



SANDY MARTINEZ / COURTESY PHOTO

Immediately after the storm, members of the Ave Maria Teen Club, aka Los Adolescentes de Ave Maria, and some of their parents organized a bake sale to benefit people in nearby communities impacted by the wrath of Hurricane Ian.

Townspeople unite to help others affected by Hurricane Ian

BY ERICA FISH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Ever since Hurricane Ian hit the southern west coast of Florida on Wednesday, Sept. 28, Ave Maria business owners, community members and their families have been working tirelessly to provide hot meals, clothes and shelter for people outside Ave Maria facing the heartbreaking devastation left behind by the historic storm.

The Ave Maria Teen Club, aka Los Adolescentes de Ave Maria, hosted a fundraiser bake sale for nearby communities impacted by the wrath of Ian. Town Center businesses The Secret Ingredient, Meltz and Way Out Toys & Games opened their storefronts for the kids to set up booths as the lines grew and grew in anticipation of savory pastries.

“Myself, other parents and our teens felt we needed to assist our neighboring communities,” says Sandy Martinez, a Maple Ridge resident and parent of two club members. “Even if it’s just a small-town bake sale ... there’s still that commitment to do right for others. It’s wonderful as a parent to know that our kids want to be part of the process to recovery.”

Los Adolescentes are collecting items and driving to severely impacted coastal areas in Collier and Lee counties, with their most recent initiative being “Bags of Love” for 50 families containing wet wipes, feminine hygiene supplies, oral care, first aid kits, body wash, canned food and non-perishable snacks. Little notes of hope, handwritten by Ave Maria residents as young as 10 years old, were tucked inside each bag.

“We wholeheartedly thank everyone who has donated and who continues to give their support to families affected by Ian,” Ms. Martinez says “It’s an amazing feeling to be able to help our close neighbors during these very

SEE HELP, A6 ►

FLAGPOLES AND MEMORIAL RISE in HONOR of VETERANS

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

MORE THAN 320 flagpoles have sprouted around Ave Maria in recent years, blossoming with the red, white and blue of the American flag waving in the Florida sunshine.

In addition to proclaiming the community’s patriotism, this flowering of flags is a fundraiser for an even bigger tribute to America’s heroes: a permanent memorial dedicated to veterans of all American conflicts going back to the Revolutionary War.

If all goes well, groundbreaking for the memorial could happen this Veterans Day (Nov. 11). Details are to be announced soon.

The flagpoles and the memorial are projects of the Ave Maria Veterans Association (AMVA), which was formed in 2018. The group has 50 members with ages ranging from their 20s to 88, including veterans of the Korean War.

The Flagpoles for Veterans project was one of the association’s first ideas for a way to make an impact in the Ave Maria community, and in the more than three years since members started working on the project, they have been grateful for the reception from town

SEE VETERANS, A14 ►



COURTESY PHOTO

Ave Maria residents and veterans who are proud to have flagpoles in their yards thanks to the Ave Maria Veterans Association include Raymond and Kristen Carter, here with daughter Quinn.



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Ave Maria Veterans Association members who are working on the memorial include Joe Rivera Jr., Tom Schlessinger and John Bestul. The fourth committee member, Bob Van Asten, is not in the picture.

Farmers Market

A home run for shoppers and vendors.

A22 ►



More than just smarts

Ave Maria schools revel in academic, athletic success.

A12 ►



Fun around the town

“God Bless America” parade and the Latin Festival.

A28-30 ►



Sweet! Town celebrates a top spot among master-planned communities

BY CINDY PIERCE

Ave Maria Sun Editor

Ave Maria Development hosted “It’s Sweet Being #16” party one August afternoon in celebration of the town’s ranking as the 16th fastest-selling master-planned community in the United States by RCLCO Real Estate Advisors. Festivities included trolley tours, refreshments, live music, candy bar and delights, and a healthy number of congratulatory remarks taken place in the Ave Maria New Home & Welcome Center and at the various sales centers of each of the four premiere builders that helped make this accomplishment a reality.

As part of the celebration, the trolley provided attendees a tour — and victory lap — of the bestselling neighborhoods.

“The event was the perfect opportunity for the public to learn why Ave Maria is ranked a top master-planned community and for them to experience a taste of the Ave Maria lifestyle, including our vibrant Town Center with dining, shops and services, our recreational amenities and our homes that offer affordable luxury,” says Michelle Mambuca, marketing and public relations manager for Barron Collier Companies, Ave Maria’s developer.

Mrs. Mambuca attributes the community’s positive momentum to several factors, among them:

■ Home prices here are significantly lower than in comparable Florida communities.

■ Residents enjoy a rewarding sense of community.

■ The town offers an extensive selection of recreational amenities such as a water park,



COURTESY PHOTO

multiple golf courses, a fitness center and beautiful walking paths.

■ There’s also an amphitheater, two parks offering different amenities, a Publix supermarket and free events throughout the year.

■ Private grade schools and an accredited university are already here. A preschool recently opened, and Collier County Public Schools plan to open a new elementary school in the next couple of years.

“We are very proud of this national recognition and to know that families and active

adults are finding their dream home and community in Ave Maria,” Cee Cee Marinelli, director of development for Ave Maria says.

All told, prospective home buyers are currently able to explore 25 designer-furnished models by CC Homes, Del Webb, Lennar and Pulte Homes. New home prices range from the \$200,000s to more than \$500,000. At its build out, the town is expected to include up to 11,000 residences and 1.8 million square feet of retail, office and business park use in its 4,000 acres.

Ave Maria is at the intersection of Oil Well and Camp Keais roads in eastern Collier County. For more information, visit www.avemaria.com or call 239-352-3903. 🌟



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Kathleen Coppola is an inspiring ambassador of Ave Maria

BY SANDRA YEYATI
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Self-avowed people person Kathleen Coppola serves as a community representative at the Ave Maria New Home & Welcome Center in the Town Center. In addition to being knowledgeable about the history and goings-on of the town, she also happens to be an inspiring beacon of triumph over adversity.

For five years, she lived in Del Webb, but when an adverse reaction to a new chemotherapy drug paralyzed her from the waist down, leaving her wheelchair-bound and struggling to recover from other complications, the 19-year cancer survivor decided to take dramatic action. She sold her home in Ave Maria and moved into an assisted living community in Naples.

“I saw my kids take care of their dad, who passed away three months after we moved to Del Webb. It consumed their lives, and I saw it starting to happen again, as they were flying in from all over. I just didn’t want that,” explains the mother of two sons, one daughter and two step-sons — all adults living around the country. She also has 14 grandkids — eight boys and six girls.

Mrs. Coppola shakes off any talk of difficulties, saying, “We all have our journeys. I choose to react with positivity, and to do a lot of research and educate myself. You have to be your own healthcare advocate, but I’m fine now. I’m raring to go.”

With renewed vigor, she recently purchased a condominium at The National and is excited to move back to Ave Maria as soon as construction is completed. “It’s an absolutely beautiful community,” she says. “Although I don’t play golf, it was at my price point. They’ll have three restaurants — a chickee bar, a bistro and a fine dining restaurant — which is right up my alley. Three of my boys are avid golfers, so when they visit, they can play. They’ll also have pickleball, tennis and the pool, which I love. Everything will



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Kathleen Coppola serves as a community representative at the Ave Maria Welcome Center.

be right there.”

Eager to return to normalcy, Mrs. Coppola resumed her duties at the New Home & Welcome Center in January, commuting from Naples three or more times a week. “I love the people I work with. There are five of us who take turns at the front desk. I am the oldest of all and should be retired, but I continue to work because I like to stay engaged. I think it’s very important as you get older to do that,” she says, noting that she is an active participant in social groups and charitable organizations, such as the American Cancer Society for which she served as the Naples sponsorship chair for a dozen years.

She loves to interact with visitors at the New Home & Welcome Center. “When they come in,

they’re happy. They’re going on their next adventure; many of them are buying a new home, and they’re grateful to have someone to talk to.”

A recent new resident was thrilled to learn that there’s a dry cleaner in town, she says.

“There are a lot of new amenities in town that people aren’t aware of yet, so we help them learn about those. Even people who are just visiting the town and aren’t actively looking for a house, sometimes we can entice them to move here — not aggressively, but with quiet suggestions and our enthusiasm.”

Decades ago, the Long Island, N.Y., native was an executive assistant at Goldman Sachs. After moving to Florida 30 years ago, she worked for the leadership team at Naples Community

“I’m a Type-A personality, so I love new things and I get involved. It’s good for me, just thinking of the positive things, the good things.”

– Kathleen Coppola

Hospital for 15 years. She has always liked to stay busy and says that’s her secret to remaining upbeat through the ups and downs.

“I’m a Type-A personality, so I love new things and I get involved. It’s good for me, just thinking of the positive things, the good things.”

Prayer is another important balm, and Ave Maria Catholic Church has been a source of comfort for her.

“The church is magnificent. It’s very unique — outside, inside. You can see the church no matter where you live in this town, which is amazing to me. When inside, I feel grateful, blessed.”

She can hardly wait to come home again to Ave Maria.

“When I’m here, I feel a lot of peace,” she says. “This is a very peaceful and beautiful community. There’s virtually little to no crime here. All of the schools are A-rated, and when the students are here, you feel their energy. They’re very well behaved, very focused. You have low taxes, the pricing is great, and the amenities are magnificent.”

But most of all, she adds, “I just love the people here. I haven’t met anybody I didn’t like. There’s a great sense of family here and that’s important to me. Family.” 🌻



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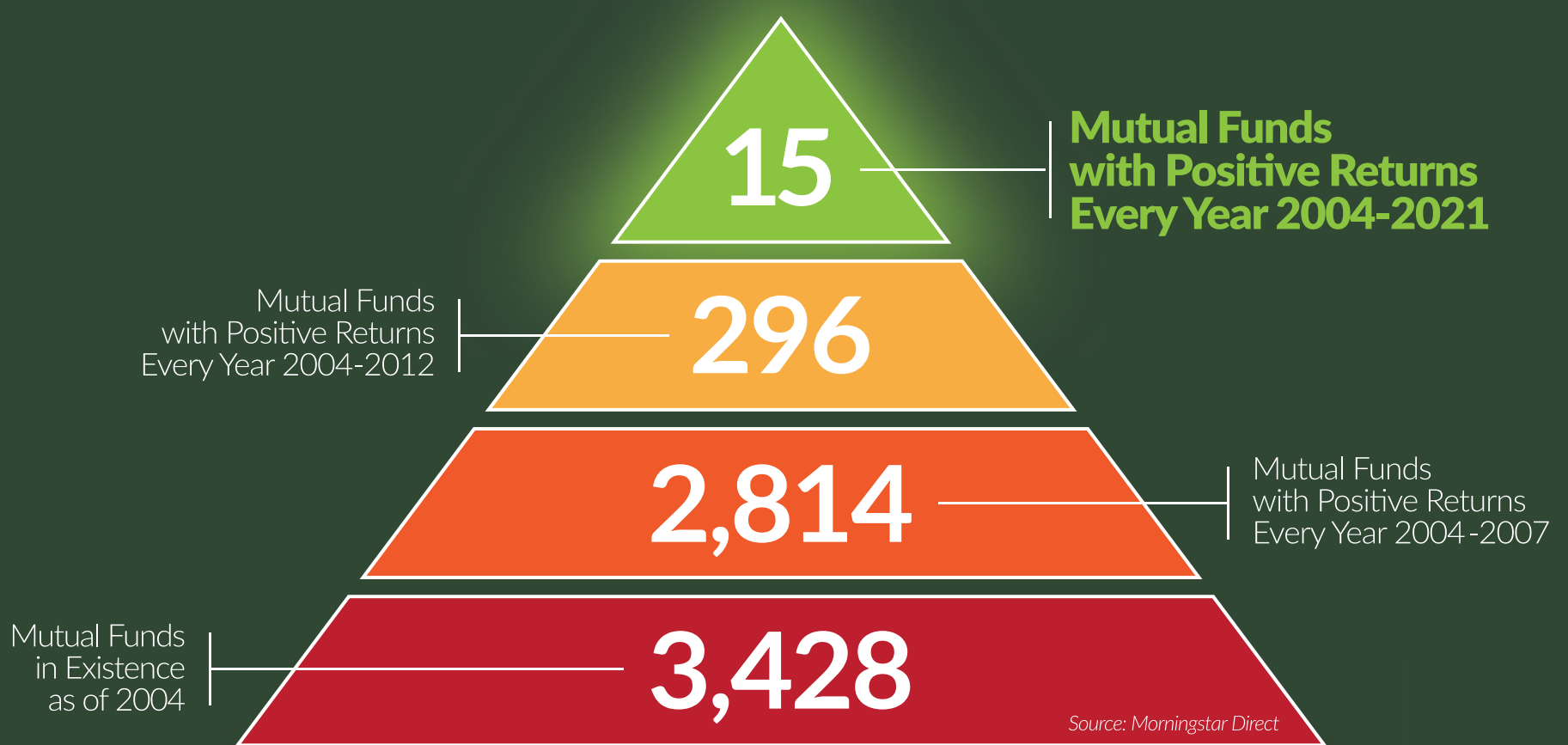
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HELP

From page 1

difficult times. Our kids are experiencing what our beautiful Ave Maria is truly about.”

Moved by these relief efforts, Way Out Toys & Games owner Shawn Jones is donating all proceeds gained from poster sales every Sunday to aid organizations like the Red Cross and to volunteer groups formed by his neighbors and fellow business owners.

“Twenty-dollar posters are one of our best-sellers,” Mr. Jones says. “It was a no brainer to decide we wanted 100 percent of these proceeds to go to charity. As of press time, he adds, the effort had helped 70 Lee County families.

Puerto Rico native Reina Del Mar, the owner of Hoja de Menta boutique, understands firsthand the difficulty experienced when a city takes on the worst from a storm. A week or so prior to Ian, she organized several donation drives for islanders impacted by Hurricane Fiona. The day after Ian rocked Southwest Florida, Ms. Del Mar partnered with the Florida Breast Cancer Foundation collecting clothes, shoes, bedding, toiletries and household items for anyone in the region who experienced loss.

“I am extremely grateful for everyone in our community who donated. They may not know it, but they brightened someone’s day with their contributions,” Ms. Del Mar says.

Ave Maria residents Kimberly Alexandra and Paula Azcarraga-Moran connected on the Facebook group, Ave Maria Neighbors, the day after Ian, both asking community members for spare water or toiletries they could deliver to neighborhoods directly hit by the storm. Strangers to each other then, the two women started collaborating on collecting and delivering supplies and meals.

A single post asking for assistance driving



Ave Maria residents gather before heading to Fort Myers with much-needed supplies..

supplies to Lee County catapulted to several hundred townspeople coming to Ms. Alexandra’s home to drop off supplies. Many even took pets into consideration by bringing whatever animal food and supplies they could find in stores that were open.

“Even though Ave Maria was not directly affected, countless people here have expressed the love they have for this community and for all the rest of Southwest Florida,” Ms. Alexandra says. “I have never been prouder to live somewhere.”

Ms. Azcarraga-Moran knows that the bare essentials are the immediate need for all who are weathering a disaster, but as repairing, rebuilding and replacing move forward, she also knows people will start craving the things they once were used to. This is why she and Ms. Alexandra are delivering hot pizzas and focusing on collecting body care and feminine hygiene products, along with toys to replace teddy bears washed away by Ian.

Word spread fast and far about their relief efforts. Ave Maria University students joined in to help deliver supplies and remove debris. And first responders from Homestead Fire Rescue dropped off dozens of blankets at Ms.

Here to help

» **A fundraiser** for those outside of Ave Maria who are affected by Hurricane Ian is set for 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 23, at the Town Center. Come and enjoy live music, food, drinks, shopping specials and more. Call 239-352-3903 or visit www.Ave-Maria.com for more information.

» As time goes on, the needs of those impacted are changing. **Reach out** via email to info@Ave-Maria.com to learn more about how you can help.

Alexandra’s front door.

“People are remaining in their homes with no roofs and water still leaking inside, because they want to hold onto what is left of their possessions,” Ms. Azcarraga-Moran says.

Ms. Alexandra adds, “We don’t plan to stop what we’re doing, and we know the folks of Ave Maria won’t turn away from the cause.”



COURTESY PHOTOS

An Ave Maria resident drops off donations at Hoja de Menta.

Although a great deal of devastation has rattled many, a small town’s efforts are making an enormous impact. Big hearts truly have the ability to produce the greatest of gestures, showing how one selfless act can create a ripple of plenty more.

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Ave Maria offers great home values in a big small town

BY Nanci Theoret

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Value-minded homebuyers are getting more bang for their buck in Ave Maria, where new-construction homes are priced substantially less than their identical counterparts in communities only 100 miles away.

To some extent, the price differential reflects the “location, location, location” mantra of realtors the world over, but as Chelsea Kimmey of CC Homes points out: today’s now-hot top-dollar markets were once unknowns, mere blips on the map people passed through en route to Miami or Palm Beach.

“Ave Maria is an emerging market and growing hometown,” says Ms. Kimmey, director of marketing for the Coral Gables builder. “People who have been in Florida long enough remember other certain areas during their early development as being similar to what Ave Maria is now. It speaks to the value and promising future of the community.”

Today’s Ave Maria is like a field of dreams: Build it and they will come.

And boy, are they coming.

With its friendly small-town way of life, expanding amenities, the convenience of in-town grocery shopping and a budding base of retailers, restaurants and other businesses lining up to hang their shingles here, buyers are finding their way home – and paying less for it. Families, retirees, remote workers and commuters are zeroing in on Ave Maria, driving 2022 home sales through June to the No. 16 spot in midyear rankings of the nation’s fastest-selling communities. The town claimed the No. 24 spot for 2021.

There’s the excitement of growing with a town, the security and stability of living in a community just now hitting its stride. And, of course, lower home prices. Ave Maria’s affordability is particularly appealing to South



COURTESY PHOTO

The Inlet by CC Homes in Maple Ridge

Florida buyers who can purchase the same home, with the same features, constructed by the same builder for nearly 50% less in Ave Maria – and commute to the southeast coast. The town is 20 miles from I-75’s Alligator Alley and conveniently situated between both Florida coasts.

“The drive from Ave Maria is a manageable commute, especially if you work in Broward County,” says Ms. Kimmey.

Examples of Ave Maria’s home values are underscored throughout its neighborhoods. Pulte Homes’ popular single-family Mystique floor plan, for instance, is 51% less in Avalon Park at Ave Maria than the identical home in Oak Tree, a community 102 miles away in Oakland Park just north of Fort Lauderdale, at \$460,990 vs. \$896,990.

The same scenarios play out in The National Golf & Country Club, Lennar’s bundled golf-club community of 1,300 single- and multifamily homes, golf course and amenities, and in Del Webb Naples, an active adult 55 and older neighborhood with an expansive amenity center, 18 holes of optional golf and one of the region’s top-notch pickleball programs.

Florida’s escalating rents over the past year — up almost 40% in Miami, 32% in Fort Myers and now averaging \$2,500 monthly — are making homeownership a more viable option for some.

Buyers in The National also get more value for their dollar. Lennar’s two-bedroom, 2½-bath-plus-den Victoria, a single-family executive home with 1,850 square feet, is 31% less in

Ave Maria than the same design in Lakewood Ranch, north of Sarasota. Lennar also offers larger estate homes, multifamily condominium terrace and veranda homes and new coach homes.

“Buyers are a mix of snowbirds, retirees, working preretirement, working remotely and some families,” says Scott Schilling, area sales manager for Lennar. “Ave Maria is a big small town.”

Danielle Calamela, vice president of sales for PulteGroup’s Southwest Florida Division, the parent company of Pulte Homes and Del Webb, says interest is strong in Ave Maria. Buyers include families of all sizes, empty nesters, seasonal residents and retirees.

“They want world-class amenities, the incredible value, and the know-your-neighbor-



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bors-connections a small town like Ave Maria really excels at,” says Ms. Calamela. “Ave Maria is developing into one of the region’s most attractive and vibrant lifestyles.”

It’s the same sentiment echoed by residents of CC Homes’ Maple Ridge neighborhood.

“They love the comfort, laid-back energy and the security Ave Maria offers,” says Ms. Kimmey. “There’s a sense of belonging, a sense of family. When you own a home in a growing neighborhood, there’s also the sense of a promising future for your investment. The location is what’s drawing people to Ave Maria.”

Also attractive is Ave Maria’s inventory of “quick-delivery homes” — homes in various stages of construction and interior finish installation. Instead of building from the ground up, buyers can move to town sooner, in some cases by the 2022 holiday season.

Quick move-in homes span each neighborhood and currently include attached villas and single-family homes. Del Webb Naples and Avalon Park feature a handful of quick move-in homes expected to be completed as early as December. CC Homes, primarily builds custom homes with buyers after the sale, is offering a two-story, 2,032-square-foot home in Silver-

wood, an enclave of Maple Ridge, with anticipated completion in January 2023. Lennar has new homes in The National Golf & Country Club that can close in November.

Ave Maria’s neighborhoods also offer private amenity campuses, functioning as activity hubs and social destinations with resort-style pools; tennis, pickleball and bocce courts; and clubhouses with fitness centers and places to gather for dances, dinners and more.

They complement the town’s parks, play areas, ballfields, walking paths and recreational facilities, including a water park and fitness center. The Publix-anchored Ave Maria Town Center offers over 40 local businesses, including restaurants and pubs, professional offices and services, shopping and entertainment venues and is the heart of town events, parades and activities.

Ave Maria is also home to college sports, lecture series and theater at Ave Maria University and the top-ranked Donahue Academy, a K-12 classical Catholic school.

And there’s more on the homebuying horizon, with new sections already earmarked for expanding Maple Ridge and Avalon Park, plus a planned Collier County public elementary school and more businesses. 🌞



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Victoria in The National Golf & Country Club by Lennar



The Reverence in Del Webb Naples by Pulte Homes



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Meet Ave Maria townmaker Tammy Smith

BY NANCITHEORET

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

When Tammy Smith joined Ave Maria Utilities Company in 2008, the town had 194 residential connections and only six employees. She often spent time in the field and was one of only two handling customer service.

“There was no gas station, no Publix, no Arthrex, little to no restaurants and only one builder in town,” she recalled. “It has been exciting to see Ave Maria take shape and residents coming here from all over. I’ve heard so many stories about what brought them to Ave Maria, how they heard about the town and how much they like the area. It’s also been exciting to see more builders come to Ave Maria and truly make this a booming town with options for everyone, young and old.”

Today, Ms. Smith has the multifaceted responsibilities of customer service, billing and finance managing for the developer-owned utility that has more than 3,000 residential customers, a growing town center of retail, restaurant and professional services, and a team of 22 full-time employees and one part-timer.

“Part of what is exciting about my job is that no two days are alike,” she says.

Once the only person customers encountered, while visiting the utility’s Town Center office, Ms. Smith now works primarily behind the scenes as a liaison with in-house and outside engineers, the maintenance department, town builders and homeowners associations. She’s as apt to be auditing payments and charges as she is to be reviewing construction and turnover submittals for new neighborhoods, tracking warranty periods, bonds, permitting and inspection fees, creating and maintaining the budget and validating annual reports.

“I’m basically the data keeper for all things related to Ave Maria Utility Company,” Smith



Tammy Smith joined Ave Maria Utilities Company in 2008.

COURTESY PHOTO

says. “We do more than just bill water and sewer service. We review any development inside Ave Maria boundaries. If it includes any ‘wet planning,’ which is basically any new development that requires utility services, it must come through our office. The infrastructure is installed during construction to our

specifications by the developer. At any time, we have roughly 15 to 20 projects underway at Ave Maria.”

As a townmaker, Ms. Smith is also an educator, working closely with homeowner associations and residents to help them understand rates, maintenance of lift stations, and irriga-

tion, especially during wintertime watering restrictions.

“The level of involvement I have with our homeowners associations stands out,” she says. “This type of education reduces our costs, which truly has a bearing on rate adjustments.”

Originally from Oklahoma City, Ms. Smith moved to Naples in 1986 and graduated from Lely High School. Most of her career has been defined by government and utility work — 14 years with Collier County in utilities, public information, information technology and managing special projects including utility billing. Her husband of 28 years is a plant manager.

Ms. Smith learned of Ave Maria’s need for a customer service manager while working at an engineering firm during the waning days of long-term project, “I had a strong background in utilities, software, finance and management,” she recalls. “It offered long-term employment. I felt like it was made for me.”

Ave Maria developer Barron Collier Companies opted to assume operation and maintenance of the town utility in 2015, offering full-time positions to current employees.

“100 percent of the staff stayed on and to this day, all but one is still with the company,” Ms. Smith says. “We have built a fantastic team, we all work well together and having a great company to work for just sweetens the pot.”

The town was and still is an event destination for Ms. Smith, whose daughter, now 20, participated in the annual Christmas parade and enjoyed the holiday ice rink.

“Ave Maria is always putting together functions and since I live close, I attend many of them,” she says. “The town has great things for children. Everything here is based on family.”

She says she also enjoys walking along the town’s lakes and admits she’s “partial to Lozano’s Mexican Restaurant.”

SEE TOWNMAKER, A11 ►

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TOWNMAKER

From page 10

Despite the growth of both the town and utility company, AMUC still maintains a customer-centric focus.

“We know most customers on a first-name basis,” Ms. Smith says, adding the utility’s smart meter technology and leak detection systems alert the team of potential problems so they can relay information to residents. Because of its high-pressure water infrastructure, required as a university town, a leaking toilet can result in a \$500 water bill. AMUC’s meters are accurate within 0.5% compared to the allowable 3%, she says.

“It goes to show our maintenance department does its job well,” she notes. “We have an advantage because most of us have been here a long time and know the system.”



“We do more than just bill water and sewer service. We review any development inside Ave Maria boundaries. ... At any time, we have roughly 15 to 20 projects underway at Ave Maria.”

— Tammy Smith



COURTESY PHOTO

The Ave Maria Utility Company team will soon work from a new location.

Utility company relocating to larger offices

BY Nanci Theoret

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Ave Maria Utility Company will soon have a new location and more user-friendly options for paying bills online, by app and by phone.

Headquartered in Town Center since 2008, the utility is moving just across the street to a second-floor home in the First Foundation Bank building at 5078 Pope John Paul II Blvd. The move more than doubles its current 2,025 square feet and is expected to happen before Thanksgiving.

“We have outgrown our existing space,” says Tammy Smith, the company’s customer service, billing and finance manager. “The new space will offer a more modern look and a feel that is open and flush with natural light.

More importantly, we are looking forward to an office that brings everyone — from engineering and asset management to billing and customer service — back together under one roof.”

With 4,246 square feet, the new office accommodates future growth, provides a large conference room for whole-team training and homeowner association education, a kitchen, and marks the return of a formal mail room, now located in a hallway in the current office.

The relocation also frees up prime space to a future restaurant or retail tenant in the Town Center.

“As the utility company has evolved, so have our approaches to customer service, including more remote and online services that will continue to reduce our foot traffic

even as the town grows,” Ms. Smith says. “For our traditional customers, our new location remains conveniently located in the heart of town. We will always welcome in-person walk-ins.”

Customers will have the option of depositing payments in a ground-floor drop box, plus expanded choices for paying via Apple Pay, PayPal, Venmo, a dedicated payment-only website and by telephone using a new interactive voice response system.

The expanded choices reflect modern times: 70% of Ave Maria’s 3,007 residential customers are enrolled in autopay or remit online by credit card. Of the 28% paying by check, 20% are mailed in or put in the on-site drop box.

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“Ave Maria is a small university town. The students and faculty are blessed by the town, and the university is a resource for the town.”

– Roger Nutt, provost and professor of theology at Ave Maria University

From K to college, Ave Maria celebrates academic and athletic accomplishments

BY NANCITHEORET

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Successes in the classroom, on the stage, in sports and in life have become the hallmarks of Ave Maria University, which continually ranks among the top schools in Florida and the U.S., producing noteworthy graduates and bonding college with community. The same is also true for the Rhodora J. Donahue Academy of Ave Maria, the town’s kindergarten through 12th-grade classical Catholic school.

The town and schools have grown together during the past 15 years, intricately woven not just by location but by a common history: a pioneering spirit. For Ave Maria University, one of the country’s newest private Catholic schools, is finally overcoming the initial perception as a quasi-seminary.

“We’ve always been committed to the traditional liberal arts and humanities,” says Provost Roger Nutt, who arrived on campus in 2006, the year before the college and town opened. “We’re always looking for ways to provide



NUTT

knowledge and skills for students to succeed and make an impact.”

The school today offers 33 majors across a diverse spectrum — from biology and business to politics, communications and marketing — and recently introduced data analytics and computer

science minors. Business and psychology are its top two majors, with pre-nursing and theology tied for third.

Ave Maria University has a growing array of academic, arts and culture clubs and chapters of national honors societies, including the Tri-Beta Biology Honors Society for high-achieving students. Seniors majoring in politics placed in the 99th percentile against students from over 100 peer universities in the 2022 major field test on political thought.

The school’s credentials not only attract students but a cadre of professors affiliated with the most renowned colleges, like Duke, Harvard, Notre Dame, Southern Methodist University and The Catholic University of America among them. T. Adam Van Wart, an assistant professor of theology, was the first recipient of the Father Joseph Koterski Research Fellowship for Philosophy in Theology, awarded this year.

“This puts us in fellowship with other larger schools,” says Dr. Nutt.

It’s not all academics

There’s also a “playful” side to the university that includes champion-winning sports teams and Shakespeare in Performance, the latter a popular class/minor that stages annual works by the Bard performed by students who have little or no acting experience. For the program’s 10th anniversary in March, students revisited its inaugural play, “As You Like It.”

The modernized versions incorporate song and dance, hip-hop and active storytelling to parley Shakespeare in a relatable way. The program is also bringing Macbeth to Uganda in summer 2023 to support Lady of the Rosary School, a pre-K through sixth-grade orphanage.

Sixty percent of this year’s 1,311 AMU students come from out of state, with 1,175 living on campus, where they experience the collegiate rite of passage for football games, tailgates and camaraderie.

“There’s a genuine sense of joy on campus and vitality of life,” Dr. Nutt says. “Students come here because of the combination of being



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Gyrenes football team has had three straight winning seasons under Coach Joe Patterson.

a relatively small school with small classroom sizes where they get to know their professors and develop deep peer-to-peer friendships.”

There’s also a symbiotic relationship between university and town as they’ve grown together. Many students find part-time employment and internships at local businesses and professional offices. In return, residents enjoy rooting on their hometown sports teams, attending theater and musical performances, the school’s Hail Mary lecture series and visiting the campus’ Mother Teresa Museum.

“Ave Maria is a small university town,” says Dr. Nutt. “The students and faculty are blessed by the town, and the university is a resource for the town.”

Success in sports

In his seventh year as the university’s football coach, Joe Patterson has led the Gyrenes to three straight winning seasons on the gridiron. The university has added 10 new sports in the past two years, now fielding men’s and women’s golf, swimming, outdoor and indoor track and field

teams, plus men’s ultimate Frisbee and women’s competitive dance — all under the guidance of Mr. Patterson, who was named athletic director in spring 2020.

The women’s indoor volleyball team won the 2021 Sun Conference Tournament championship, men’s and women’s tennis teams were nationally ranked in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics in 2021, along with the men’s and women’s basketball teams competing in championship games.

With 24 varsity sports, including Southwest Florida’s only college football team, a newly minted athletic Hall of Fame founded last year, a just-announced golf training center and teams advancing farther along the road to championship titles, Ave Maria University is getting noticed by student athletes, even future coaches. Alan Webb, a three-time U.S. champion in the 1500-meter run and a 2004 Olympian, joined the athletic program in May 2022 as head cross country, track and swimming coach — just months before his induction into the Washington, D.C., Sports Hall of Fame as the first track

athlete.

“There’s been more demand for competitive athletics in a Catholic environment,” Coach Patterson says. “Fifty percent of our students play an intercollegiate sport. It’s a point of distinction and a point of attraction for incoming students.”

The school’s strong sports culture is echoed throughout campus and the town in waves of navy blue and Kelly green. On Sept. 3, the football team’s first home game of this season, against Lawrence Tech from Michigan, drew a standing-room-only crowd. The Gyrenes didn’t disappoint, winning the nail biter by a score of 26-25.

“There’s a lot of energy, a great mix of town and university,” says the coach. “We really appreciate the support of our hometown.”

That energy and spirit will be on full display during Homecoming weekend beginning Friday, Oct. 21, with the Ave Maria University Athletics Hall of Fame induction ceremony honoring Abby Castro, class of 2017, women’s lacrosse; Kiel Lewis, class of 2013, men’s basketball; and Alex Sanchez, class of 2013, baseball. The university is also recognizing the first recipient of the Saint John Paul II Distinguished Alumni Award.

“I think having a hall of fame marks the maturity of an athletic department,” Coach Patterson says. “We really have a strong ballot of students this year and looking into the future. Our inductees are men and women who have set the standard on the field of competition. They inspire other students. There’s excitement from current athletes when they see someone from their sport being inducted.”

The following day, Saturday, Oct. 22, the university hosts the Ave Maria cross country invitational in the morning and Miami Gardens’ St. Thomas University on the gridiron at 7 p.m.

Donahue Academy: Success starts early

Since welcoming its first students in 2007, Donahue Academy has set the academic bar. It was Southwest Florida’s highest-scoring school on 2022 SATs with an average 1310 and Florida’s



Joseph Marsh and Mary Hope Randolph as Oliver and Celia in “As You Like It”



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Gyrenes men’s and women’s harriers each took second place, out of seven schools, in the 2022 season opener at the Fire Short Course Invitational hosted by Southeastern University.



The women’s indoor volleyball team won the 2021 Sun Conference Tournament championship.



The men’s soccer team opened the season with four straight wins.

top-scoring Catholic private in-person school. All 14 of Donahue’s 2022 graduating seniors were accepted into colleges, many with generous scholarships, and the middle school won the 2022 Collier County Scholar Bowl.

“That’s quite the accomplishment, especially considering we were competing against schools 16 times our size,” says Thomas Carroll, director of marketing and development.

In the Diocese of Venice’s most recent annual robotics competition, the Donahue middle school team won its age group and the high school team placed second and received the best design award.

“The last year has been a banner year,” Mr. Carroll says.

Most students also participate in sports. Donahue is home to the 2021 Class 3A state champion eight-man football team; a middle school boys’ soccer team that’s claimed five consecutive conference titles, losing only one game; and a cross country program for third- through 12th-grade runners and host of the annual Ave Invite, one of two state qualifying events for middle schoolers.

“At last year’s Ave Invite, our high school boys’ and girls’ teams each placed second, only losing to Barron Collier High, which has a student body 20 times our size,” says Mr. Carroll.

The academy’s current 380-student enrollment continues a seventh consecutive year of growth with wait lists for most grades. While academic and athletic success have some influence on parents choosing the parish school, Mr. Carroll says it’s the classical Catholic foundation that matters most.

“Our mission, summarized as “encountering Christ and pursuing excellence in all things,” is the reason for everything we do and it’s the primary reason why parents choose to send their children here,” he says. “Right now, we have multiple international families who moved to Ave Maria from abroad specifically to send their children to Donahue Academy.”

Today, Donahue counts doctors, lawyers, congressional aides and engineers among its former students.

“A graduate-turned-engineer recently told me that while she was behind a bit in some of the sciences at college, her classical education gave



Donahue Academy’s middle school robotics team took first place in the most recent competition sponsored by the Diocese of Venice.

her the skills to approach new situations, talk through them and understand the truth,” says Mr. Carroll. “Now, she’s a successful engineer for a major construction firm.

“The academic skills Donahue Academy teaches aren’t just for school,” he adds. “They are directly applicable to life as adults.” 🌟



Modern music, dance and pop culture are regular features of all Shakespeare in Performance productions. “As You Like It,” taglined as “the greatest wrestling match ever,” featured a cast-spanning finale dancing to “Come and Get Your Love.”



Donahue Academy’s middle school boys’ soccer team has claimed five consecutive conference titles.



Donahue Academy’s eight-man football team won the 2021 Class 3A state championship.

VETERANS

From page 1

residents and businesses, many of whom have gladly put their money where their patriotism is.

“It’s been tremendous,” says AMVA treasurer Tom Schlessinger, a former Marine. “We started out asking people to donate a flagpole to a veteran.” And it grew from there.

“We’d put a flagpole up and say somebody donated one for you,” Mr. Schlessinger says. Most recipients, he adds, responded by saying they wanted to pay it forward and donate a flag to somebody else.

Ave Maria resident Raymond Carter, 35, is a veteran of both the Navy Reserve and Air Force Reserve. He was a Naval reservist for 10 years and has now been in the Air Force Reserve for five years.

For the past two years, a flag provided by the AMVA has flown in Mr. Carter’s yard.

“It feels great,” Mr. Carter says. “It’s nice to be recognized for serving and it’s nice people are donating. You drive around Ave Maria and they’re everywhere.”

Initially, the flagpoles were just for veterans, but the organizers have also begun dedicating flagpoles to first responders such as police officers and firefighters.

“But primarily our focus has been on veterans,” Mr. Schlessinger says.

The first flagpoles were installed in January 2019, and by summer that year, Mr. Schlessinger says, 75 had been sold. A flagpole with flag, hardware and installation costs \$365. Of that, \$50 goes toward the memorial.

It’s not too late to get a flagpole and contribute to the memorial project by going to www.avemariavets.org/veterans-monument.

The monument to come

The Ave Maria Veterans Memorial will be erected on Ave Maria Boulevard intersecting Clancy Avenue, overlooking a large lake. Mr. Rivera estimates the size of the plot of land at roughly a quarter of an acre.

The vets have a 99-year lease at \$1 for the land.

The monument will have a diameter of 45 feet and will include black marble pedestals and bronze medallions set in a concrete pad.

A plaque will be emblazoned with these words: “All gave some and some gave all.”

Around the fringe of the circle will be six poles flying service flags of the military’s



COURTESY PHOTOS

Bert Restituto, Dean Seymore and Michelle Gangloss are among the Ave Maria residents and veterans who are proudly flying flags in their yards thanks to the Ave Maria Veterans Association.

branches: Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard and Space Force. Those flagpoles will be 20 feet tall.

Ave Maria resident John Bestul, an Army Reserve veteran who retired as a major and is a past president of the Ave Maria veterans group, says the idea behind a circle and having service flags at the same height is so each branch is considered equal.

In the middle of the monument will be a 25-foot-tall pole flying the American flag. All the flags as well as the memorial wall will be lit.

The AMVA’s goal is to raise \$85,000 for the monument; about \$56,000 has been raised to date, with commitments taking the total to \$62,000.

“We’re really cooking now,” says association member Joe Rivera Jr., a Marine Corps veteran,

local realtor and Ave Maria resident.

Mr. Bestul, 67, says the campaign started snowballing in 2020 as more and more flagpoles were installed

Funds for the memorial have come in donations small and large, including from a golf tournament last year that raised more than \$11,000.

The 2022 golf scramble is scheduled for Nov. 9 at Panther Run Golf Course. The cost is \$125 per golfer.

The three largest donations so far: \$15,000 from Michael Schwartz of Ave Maria Mutual Funds, \$5,000 from CC Homes and \$2,400 from The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria. Peninsula Engineering has assisted in the planning and engineering of the memorial and resident Jim Soltis donated 10 flagpoles valued at \$1,600

toward the effort. In addition, yellow bricks will be sold and placed on the site with the names of donors. Details aren’t finalized on the bricks, but the cost could be in the \$200 to \$300 range. T-shirts might also be sold to help raise funds.

Saluting a group effort

It takes more than money to turn the dream of a memorial from concept to concrete then bronze.

Canadian Marc Moreau, an Ave Maria resident with expertise in monuments who owned a metal company, has pitched in.

“He selflessly donated his time, talents and part of the monument itself to the project,” Mr. Rivera says.

Mr. Moreau donated the metallic art that will be at one of the entrances to the memorial.

Engineering wisdom came from Carlos Deternoz, CEO of Deternoz Engineering. “He’s been an amazing help, completely donating his time, talents and expertise,” Mr. Rivera says.

The memorial was designed by AMVA members as a group project. “It’s an amalgamation of ideas,” Mr. Schlessinger says, adding a scale model has been created showing the details.

The flagpoles and memorial are about much more than the veterans group. “We want the entire community to feel involved,” Mr. Rivera says.

He estimates three or four months will be needed to build the memorial. Depending on when ground is broken, the memorial could be dedicated and opened sometime in late winter or early spring of 2023.

It is intended as an enduring tribute to veterans.

“A place we as veterans can call our place,” Mr. Bestul says. 🌻



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Committee members and veterans John Bestul and Joe Rivera Jr. stand on the site where the memorial will be installed.



A model of the memorial



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AVE MARIA COMMUNITIES



AVALON PARK

About the community

From the \$400,000s-\$700,000s

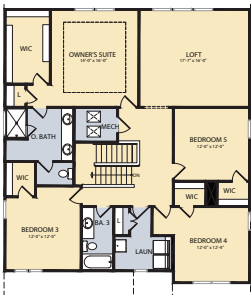
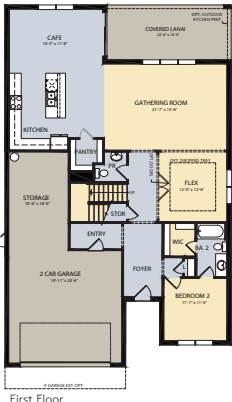
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About the community

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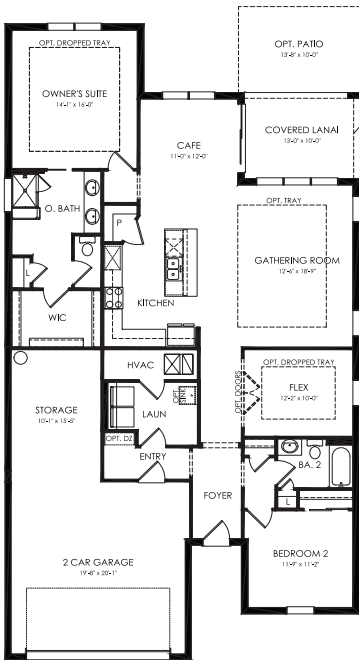
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About the community

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 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 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.

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Floor plan spotlight: The Huntington is a new construction, one-story home with three bedrooms, two baths, great room, eat-in kitchen, storage, master suite with walk-in closet and attached garage. Premium features included that are standard include designer brand faucets and 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 and a spacious shower.



Stay tuned for new phase release announcement.

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

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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, and executive and estate single-family homes. The National Golf & Country Club will feature

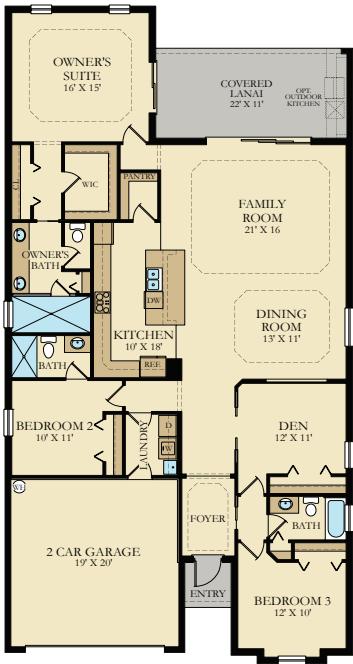
its own clubhouse with a pro shop, formal and casual dining, a resort-style pool and spa, fitness center with yoga/aerobics room, spa treatment rooms and beauty salon. Active residents can take advantage of Har-Tru tennis courts, pickle and bocce ball, a putting green, chipping area, and a driving range. This all-encompassing amenity campus is designed to bring the community together, with spaces for friends new and old to gather. 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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Welcoming new faces and new places to Ave Maria Town Center

BY Nanci Theoret

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Town Center is welcoming three locally owned businesses.

Ave Maria resident Katie Stella recently opened Stella Rose Way, a 1,300-square-foot boutique featuring home décor, gifts, items for children and works by Southwest Florida artists

“I’m a small local business and really wanted to support the community,” says Ms. Stella, who relocated from Ohio to Ave Maria a year ago for her daughter to receive a Catholic classical education at the town’s Donahue Academy. “The store is a place to buy a unique gift for anyone in your life. We offer hand-crafted products, books, candles, stuffies and limited-edition items revolving around entertaining guests — things I think the community will like and what’s a good fit for Ave Maria.”

Kibitz n’ Play, also resident owned, provides an intimate indoor, air-conditioned play and social space for kids 6 months to 9 years old.

“I’ve done mobile events and parties for children and saw a need in Ave Maria for a place for kids to play and enjoy being with their parents,” says Sabena Black, a Pembroke Pines realtor who moved to Ave Maria 18 months ago. “Kids will be able to explore their creative side and also get to know other children while they’re having fun. Parents will meet their neighbors.”

The 1,200-square-foot play zone features soft activity areas, a mini bounce house and interactive destinations to decorate cupcakes, play dress up, walk a fashion runway, sing, dance and play instruments.

As a semi-private facility, Ms. Black says,



Sandra Yeyati / Ave Maria Sun

Katie Stella recently opened Stella Rose Way.

Kibitz n’ Play is available only by reservation.

Naples’ popular Palm Preschool is also set to welcome children 2-4 years old to its newest location, a 2,500-square-foot school emphasizing meaningful hands-on activities and experiences and opportunities for rigorous skill development, positive relationships and improved problem solving. Owned by Naples native Lanie Bonaquist Hill, the school offers extended hours, morning and afternoon snacks and daily catered lunches.

Town Center’s newest businesses complement Ave Maria’s expanding choices of restaurants, clothing boutiques and specialty stores. 🌻



Courtesy Photos

Above: Brittani Gore teaches her classroom of 4-year-olds at Palm Preschool-Marquesa in Naples. She uses the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum that is also used at the Ave Maria preschool.



Left: Palm Preschool’s newest location is open in Town Center.



Kibitz n’ Play is a play and social space for children 6 months to 9 years old.

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HERE COMES SEASON

It's time to start marking your calendar and telling your friends about a busy season of fun at Ave Maria. All events take place in Town Center. Visit www.AveMaria.com, call 239-352-3903 or follow Ave Maria, Florida, on social media for details. Events are subject to change.

Trolley tours

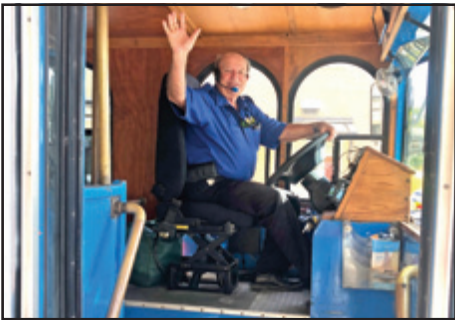
Jan. 17-April 25, every Tuesday from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Everyone can enjoy a free trolley tour through the town named Community of the Year for the past eight years. One-hour tours depart at 11 a.m., noon, 1 and 2 p.m. from Town Center. Guests receive a trolley bag with swag items and coupons. Reservations are encouraged and can be made by calling 239-352-3903.

Taste of Ave

A new event for 2023, merchants and restaurants in town will showcase their offerings from 1-6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 28. Visitors will also enjoy live music by Steinbeck Way & Back Country Boys. More details to come.

Live music

Every Tuesday and Saturday Jan.17-April 25, enjoy live music from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Performers include the Mason Williams Duo, Eric



Trolley tours start up Jan. 17.

Jacques, Gerald Augustin, Chris Stultz, Wendy Renee, Harmony 2 and many more.

Arts & Crafts Festival

This event on **Saturday, Feb. 4**, brings an array of arts and crafts vendors, live music and a farmers market to Town Center from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free admission and parking.

Blues, Brews & BBQ

Not to be missed, this event brings great beer and barbecue plus performances by Deb and The Dynamics, Old School and Little Eddie & The Fat Fingers from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18. Admire cars from the Cool Cruisers and the Bonita Corvette Club, try the mechanical bull ride and fill up on goodies from your favorite local vendors and food trucks. Activities for kids and arts and crafts will be part of the fun, too. Admission and parking are free, but no coolers, please.

Margarita & Taco Festival

Bring your lawn chairs and enjoy live music, tacos, margaritas, Lucha Libre wrestling and more from 3-6 p.m. Saturday, March 18. Admission and parking are free, but no coolers, please. 🌮



Enjoy live music every Tuesday and Saturday beginning Jan. 17.

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Ave Maria

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Ave Maria Farmers Market a home run for shoppers and vendors alike

BY SANDRA YEYATI
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Now entering its sixth year, the Ave Maria Farmers Market, held November-April every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Town Center, has become a vital part of the community, offering convenient access to freshly harvested produce from local farmers; artisanal jams, jellies, oils and sauces; homemade baked goods; handcrafted soaps and beauty products; houseplants and flowers; arts and crafts; new and vintage clothing; and unique jewelry and trinkets by local designers.

Every week, more than 25 booths are installed on the grass behind the Catholic church, allowing shoppers and browsers to walk comfortably and safely along the sidewalk. Live music and fun activities for kids add a festive, family-friendly vibe. A few service providers — real estate professionals, interior designers, travel agents and the like — also set up tables to reach out to the community. Admission is free.

“We encourage people to come downtown and socialize, eat at one of the restaurants, walk around, experience Ave Maria and do their shopping right here where they live,” says Dennis Strausbaugh, of SW Florida Markets. “What brings people to our hometown market is that Ave Maria residents want to stay in Ave Maria; that’s the feedback we’ve gotten over the years. They do not want to drive into Naples or up to Bonita or Estero.”

The market is well-curated and quality-controlled to provide a good selection of products and also to support the vendors. “We might have two or three vendors per category,” Mr. Strausbaugh says, “but never two vendors that are selling the exact same products.”



Produce is always local and always in-season.

The produce is all local and in-season. There’s nothing quite like just-picked fruits and veggies straight from the farm. They’re



Clothing and fashion accessories, like these from Bloom Vintage Boutique at a market last season, are part of the mix offered by vendors.



Shoppers can take home flowers already arranged, like these, or in bunches ready for the buyer’s artistic touch.

better tasting and more nutritionally dense than produce that sits in warehouses and is driven across the U.S. or flown in from other countries. The market also offers access to unique specialty foods that might not be in a grocery store and affords residents an oppor-

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ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

Dates and details are subject to change. Visit www.avemaria.com and the www.ave-mariamasterassociation.com calendar before venturing out, and also follow Town Center businesses on social media for updates and special promotions.

■ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Trunk or Treat at the Park of Commerce

Brought to Ave Maria by Oil Well Craft Beer and Cruise Planners, the annual Trunk or Treat from 4-6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 29, at the Park of Commerce, invites residents to decorate their golf carts and car trunks, and bring plenty of candy to distribute to the kids. This not-to-be-missed family night features contests for best kids' costume and best trunk, plus games, prizes, craft brews, ciders, sodas, food trucks, music and more. Admission is free. Participating golf cart and car owners must pre-register by email at contact@oilwell-craftbeer.com.

First Friday at the Park of Commerce

This free event from 5-7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 4, at the Park of Commerce features live music by Bager and Rose, the Viva la Taco food truck and Pop Love gelato cart, as well as outdoor family games.

Farmers Market

Starting Nov. 5 and through April 29, the Ave Maria Farmers Market comes to the Town Center every Saturday from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Shoppers can enjoy live music while browsing an array of delectable products, including farm-fresh produce, flavored oils and sauces, honey and baked goods, along with plants and flowers, artisanal soaps, arts and crafts, clothes, jewelry and more. Admission is free. For more information or to become a vendor, call Dennis Strausbaugh at 239-293-6266.

Christmas Boutique Crawl

It's time to get your holiday shopping done while supporting local businesses and having a jolly ol' time as merchants in the Town Center and La Piazza Publix Center host the Christmas Boutique Crawl from 5-8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 19, featuring live music and shopping specials. To enter to win a grand prize basket with awesome products, shoppers will be invited to get their Boutique Crawl bingo cards stamped at each of the participating shops for a drawing at the end of the event.

MERCHANT EVENTS

OASIS The Kitchen Lounge

Ave Maria's newest hotspot offers plenty of adult fun during and after dinner with themed parties and recurring programs. Costumes



COURTESY PHOTO

OASIS The Kitchen Lounge



COURTESY PHOTO

The Ave Maria Farmers Market comes to the Town Center every Saturday beginning in November.

are encouraged at October's **Hocus Pocus Halloween Bash**, while November welcomes the **Fire and Carnival Show Extravaganza**, featuring circus-themed activities and decor. December's frivolity includes an **ugly sweater Christmas party** and a **New Year's Eve soiree** to ring in 2023. The lounge hosts **Friday night karaoke parties** once a month, featuring music by a celebrity DJ; jazz and wine socials; and comedy shows with world-class comedians. For dates, times and reservation information, check the schedule posted on the window outside or visit www.facebook.com/oasiskitchenlounge and Instagram at [oasis_kitchenlounge](https://www.instagram.com/oasis_kitchenlounge).

Meltz

On Sunday, Oct. 30, Meltz celebrates its **one-year anniversary** with discounted desserts and fun games for kids from noon-9 p.m., as well as face painting from 2-5 p.m. by local artist Manuela Cason, who created the colorful mural inside the shop.

Blue Boutique

On **Black Friday**, Nov. 25, all gently used items in the Blue Boutique are 50% off.

Oil Well Craft Beer (OWCB)

Enjoy **free bingo** sponsored by Cruise Planners' Jackie Rategan from 6-8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 5. Chef Global's Kitchen food truck will be onsite from 5-8 p.m. serving dinner.

Dance the night away at **Ave Maria '70s Night** with groovy music by DJ D-FLO from

8-11 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12. Wear your most creative '70s getup for a chance to win the Best Costume prize, to be announced at 9 p.m.

Outsmart your friends at the **Thinking & Drinking Trivia Night** at 7 p.m. Monday, Nov. 21, with Speed Quiz Trivia Host DJ Tom. Admission is free.

Enjoy **free bingo** by Cruise Planners' Jackie Rategan from 6-8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3. The Yiet Yum food truck and Pop Love gelato cart will be onsite from 5-8 p.m. serving dinner and dessert.

Get into the holiday spirit with **OWCB's Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest and Christmas Karaoke Party** with DJ D-Flo from 8-11 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10. The best Christmas sweater will be announced at 9 p.m.

Show what you know at the **Thinking & Drinking Trivia Night** at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 19, with Speed Quiz Trivia Host DJ Tom. Admission is free.

The Secret Ingredient

Every Monday in October, November and December is **55+ and Fabulous Day**, when shoppers ages 55 and over save 10% off one item.

To commemorate **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**, 10% of all sales on Saturday, Oct. 22, will be donated to the Cancer Alliance of Naples.

On **National Hat Day**, Friday, Nov. 25, all hats are 20% off.

On **National Wear Brown Shoes Day**, Sunday, Dec. 4, shoppers that come in wearing brown shoes will receive 20% off one item.

Take advantage of **free gift wrapping** on Saturday, Dec. 17, for all holiday gifts purchased at the store or elsewhere. Tipping is encouraged.

On **National Sangria Day**, Tuesday, Dec. 20, shoppers are invited to enjoy a complimentary glass of sangria.

Hoja de Menta

Tuesdays are all about savings at Hoja de Menta with the following specials: 1) Buy two or more items and receive 10% off your entire purchase; 2) Buy two or more fashion accessories and get one free, excluding full-price handmade items; and 3) Save \$5 when renting two bicycles.

From **Nov. 1-5**, post a picture on Instagram or Facebook of your Hoja de Menta look in front of the shop's mural with the tag [#hojade-menta](https://www.instagram.com/hojade-menta).



COURTESY PHOTO

Hoja de Menta



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

The mural at Meltz

ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

mentashop. The person with the most creative picture will be announced at 5 p.m. Nov. 5, entitling them to a mystery gift card.

On **Black Friday, Nov. 25**, shoppers are invited to spin the wheel for prizes and special promotions.

AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

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

- Thursday, Oct. 20**
Women's Soccer vs. Southeastern, 1 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 21**
Hall of Fame Dinner, 5:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Oct. 22 (Homecoming)**
Cross Country Ave Maria Invitational, 7:40 a.m.
Football vs. St. Thomas, 7 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 28**
Volleyball vs. Florida College, 5 p.m.
Men's Basketball vs. Trinity Baptist, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Oct. 29**
Men's Soccer vs. SCAD, 12 p.m.
Volleyball vs. Coastal Georgia, 2 p.m.
- Wednesday, Nov. 2**
Volleyball vs. Keiser, 7 p.m.
- Saturday, Nov. 5**
Volleyball vs. Florida Memorial, 7 p.m.
- Saturday, Nov. 12**
Swimming vs. St. Thomas, 11 a.m.
Men's Basketball vs. Southeastern, 4 p.m.
Football vs. Warner, 7 p.m.
- Thursday, Nov. 17**
Men's Basketball vs. St. Thomas, 8:15 p.m.
- Saturday, Nov. 19**
Men's Basketball vs. Coastal Georgia, 4 p.m.
- Monday, Nov. 21**
Men's Basketball vs. Kansas Christian, 8 p.m.

■ AVE MARIA RESIDENTS ONLY

Organizers request preregistration for these resident-only events via the Ave Maria Master Association (AMMA) calendar at www.avemariamasterassociation.com. For more information, call 239-867-4322.

Ave Maria Stewardship Community District (AMSCD) Meetings

Monthly AMSCD meetings are open to the public at 9 a.m. the first Tuesday of every month in the AMMA meeting room. The next two meetings are Nov. 1 and Dec. 6.

Coffee with a Twiss

This casual gathering with AMMA Executive Director Kim Twiss allows homeowners to ask questions and get updates pertaining to the master association and community news. Upcoming meeting in the AMMA meeting room is Dec. 8 at 10 a.m.

New Homeowners Social and Orientation

New Ave Maria homeowners are invited to a social and informational event Thursday, Oct. 27, in the AMMA meeting room. The event begins with a 5:15 p.m. meet-and-greet, featuring tasty treats by Amazing Grazing, followed by a presentation by the master association at 6 p.m. Participants will receive a wealth of helpful information about living in this community and the various organizations operating in Ave Maria.

Blue Zone Programming

Ave Maria is a Blue Zones Project community. Visit southwestflorida.bluezoneproject.com to learn more and to take the RealAge test, which helps you track your habits and set goals for a longer and better life.



ANNALEE HULL / AVE MARIA SUN

Hometown Christmas

Teens Spooky Social

On Friday, Oct. 28, at 7 p.m., Ave Maria teenagers 14 and older are invited to meet other kids their age at a fun, Halloween-themed social in the AMMA events room, featuring a costume contest, snacks, music, activities and a photo booth.

Adult Games Group

Adults looking for a friendly game of cards (Skip-Bo, Sequence and others) or Mexican Train (dominoes) are welcome to join the group from 1-4 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays in the AMMA card room.

AMMA Annual and Budget Meeting

All Ave Maria homeowners are invited to attend this master association meeting on Monday, Nov. 7, at 6 p.m. in the AMMA community room. For more information, contact Kim Twiss at 239-867-4322.

Veterans Day Appreciation

In honor of Veterans Day, Friday, Nov. 11, Ave Maria residents are invited to show their support for the heroic men and women that so honor-

ably served our country by joining a flag folding ceremony on the Ave Maria University lawn at 11:11 a.m., followed by an appreciation gathering with light refreshments and an American flag pin presentation from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in the AMMA community room. Veterans are asked to RSVP on the AMMA website calendar.

Music in the Park

Prepare to dance in the grass at South Park's amphitheater from 12:30-4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 13. Performing high-energy popular music, 41 South Band will take the stage at 1 p.m. Residents can either bring chairs and blankets to enjoy the concert on the lawn or watch the show from the comfort of their golf carts in the grass parking area close to the stage. (Registration is required for golf cart parking.) The Kids' Corner will offer supervised games and activities. Food trucks will serve lunch, snacks and desserts. A range of crafty vendor booths will also be on hand for early holiday shopping. Admission is free. Visit the AMMA online calendar for updated details.

Resin Art Class

Explore the creative possibilities using resin in this popular, hands-on class from 6-8 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 17, in the AMMA lobby. The \$65 fee includes all needed supplies and guidance to make a 10-by-12-inch picture-framed creation. No artistic skills are required.

Hometown Christmas

To kick off the holiday season, join your neighbors for Ave Maria's largest celebration of the year from 5-9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 2, in the Town Center, featuring live musical acts throughout the circle and on a central stage; a shopping area with local vendors and crafters; and inflatable rides for the kids, including a giant slide, a Ferris wheel and an ice-skating rink. The parade begins at 6 p.m. with school marching bands, decorated golf carts and a special appearance by Santa Claus himself. Families are invited to take pictures with St. Nick until 7:30 p.m. Admission is free.

SPORTS AND FITNESS (RESIDENTS ONLY)

Swim Lessons

The Ave Maria Water Park offers an eight-lesson program sanctioned by the American Red Cross that teaches kids how to swim and be safe in the water. The 45-minute lessons are priced at \$65 and grouped by age: water babies (6 months to 3 years old), preschoolers (3-5 years old) and youth (6-12 years old). Families must register in person at the water park. For more information, call 239-348-8384 or email kellie.powell@fsresidential.com.

Water Exercise Classes

The Ave Maria Water Park offers one-hour morning classes alternating between aerobics, muscle toning routines and aqua Pilates Monday-Saturday at 9 a.m. Residents aged 13 and above are welcome. Cost is \$5 per class or \$65 for 20 classes. All equipment is provided, including resistance gloves, noodles, pool buoys and barbells. For more information, call 239-348-8384 or email kellie.powell@fsresidential.com.

Softball at South Park

Every Saturday through February, from 7 a.m.-noon at South Park, neighbors come together for a friendly game of softball. For more information, call Natalie Coats at 252-435-7881.

Free Fitness Classes

Join fitness trainer and Ave Maria resident Nicholas Leon for free, high-energy fitness workouts at 9:30 a.m. and 6:15 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday at South Park. For more information, call 786-436-3323.

Men's Pick-up Soccer

Players 16 and older looking for a good workout and team camaraderie are welcome to join these resident-organized games at 6 p.m. every Wednesday and Sunday on soccer field No. 2 in North Park.

Quest Martial Arts Academy Classes

Led by veteran instructor Kenny Quintero, these martial arts classes at 5 p.m. every Monday and 10 a.m. every Saturday teach students discipline and self-defense techniques while they hone their focus, have fun and get fit. Classes are held in the AMMA event room. For more information, contact Kenny at 305-305-8632 or visit www.questmartialartsacademy.com. 🌟





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FUN AROUND THE TOWN

“God Bless America” parade and water park fun on Independence Day

The Ave Maria Knights of Columbus 4th Degree Assembly sponsored an all-star parade that drew a huge and patriotic crowd on the Fourth of July. Rev. David Vidal of Ave Maria Catholic Church offered prayers for the U.S.A. and blessings of the many bikes and golf carts that brought people to Town Center for the festivities. The children’s choir from the church performed, and Ave Maria resident Sgt. Dan Linton, a 27-year veteran of the New York Police Department who was a first responder on 9/11, shared his reflections on the blessings of freedom. After the parade, many in the crowd made their way to the Ave Maria Water Park for more fun. 🌞



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

FUN AROUND THE TOWN

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month



Phil and Patricia Stocton, co-owners of Meltz



The team from Meltz celebrating Ecuador: Madi Kidder, Benjie Kidder, Phil Stocton, Amanda Picado, Patricia Stocton and Lucy Stocton



The crew at Lozano's Mexican Restaurant: (back, from left) Maria Velazco, Mireya Flores, Zach Mauro and Hillary Whitembury; (front, from left) Jennifer Ramirez, Magdalena Soriano, Ariel Garcia and Jacky Fabius



Hilda Lozano and Artemio "Junior" Lozano, the owners of Lozano's Mexican Restaurant



The staff from Lozano's Mexican Restaurant



Street tacos in the making



Revelers admiring the decorated golf carts



Benny Reyna of Latin Xplosion DJs



A decked-out golf cart



Celebrating Latin Fest with friends



Patricia Palacios of Royal Palace Event Planners with some Venezuelan baked goods



June Sherman, 12, admiring her face-painted unicorn design



Jack Schaefer patiently waiting for Manuela Cason to turn him into The Amazing Spider-Man



Hoja de Menta owner Reina Torres (left) and Normy Martinez celebrate Puerto Rico.



Jack Schaefer, June Sherman and Max Schaefer



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“Top Salesman”

PENDING



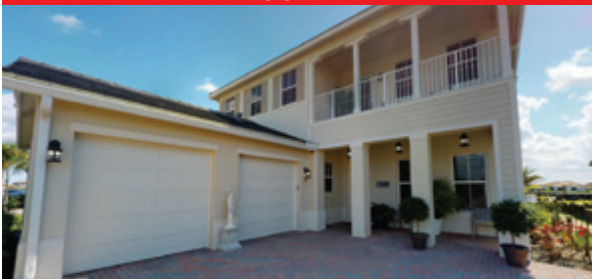
Del Webb

5863 Plymouth Place

\$614,900

MLS# 222058149

SOLD



Maple Ridge

4791 Corrado Avenue

\$743,900

MLS# 222013605

SOLD



Del Webb

6232 Harmony Drive

\$501,858

MLS# 222054811

SOLD



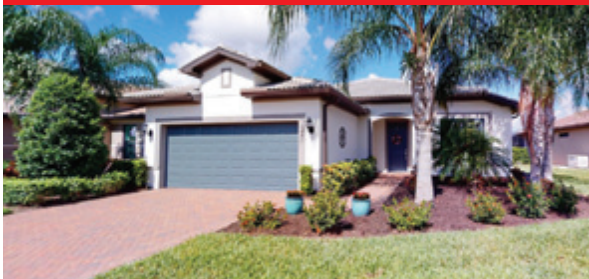
Emerson Park

4222 Nevada Street

\$430,000

MLS# 222045292

SOLD



Del Webb

6431 Rushmore Road

\$610,000

MLS# 222042956

SOLD



Del Webb

5781 Mayflower Way

\$395,200

MLS# 222041906



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