

Coming soon:
Midtown Plaza
with NCH center,
coffee and more

BY NANCY THEORET

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The brand that America runs on, Maryland-style pizza and an immediate care center from a major Collier County health care provider are coming to a new 21,000-square-foot neighborhood commercial and medical plaza in Ave Maria. Construction has started on Midtown Plaza, centrally located on Ave Maria Boulevard and Anthem Parkway, just south of the Mobil gas station, with completion expected in the first quarter of 2024.

“Businesses want to be here,” says Cee Cee Marinelli, Barron Collier Companies director of development for Ave Maria. “Ave Maria has 11,000 homeowners and college students, and we’ve reached the point of critical mass for substantial commercial activity. These are exciting times and a sign of what’s to come.”

Midtown Plaza is nearly fully leased with town newcomers Dunkin’ (formerly Dunkin Donuts), Ledo Pizza and NCH Healthcare System already committed.

“NCH coming to Ave Maria is major,” Ms. Marinelli says. “It’s the beginning of a long-term partnership and NCH’s commitment to expanding services to the ever-expanding eastern Collier County.”

Rated among America’s top 100 hospitals, the not-for-profit Naples-based NCH brings health care close to home at Midtown Plaza. Staffed by board-certified emergency physicians, physician assistants and nurses, the 6,000-square-foot immediate care center will treat minor cuts, colds and infections and offer extended hours seven days a week.

“We’ve been working with Barron Col-

SEE MIDTOWN, A23 ►

“Businesses want to be here. Ave Maria has 11,000 homeowners and college students, and we’ve reached the point of critical mass for substantial commercial activity. These are exciting times and a sign of what’s to come.”

— Cee Cee Marinelli

Barron Collier Companies
director of development
for Ave Maria

HOMETOWN ROCK STARS

Back Country Boys are proving they’re anything but hayseeds



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

EVEN SMALL TOWNS have celebrities, and in Ave Maria, the Back Country Boys are famous. Performing together for only two years, Mike Joyce, Colton Pointz, Brayden Reites and Matt Byrne are in high demand with steady gigs, a growing portfolio of

private engagements and avid fans who stop them on the street to sing their praises. A passionate commitment to craft (and friendship) drives this up-and-coming country music ensemble that calls Ave Maria home. Think of them as the rock stars of tomorrow.

The first thing you notice is their youth, and then you hear their talent. Ranging in age from 17 to 23, the Back Country Boys light up the stage with thrilling renditions of Southern

SEE BOYS, A16 ►

▲
Colton Pointz,
Brayden Reites,
Mike Joyce and Matt
Byrne are the Back
Country Boys.

Fun around the town

Holiday festivities
and grand
openings for all
to enjoy.

A8, 32 and 28-29 ►



Then to now

Reflections on
how – and how
much – Ave
Maria has
grown.

A30 ►



Hometown Giving

Event brings
townspeople
together for
hurricane
relief.

A4 ►



Moving on up: Ave Maria advances in national rankings

SPECIAL TO THE AVE MARIA SUN

Two prominent national real estate consulting agencies have named Ave Maria as one of the Top 20 Master-Planned Communities in the United States, according to their annual reports. Ave Maria reported a total of 586 new home sales in 2022, placing the development as the highest-ranking community in Collier County.

RCLCO Real Estate Consulting ranks Ave Maria 18th in its annual list of Top 50 Selling Master-Planned Communities. In 2021, the town ranked 24th on the same list.

“This ongoing success should be viewed as a testament to the careful planning and investment in community place-making which Barron Collier Companies has done to set the Ave Maria community apart from its competition,” says Karl Pischke, author of the RCLCO report.

Ave Maria moves up six positions from 2021, to the No. 18 spot, on the John Burns Real Estate Consulting list.

“Ave Maria’s small-town charm and natural surroundings attract retirees as well as families,” says Lesley Deutch, managing principal with the firm. “With its large sidewalks, water park, recreational parks and retail offerings,



COURTESY PHOTOS

Above: The Ave Maria Town Center

Ave Maria offers something for all buyers, all within a community-focused master plan.”

Various housing types — from condominiums and attached villas to

single-family homes — feature lake, preserve and golf course views. More than 25 designer-furnished models are open daily, with prices ranging from the \$200,000s to the \$800,000s.

CC Homes, Del Webb Naples, Lennar and Pulte Homes are the town’s exclusive residential builders. Residents enjoy ame-

nities including soccer and baseball fields, a fitness center, amphitheater, dog parks, walking paths, bocce and tennis courts, Town Center with 50-plus businesses, a Publix Supermarket and commercial center with Mobil gas station, private schools from preschool through university, and a wide variety of free events throughout the year.

At its build out, Ave Maria will include up to 11,000 residences, and 1.8 million square feet of retail, office and business park uses in its 4,000 acres.

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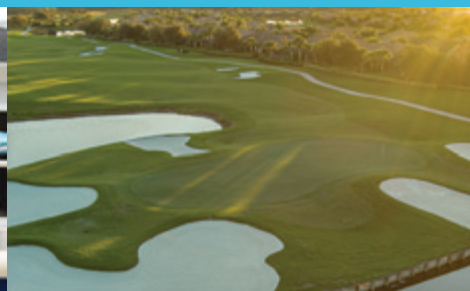
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Hometown Giving helps agencies’ hurricane relief efforts

BY CINDY PIERCE

Ave Maria Sun Editor

Less than two months after Hurricane Ian, the day before Thanksgiving became a day of giving at Ave Maria when Barron Collier Companies hosted Hometown Giving. Local merchants and restaurants welcomed residents and visitors to Town Center for an afternoon of fun, food and live music, with all proceeds benefitting the storm relief efforts of St. Matthews House and the Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida.

“It was all about community connection and reflection,” says Cee Cee Marinelli, Barron Collier Companies director of development for Ave Maria. “Everyone in the town realized how fortunate we were to have been spared the worst of Ian. We were humbled and grateful to be able to help our neighbors who were not as lucky.”

The event raised more than \$12,000.

Funds from Hometown Giving helped the Harry Chapin Food Bank provide more than 27,000 meals to area families impacted by the hurricane.

“Many people who were giving back to their community before the storm now found themselves needing help for the first time,” says Richard LeBer, president and CEO of the food bank. “We are incredibly grateful for the gift from Hometown Giving that allowed us to help them.”

Julia Szwed, director of development operations for Saint Matthews House, says Hometown Giving was a blessing to Saint Matthews House and to the people it serves. “It was a wonderful mix of faith, family and fellowship,” she says. “The vendors and the entertainment provided a dose of positivity for

all of us working to help meet the desperate need Hurricane Ian created for many in our community. We are still helping those affected by the storm and know we will be doing so for years to come.”

Many thanks to all who donated their proceeds from the day’s food and drink sales, including The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria, OASIS The Kitchen Lounge and Lozano’s Mexican Restaurant. Ave Maria businesses Oil Well Craft Beer, The Secret Ingredient, Stetlla Rose Way, Hoja de Menta

and Way Out Toys & Games also donated a portion of their proceeds. Thanks, too, to the bands Back Country



Barron Collier Companies and Ave Maria Development staff members and friends contributed to the success of Hometown Giving.



Staff from OASIS The Kitchen Lounge served refreshments.



Bill Curry, vice president of development for Saint Matthews House, addresses the crowd.

Boys and Steinbeck Way for adding to the spirit of Hometown Giving by contributing crowd-pleasing live music. 🌟

COURTESY PHOTOS



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Meet a Townmaker: Daniel Guernsey champions education at every level

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Daniel Guernsey initially wanted to be a doctor, following in the footsteps of his surgeon father. But he took a different path while in college.

“I discovered the deeper beauty of literature and philosophy,” he said. “I realized people need help in other ways besides their bodies. They need help also with their minds and their souls.”

He has spent his career in education, including almost 20 years in Ave Maria with both the Donahue Academy of Ave Maria as well as Ave Maria University.

“I love learning and I love being around people who love to learn,” he says.

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay area as the youngest of five children, he always enjoyed reading. In high school, he played football and performed with the drama club.

He earned a bachelor of arts in English from the University of San Francisco, a master of arts in English from the University of California-Berkeley, a master of arts in education from California State University, and a doctorate in education from Eastern Michigan University.

It’s no wonder he has championed education throughout his career.

Dr. Guernsey was a principal in a small Ohio town when Tom Monaghan asked him to coordinate seven K-12 schools in Ann Arbor, Mich.

He has now worked with Mr. Monaghan for 23 years, serving as the founding principal of Donahue Academy. “I wanted to make a big difference in Catholic education, and he



Dan Guernsey was one of the first people to work in Ave Maria, coming here initially to work at Ave Maria University and then becoming the founding principal of the Donahue Academy.

offered that opportunity to me,” he says.

Dr. Guernsey moved to Southwest Florida in 2004, initially to work at AMU and then to launch Donahue Academy.

“Everything was a challenge,” he laughingly recalls. “There were no stores, no people, no building. We had no guarantee — and at many times there were very few signs — that the school would succeed.”

Today, Donahue Academy thrives, with waiting lists for enrollment and the highest SATs of any in-person Catholic school in Florida. The academy is preparing a capital campaign to expand its footprint.

This might seem like an odd time to leave, but Dr. Guernsey is heading back this summer to AMU, where he has worked twice before, to start a graduate program in Catho-

lic educational leadership.

“As I leave Donahue Academy,” he says, “I have such a strong sense of satisfaction and excitement about its future. The commitment of the faculty and the strongly lived mission of the students is delightful to see.”

Donahue Academy students will continue to see — and hear — Dr. Guernsey around town. Seven years ago, he took up playing the bagpipes despite not having previously played a musical instrument.

“I always felt drawn to the bagpipes, and at age 50 I decided I had to play now or never,” he says, adding he practices and plays “around the edges of Ave Maria, so as not to disturb too many people.”

A member of the Naples-based Harp and Thistle Pipe Band, he has participated in one parade so far and will be with the group at a band competition in February.

When he’s not playing the bagpipes, he enjoys fishing, gardening and reading any genre, though he particularly enjoys historical fiction. He also spends time with his wife of 30 years, Lisa, their six children and their grandchildren. It’s all in the family at Donahue Academy, as Dr. Guernsey’s youngest daughter as well as his oldest granddaughter are both enrolled, and Lisa is one of the school’s nurses.

As one of the first people to work in Ave Maria, Dr. Guernsey has a unique perspective on the town’s founders, which include Barron Collier Companies and Mr. Monaghan.

“I have found it such an honor to be able to work with Tom Monaghan for so many years,” he says. “His drive, his vision and his faithfulness have helped the school and the town become a reality through many, many challenges — and many blessings.” 🌟

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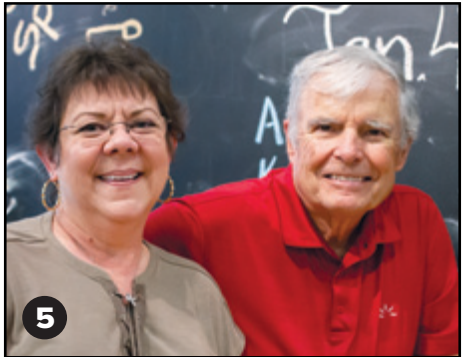


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- 7. Mike Bennett, The Bean manager
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- 9. Rich and Joanne Curley from Maple Ridge
- 10. Luisa Del Toro and Ralph Corcino



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Hometown Heroes: A day in the life of Ave Maria's fire station

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Like many children, Josh Bauer wanted to be a firefighter when he grew up.

He pursued that dream, going on ride-alongs during high school as part of the Fire Department's Explorer program, which confirmed his career aspirations.



BAUER

A headshot of Chief Bauer, a man with short brown hair, wearing a dark suit and tie. He is positioned in front of an American flag.

BAUER

“I just felt a calling to it,” says Chief Bauer, who was an Immokalee Fire Control District battalion chief until becoming the chief of administration in November 2021. “I’m very well suited for public service because I really enjoy helping people. It gives you a sense of accomplishment when you see somebody benefitting from something you did.”

Fighting fires is just one component of the job. Firefighters are trained to respond to a variety of emergencies but also help with everything from changing tires to replacing a homeowner's smoke alarm batteries.

“Thirty years ago, you called the fire department because your house was on fire. Now, we get called for everything, including fire, hazardous materials, an alligator on your front porch, a snake in your yard,” Chief Bauer says. “When the police don’t know what to do and public works doesn’t know what to do, we have to figure it out. There’s no one else to call.”

Station 32 opened in Ave Maria in June 2022, bringing faster response times, more equipment and additional personnel to the growing town.

"I remember working from 8 to 5 with one truck, one person and 250 gallons of water," says



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Testing the ladder.

Robert Mendoza, the C shift battalion chief who started with the fire district as a 15-year-old cadet in 1990 and became a full-time employee in 2002.

As the town of Ave Maria grew, the district transitioned from working in a double-wide trailer to the new complex with crews on-site 24/7. “The people of Ave Maria needed this,”

Chief Mendoza says.

The new Fire Station 32 houses four firefight-

SEE HEROES, A10 ►

An aerial night view of a city, likely San Diego, showing a harbor with many boats, a highway with traffic, and various city buildings illuminated by lights. The sky is dark with some light clouds.

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“...people don’t realize that in order for us to keep our credentials, we have to do a lot of continuing education.” — **Chief Josh Bauer**, Immokalee Fire Control District chief of administration



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

HEROES

From page 9

ers and two Collier County EMS employees, the fire chief, deputy fire chief, administrative chief, support services chief, administrative captain, a chief finance officer and an administrative assistant. There’s also space for a Collier County Sheriff’s Office alternative response unit civilian employee and CCSO road deputies.

Fire district crews work 24 hours straight and then are off for 48 hours, creating A, B and C shifts. A battalion chief oversees each shift, with a lieutenant, driver/engineer and firefighter assigned to each fire engine or ladder truck. Every morning, the crews check the trucks and equipment to ensure that vehicles are fully gassed up and everything is in working order. They note anything that needs repair.

After about an hour, they perform station duties that are assigned for specific days of the week. This can include cleaning the kitchen or the bays, waxing the trucks, washing equipment or conducting an inventory check of medical gear and station supplies.

Each day also includes physical training or exercising. Crews might work out in the gym or pull out hoses and practice with ladders. Monthly, they focus on specific tasks, such as working with extrication tools.

“Everything with this job is repetition, so they have to be familiar with the equipment because they have to use it in an almost instantaneous situation in emergencies,” Chief Bauer says.

Staff are also required to participate in continuing education programs related to both fire and EMS subjects.

“I think the public thinks we’re in the fire house sitting there playing cards and doing nothing,” says Chief Mendoza. “But people don’t realize that in order for us to keep our credentials, we have to do a lot of continuing education.”

In addition to formal classes, Chief Mendoza sometimes presents movies or documentaries that relate to fire service and can serve as a training aid.

Some days may also include station tours for school groups or the public.

After all planned activities are complete, the crew are free to spend their time however they would like. Cooking and eating are high on the list, and crews take advantage of the station’s commercial kitchen, paying for and preparing their own food.

“The fire house kitchen table serves as the hub for our teams to connect and is where all the conversations about the good, the bad and the ugly happen,” Chief Bauer says.

Chief Mendoza says the camaraderie that develops in the station and at the kitchen table not only helps the employees work together during emergencies but allows them to process the mental health strain of difficult calls or outcomes.

Fire services staff get suited up when they arrive for work and are always ready for calls, most of which are for medical situations, though the station responds to many vehicle accidents, especially during morning and evening commutes when more people are on the road driving.



Firefighter David Sexton tests the hose with the assistance of Lt. James Eidel.



Firefighter David Sexton in full gear.

As a community service, the fire department will change smoke detector batteries and light bulbs for homeowners, with Chief Bauer noting that his 6’ 7” height comes in handy for these duties.

Lately, the department has responded to many storm grates being dumped into drains. “It’s mischief by somebody who doesn’t realize the severity of the issue,” Chief Bauer says.

Chief Mendoza also notes the number of calls they receive related to carbon monoxide alarms going off when people charge their golf carts. “The batteries give off a fume when charging and it’s flammable. There was at least one fire. People need to keep an eye on those,” he cautions.

He also suggests having a carbon monoxide detector if operating a generator after a hurricane.

Chief Bauer says the new Station 32 building also serves as a community hub. “It’s a safe place



Engineer Erik Miller uses the StairMaster while wearing a weighted vest, an important skill for a fireman to master.

people know they can come to.”

And the building has room for expansion as Ave Maria and the surrounding area continues to grow. “We built the station to accommodate additional staffing and apparatus,” he says.

The fire district is always responding to the needs of the community. Chief Bauer says they purchase a new vehicle just about every year and have a new fire engine coming that will allow them to open another station on Immokalee’s west side at Carson Road.

Finances are always one of the district’s big-



Clockwise from above: Lt. James Eidel working on upper body strength. Firefighter David Sexton cooks tacos for the crew while Lt. Curtis Summeralls supervises. Returning the hoses back into the truck is a team effort.

gest challenges. “We’re still plagued by budget problems,” Chief Bauer says. “Our general fund is funded by ad valorem taxes. Half the district doesn’t pay taxes due to agriculture status, homestead exemptions or being a church, so we’re only funded at 50 percent.”

He adds they rely on impact fees but those funds can only be used for new services or construction, not for replacement.

Chief Bauer notes that the fire district can accept monetary donations, including through its personalized brick program. And the

employees always appreciate the cookies and snacks that many people bring to the fire house, he adds.

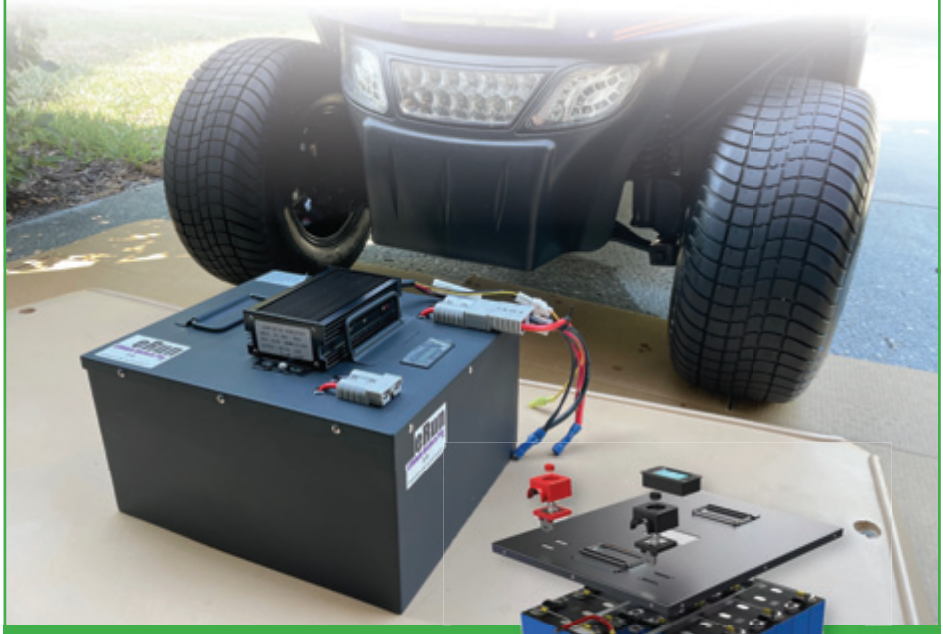
Both chiefs encourage people to pursue a career with the fire district.

“It’s a rewarding career,” Chief Mendoza says. “There are times we meet up with people we’ve saved from cardiac arrest or extricated from vehicles that weren’t expected to survive. Knowing you made a difference in somebody’s life is more rewarding than getting a paycheck.” 🌟



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

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AMU celebrates athletic achievements and expansion of majors

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Ave Maria University has added eight sports as well as several new majors and minors in the past few years as the 20-year-old school continues to grow.

“Enrollment has increased and become steady,” says Jud Cavey, the university’s director of recruitment. “We’re getting very close to having our dorms filled, which is a good problem to have.”

AMU has approximately 1,250 undergraduate students who are pursuing 33 majors and 31 minors. There are about 80 graduate students working toward a master’s or doctorate in theology, or a master’s in business administration.

This year, the school added a new major in quantitative economics. There is also a new bachelor of arts in biochemistry to complement its bachelor of science in biochemistry, with the new degree focused on the liberal arts perspective and the existing degree having a science, math and engineering perspective.

“With biochemistry, we have students doing research that appears in publications right away. At a bigger school, they’d have to wait,” Mr. Cavey points out.

Data analytics is a popular new minor, he says, and marine biology is a good fit for a school located in Southwest Florida that is surrounded by the Gulf of Mexico and the Everglades.

The university attracts students from across the country but draws mostly from Florida and Michigan. Recruitment takes place at Catholic high schools, events such as the Association of Catholic School Principals Conference, and at classical academy high schools that have a Catholic perspective.

The school also markets through social media because, Mr. Cavey notes, that’s where the students are.

A focus on faith, including offering Mass on campus and having same-sex dorms with chapels, attracts students, he says, and academics



COURTESY PHOTO

are a strong second. “We have a lot of options for students. We can prepare them to become doctors and lawyers. We have a very strong elementary education department. With our bachelor in theology, we have people becoming priests or sisters or leading youth groups.”

Potential students are also attracted to the clubs and athletics, and the school has many positive news there to highlight.

The men’s basketball team has had four straight 20-win seasons, being led by Coach Jamon Copeland. They lost last year’s championship in double overtime, coming close to the prize. “They lost by just a few points, so they had the confidence,” says Joe Patterson, vice president and director of athletics.

The majority of last year’s women’s basketball games were played by five freshmen

who returned this year. Under Coach Alex Moorhead, they got off to the team’s best start in school history.

In December, AMU held its first indoor track and field meet. “We added the new sport because we felt we could get good relatively quickly, based on the strength of our cross-country team,” Mr. Patterson says.

Coach Alan Webb, who holds the American national record in the mile with a time of 3 minutes 46.91 seconds, was an Olympian and once appeared on David Letterman’s talk show. “He’s a celebrity of sorts for us,” Mr. Patterson jokes. “He’s probably the most well-known American runner.”

Mr. Webb joined Ave Maria University last summer as coach for the cross-country, track and swim teams.

“He was attracted to the culture of the university and town,” Mr. Patterson says. “He’s wonderful to work with and has tremendous credibility when he talks about the importance of training, nutrition and recovery.”

Another new winter sport is competitive dance. The group performs at basketball and football games and will participate in an off-site championship on Saturday, Feb. 25.

The football team finished as runner-up in the conference championship. Mr. Patterson adds their 6-3 record was the team’s second-best season.

Spring sports including baseball, softball, women’s lacrosse, beach volleyball, men’s and women’s tennis, men’s and women’s golf, men’s and women’s track and field and ultimate Frisbee will start in late January.

Meet Mark Middendorf, president of Ave Maria University

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

He might be new to the role of university president, but the school and town are not new to him.

Mark Middendorf became the fourth president of Ave Maria University in February, yet his affiliation with Ave Maria dates back to the town’s establishment in 2007.

“I’m an original founder and sent two of my children to the school,” Mr. Middendorf says. “Over the years, I’ve always recommended this university to people who would ask me where they should send their son or daughter to college.”

Mr. Middendorf was born in St. Anthony, Idaho, but grew up near Chicago when his father was transferred there for work.

“My dad was born in Salt Lake City but baptized Catholic, which is unusual,” he shares. His mother was from southern Idaho, which he says is heavily Mormon, but she was also raised Catholic.

Mr. Middendorf attended Catholic grade school and high school, which he loved, but he says the religious aspect of his education didn’t have the impact that later reflection would.

“I never really understood the ‘why’ behind the ‘what’ (of Catholicism),” he says candidly.

His childhood consisted of spending time with his two siblings and playing sports, including golf, basketball, football and track. The family attended Mass every Sunday, and he considered priesthood but didn’t pursue that path.

He was educated at Northern Illinois University and holds an MBA in finance from

DePaul University.

“My aspiration was to go into business. I was always very entrepreneurial. That’s basically what I did.”

Early in his career, he worked in business-to-business marketing and management positions with Compuware, Wiremold and Westinghouse.

He also stayed in touch with college friends, playing basketball and joining a Bible study group. “We were all different religions, and everybody got to ask a question each month,” he says. “We stayed on that topic until we were all in agreement.” By reading books and listening to cassette tapes, he adds, “I really came to love my faith and fully practice it.”

This process also planted the seeds for him leaving the corporate world and starting the Lighthouse Corporate Media not-for-profit organization in 2005. Lighthouse grew to be the largest producer of Catholic audio talks in the world and distributed millions of books through its kiosks and parish-based programs.

“There are thousands of Catholic parishes in the United States, and we were in more than half of them,” he says. The company also produced CDs and books distributed in English and Spanish in four other continents. He eventually merged Lighthouse Corporate Media with the Augustine Institute.

His position as Ave Maria University president combines Mr. Middendorf’s faith, his love for nonprofit work and his corporate background into an ideal job opportunity.

“I have loved this university since Tom (Monaghan) shared the idea of it. I started donating to this university way back when it was just a tomato field. I remember my youngest son was four and I thought ‘Maybe



“Over the years, I’ve always recommended this university to people who would ask me where they should send their son or daughter to college.”

— Mark Middendorf

he’ll be able to go to this university.” In fact, his son graduated from AMU in 2020 with a theology degree. Mr. Middendorf and his wife, Christine, are proud parents of four children.

Luckily for Mr. Middendorf, the university had completed a strategic plan in November 2021 that outlines 29 goals. “It’s a great play-book and path of focus,” he says. But he also did his own research, asking students for their top three concerns — which turned out to be laundry facilities, parking and food — and addressing those.

He notes that this past fall, AMU had record undergrad and graduate enrollment, record returning student enrollment, and a record of

Catholic intercollegiate student athletes.

But, he says, there is more to do. And that takes money.

“A lot of people don’t realize the cost to educate and form the students versus what we charge for tuition, room and board has a more than \$10,000 gap. We are blessed with a lot of benefactors, but it would really help us if people join the monthly giving society. What strengthens the university also strengthens the town.”

In his free time, Mr. Middendorf enjoys reading, spending time with his family, tennis, golf, backpacking and scuba diving. Now that he lives near the pickleball capital of the world, he looks forward to trying that sport. 🍌

“Our football games have seating for 1,000 but had more than 2,000 people at each game, with half the fans standing for the entirety of the game.”

— Joe Patterson, vice president and director of athletics



COURTESY PHOTO

While this is a broad array of sports, Mr. Patterson says teams fill up quickly. “We’ve been at capacity this year and last year. About 50% of our students participate in intercollegiate athletics.”

As the town grows and the university’s teams continue performing well, more people are attending games.

“Our football games have seating for 1,000 but had more than 2,000 people at each game, with half the fans standing for the entirety of the game,” Mr. Patterson says. “We’ve had to turn people away from our home basketball games based on reaching the capacity of the gymnasium. We’re very pleased with the sup-

port.”

That support includes an active booster club that raises funds for the athletics program.

“Donations are key to our institution’s flourishing,” he says. Booster donations helped build a new locker room facility that just opened, paid for a new sound system at the sports fields and will support construction of a new field house.

The benefits go beyond the financial.

“The boosters help with the ambiance of the games in that there’s a consistent tailgating culture,” Mr. Patterson says. “It’s really neat to have boosters, parents and students there.” 🌻

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Calendar of Events

SPECIAL EVENTS

JANUARY 28
Taste of Ave - Debut Event

FEBRUARY 3 & MARCH 3
Family Fun First Fridays

FEBRUARY 4
Arts & Crafts Festival

FEBRUARY 18
Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival

MARCH 18
Margarita & Taco Festival

ONGOING EVENTS

TROLLEY TOURS
Tuesdays January thru April from 11am – 2pm

LIVE MUSIC
Tuesdays & Saturdays from 11am – 2pm
in the Town Center

FARMERS MARKET
Every Saturday from 9am – 2pm
in the Town Center

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

FUN AROUND THE TOWN

Jazz Night 2022 at the Ave Maria Town Center



- 1. Josh and Lisa Canning at Stella Rose Way
- 2. Visiting from Pittsburgh, John and Judy Domit wait for their order at The Bean of Ave Maria
- 3. Sisters Evelyn and Rose Canning
- 4. Katie Stella with her daughter Lily and Joshua Snyder
- 5. Marcelino Roxas at Way Out Toys
- 6. Glenn Dove of the Steinbeck Way band
- 7. Danee Williams, owner of The Secret Ingredient, and Mike Maxfield, who lives in Del Webb
- 8. Michael Jaenvega, co-owner of OASIS The Kitchen Lounge
- 9. Estero residents Michael Phillips and David Beal
- 10. Bellera Walk residents Ron Gobeil and Bob Pike
- 11. Snowbirds Marshall and Kathy Short, who just closed on a house in Del Webb
- 12. Ray and David Arsenault live in a condo over The Pub & Grill, right in the Town Center
- 13. Maple Ridge residents Jay and Pamela Dubin
- 14. Matt Martel and the Desanges family from Silverwood at Maple Ridge
- 15. Quinceañera Jalayni Erebia and her friend
- 16. Best of friends, Maria Gobeil and Marlo Hower

BUILDER SPOTLIGHT



The Whitestone

COURTESY PHOTOS

Pulte Homes’ Avalon Park appeals to multigenerational buyers

BY Nanci Theoret

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Avalon Park checks off the list of must-have features homebuyers envision for their new home and Ave Maria lifestyle: a close-to-everything location, a variety of floor plans and the reputation and 70-year history of national builder Pulte Homes. They’re also drawn in by the town’s quaint small-town charm and the unexpected — kids hanging out in the Town Center at Ave Maria, a novelty in modern times.

“Avalon Park is the closest neighborhood to Town Center and is within walking distance of the school, the church, North Park and the waterpark,” says Pulte sales consultant Troy White. “The community appeals to a mix of homeowners, from retirees to families. Kids can walk to school and ride their bikes downtown.”

Pedestrian travel is the preferred mode of transportation for many Avalon Park residents who arrive within minutes to the downtown area’s burgeoning dining and restaurant scene, boutiques, businesses and community facilities including meeting spaces, a park and a fitness center nestled along the oval of its main street, Annunciation Circle, with the church in the center. The Publix-anchored retail shops are just another block away.

Designed with 400 lakefront homesites and pocket parks, Avalon Park envelops the campus of Rhodora J. Donahue Academy, a private Roman Catholic K-12 school and Southwest Florida’s highest-scoring 2022 SAT school. The neighborhood is about 50% sold and has low HOA fees that cover lawn-care and landscaping. A private playground — larger than the one at North Park — is under construction.

Multigenerational buyers in Avalon Park have a choice of 11 single-family floor plans to meet their needs, starting from three bedrooms with 1,660 square feet and going



The Roseland

to two-story homes offering up to seven bedrooms and 5,360 square feet. The Roseland, a popular floor plan of this premier builder, highlights many of the structural options Pulte incorporates into its flexible floor plans: a wine cave, a spacious owner’s suite and a versatile game room that can also be configured as a multi-gen suite. In addition to the Roseland, Pulte has models of its 1,890-square-foot Mystique floor plan and the four-bedroom, two-story Whites-

tone with nearly 2,900 square feet.

Fences are permitted in Avalon Park, where homesites have room for a pool.

And for those who favor instant gratification over patience, Pulte offers several completed and soon-to-be-completed homes available for immediate occupancy and quick move-in through March and April.

New-construction homes in Avalon Park feature impact-rated glass doors and windows and are backed by Pulte’s industry-lead-

ing warranty, the strongest in Ave Maria, covering 10 years on structural integrity, five years for water infiltration and internal leaks, two years on appliances, plumbing, electrical, HVAC and other mechanical, and one year for the workmanship of the home.

“Homebuyers appreciate Pulte’s quality construction, higher standards of features and our substantially longer warranty period,” Mr. White says. “It gives them peace of mind.” 🌟

BOYS

From page 1

Rock standards like Van Morrison’s “Brown Eyed Girl” and the Eagles’ “Hotel California,” while also surprising audiences with original tunes that tug at the heartstrings. Nashville beckons, where they hope to connect with record producers and commercialize their signature sound. Bigger spotlights, national stages — it’s all ahead of them.

Every Sunday, you can catch the boys at Celebration Park in Naples. From time to time they play at the Crabby Lady in Goodland, Seed to Table Beer Bar in North Naples, Boardroom Tavern on Marco Island and several hotspots in St. Petersburg. Through word-of-mouth and social media marketing, these enterprising musicians have even expanded their reach to include private performances for weddings, corporate events and other social functions.

At the moment, they’ve got all the work they can handle.

A highlight for the group came last spring when they opened for the Eli Young Band at The Ranch Concert Hall & Saloon in Fort Myers, to an audience of about 2,000. Two months later, they performed four concerts in four days in Chicago.

But make no mistake: Ave Maria is where their heart is.

Three band members live here with their families. Their first professional appearances in 2020 occurred at The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria, owned by Kevin and Krista Joyce, parents of the band’s front man. These young country rockers have energized local crowds on the Ave Maria University campus, at Donahue Academy’s Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off and most recently at Ave Maria Development’s Jazz Night and Hometown Giving events in the Town Center. Three-quarters of the band’s repertoire is comprised of covers, and the rest are original songs written primarily by Mr. Pointz and Mr. Joyce. Most of the covers are country



Keyboardist and background singer Colton Pointz during a gig at Celebration Park in Naples.

music from the 1970s to today, with some rock ’n’ roll and a few pop songs to keep things interesting.

The band’s rising success is not serendipitous. These young men take their art seriously, meeting weekly to practice, develop original songs and learn new covers.

“There’s something about playing in a group that’s just really fun,” Mr. Pointz notes. “We each have our individual talents, but there’s something special about when we’re together; it creates a magic that you can’t replicate whenever we’re by ourselves.”

Mr. Joyce, 20, delivers powerhouse lead vocals, reliable guitar chords and tons of soul. He’s been singing and playing guitar since grade school at Donahue Academy, where he competed in talent shows. “I love being in this band, and that’s the only thing I have or want,” he says, highlighting his intention to make music a full-time career. He

inspires his bandmates with three passions: country music, family and faith.

Drawing from musical heroes like Jerry Lee Lewis, Fats Domino and Ray Charles, Mr. Pointz, 23, spices things up with vibrant complexity and flair on the keyboard. He is also the band’s lead songwriter and back-up vocalist. Before moving to Ave Maria in 2018, he lived in Cochranton, Penn., and attended a performing arts high school where he participated in Broadway productions of shows including “Mary Poppins” and “Brigadoon.”

In high school, he learned intricate chords on the piano. As he tackles songwriting for the Back Country Boys, he’s taking a studious approach to creating a country music sound that uniquely defines the band.

“When I was still learning country music, I listened to Luke Combs’ songs for like six months and tried my best to ingrain what

country music is. He has a lot of clever titles, clever lines and hits upon hits, so I based a couple of my first songs from some of his work.

“Country music is very simply constructed,” he adds. “I want to find a way to add more chords and make it more complicated without doing too much.”

Drummer Brayden Reites, 17, was born and raised in Naples, where he is a senior at St. John Newman High School. His father, Sherrad Reites, has been a drummer with the classic rock band Old School and the country music band Fakahatchee, which toured the South and opened for acts including Reba McEntire and Toby Keith. “I was put behind the drum set at a very young age, and I loved it,” the younger Mr. Reites says. “My dad taught me the basics, and I went out on my own after that.”

Unequivocally committed to the Back Country Boys, he notes that the plan for the band “is to keep on playing and continue gaining exposure and hopefully seeing a clearer path by next summer. We want to branch out and perform across the state, finding new audiences and just seeing what the next chapter brings.”

Mr. Byrne, 19, on bass guitar and back-up vocals, was born in Suffern, N.Y., and moved to Ave Maria with his family in 2014. He graduated from Donahue Academy in 2021 and now attends Hillsdale College in Michigan, playing with the Back Country Boys whenever he’s in town during breaks. A gifted multi-instrumentalist, he taught himself to play the drums, piano and guitar, in addition to bass. “I’m definitely not cut out for an office job, so if I can find a way to do music full-time, or even part-time and just do something else to make ends meet, I’d like to make that happen,” he says.

“We’re at a point where we really enjoy being around each other,” Mr. Joyce says. “It’s like being on any sort of sports team. You’re united as one. You all have individual roles that you play to make one team, one family and one band.” 🌟

— For more information or to book a gig, visit www.backcountryboysband.com.



Drummer Brayden Reites, lead singer and guitarist Mike Joyce and bass player Matt Byrne at Celebration Park.

SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

AVE MARIA COMMUNITIES

WINTER 2023

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| A17



AVALON PARK

About the community

From the \$400,000s - \$1,000,000+

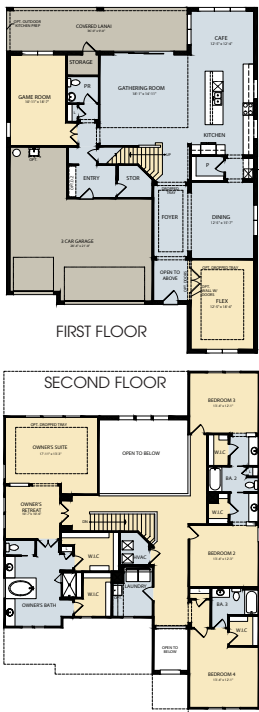
It's easy to stay active and have family fun at Avalon Park. Located within walking or biking distance to downtown Ave Maria, Avalon Park attracts families looking for exceptional schools, close proximity to neighborhood parks, and plenty of living space. Avalon Park offers spacious homesites, unique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

one- and two-story single-family homes that combine Pulte Homes' signature quality construction and personalized design opportunities. With home designs including up to seven bedrooms and 6½ bathrooms in 5,000-plus square feet of living space, you are sure to find your dream new home to fit your family's needs now and in the future.



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

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



Roseland

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- 3½ to six bathrooms
- Three-car garage

Avalon Park at Ave Maria
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Del Webb[®]
NAPLES

About the community

From the \$300,000s - \$1,000,000+

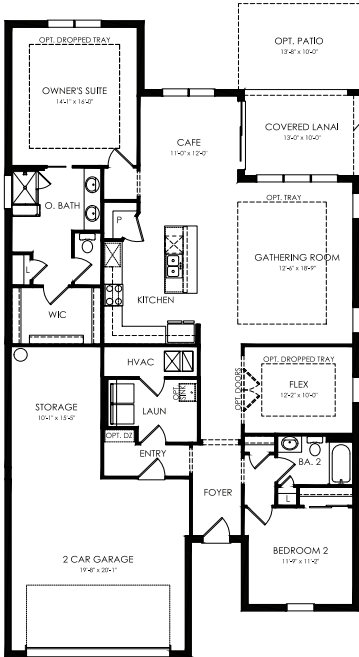
Del Webb Naples brings premier resort-style amenities and a lifestyle nothing short of extraordinary to Ave Maria. Here, daily possibilities for new adventures await. Where every day is different – and entirely up to you. From a dip in the pool to a friendly game of pickleball, in Del Webb Naples you’ll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

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Mystique

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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.

New contemporary homes available now at Maple Ridge. Tour new models today.



Starting from the low \$400,000s

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

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



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- Ground floor owners suite
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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 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.



Select homesites available. Inquire today!

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

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



Huntington

- Model home is now open for viewing.
- 1,630 a/c square feet
 - Three bedrooms
 - Two bathrooms
 - His and hers walk-in closets in master bedroom
 - One-car garage

Maple Ridge
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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

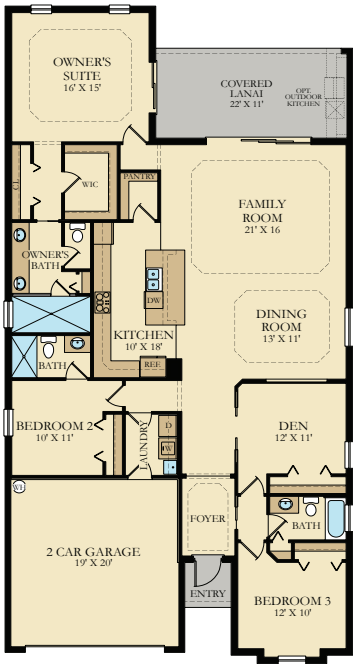
feature its own clubhouse with a pro shop, formal and casual dining, a resort-style pool and spa, fitness center with yoga/aerobics room, spa treatment rooms and beauty salon. Active residents can take advantage of Har-Tru tennis courts, pickle and bocce ball, a putting green, chipping area, and a driving 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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Maria

- Starting from the \$500,000s
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- Three bathrooms

The National Golf & Country Club
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888-214-1476 | www.TheNational-AveMaria.com

Medical practices, indoor marketplace and more businesses popping up in town

BY Nanci Theoret

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Residents will tell you Ave Maria reminds them of the town they grew up in, that it evokes a return to small-town America and a time when downtown and local businesses were at the heart of the community and the center of childhood memories. Before folks and businesses began a mass exodus to the suburbs and regional shopping malls half a century ago, downtown was the place to buy groceries, enjoy local restaurants, play in a park, meet friends and newcomers and even catch up on the latest gossip.

With its tree-shaded sidewalks, picturesque dining patios and green spaces, Town Center at Ave Maria harkens back to small-town values and a homespun ambiance where holidays are celebrated with parades and festivals, booths and barbecues and the everyday charm of local boutiques, restaurants and town doctors, which all create a sense of community. Folks even live in downtown, enjoying the vantage points from second- and third-floor condos.

Town Center, the Publix retail shops and planned commercial buildings not only fill the needs of the growing town, they're also one of the main commercial and retail centers in fast-growing eastern Collier County.

And Ave Maria continues to welcome new retailers, restaurants, medical and professional offices, many of them local, often resident-owned, single-proprietor and single-location ventures. Others have a national presence, privately owned by entrepreneurs who are moving full time to Ave Maria.

Each newcomer enhances the town's appeal, lending their personalities to creative, insightful and innovative concepts — from an indoor market to concierge health and wellness clinics and physicians eager to be part of a community.



COURTESY RENDERINGS

Above and below: Renderings give an idea of what Mercato at Ave in the Publix plaza will look like.

To market, to market

Reina Del Mar and Jorge Arroyo, the visionaries behind Ave Maria's Hoja de Menta clothing boutique and the stylish look of OASIS The Kitchen Lounge's plant-draped dining room, have unveiled plans for Mercato at Ave, an imaginative indoor marketplace elevating the shop-local trend to another level. Featuring a country chic vibe with indoor and alfresco lounge areas and colorful walls perfect for selfies, the 2,660-square-foot space in the Publix retail shops will support a curated collection of 20 or more local vendors, host local events and entertainment, and offer a boutique café serving coffee, wine, beer, small plates and empanadas highlighting the different flavors of Colombia, Argentina and other countries.

Designed to promote small business and economic growth, Mercato at Ave will provide a year-round physical retail presence for mom-and-pop shops selling unique handmade merchandise — everything from candles and clothing to plants and pottery, soap, jewelry and golf accessories. It will also give residents more shopping options as well as a

space for real estate and travel agents, event planners and other professional services. More than 200 potential merchants, most of them local, have expressed interest.

"The marketplace gives small businesses the opportunity to sell their products, grow with the community and support each other," Mr. Arroyo says. "It's a unique concept for businesses and will be a destination for everyone with a family friendly, all-seasons environment that's fun and exciting."

Akin to a farmers market but without the produce, Mercato at Ave will also have an indoor playground and free Wi-Fi.

A new doctor in town

Ana Garcia-Iguaran, an obstetrician and gynecologist, left the big city bustle of the Miami area to open the Mater Dei Clinic, a full-time gynecological practice in Ave Maria's former Braden Clinic.

"What was most important to me was the opportunity to be part of a small-town health program and provide care to patients who otherwise wouldn't have it," Dr. Garcia-Iguaran says. "I wanted to connect with people and become part of the daily life."

"In an urban setting it's all about productivity, how many patients you see. After 15 years, I felt stifled. I wanted to have the ability to spend as much time with a patient as needed because it makes a difference in their health and in their lives."

Dr. Garcia-Iguaran learned about Ave Maria from her patients, a growing number of who were driving from Ave Maria to her Pembroke Pines office. The town's Catholic values appealed to her, and after visiting, she realized she could make a meaningful difference in a small-town practice. Since opening Mater Dei in November, the roles are now reversed and Dr. Iguaran is the commuter.

"I realized the community was so close and had more diverse needs," she says. "We are excited to be here, and patients are thankful for new opportunities for health care."

Mater Dei provides gynecological care

for women of all ages and natural family planning. While her mission-driven emphasis and bedside manner are a welcomed throwback to old-school medical care, Dr. Garcia-Iguaran incorporates the latest technologies in her practice, including NaPro Technology for monitoring and maintaining a woman's reproductive and gynecological health.

With Mater Dei, she sees potential for additional specialists and services, including obstetrics should she eventually become a town resident.

"I see the clinic as a long-term commitment and the opportunity to become a hub for health care in and around town," she says. "The Catholic understanding of health care is one of the reasons I came here. It focuses more on the whole-person, not just the physical, and is a different approach to health and disease from what the mainstream program is in America now."

Healing from the inside out

Cadenza Wellness in Town Center offers a comprehensive approach to health and wellness. Founded by internist Raul Enad, the concierge medical clinic is part medi-spa and fountain of youth, offering traditional aesthetic services complemented by regenerative treatments that not only help patients look younger but relieve joint and muscular pain caused by inflammation.

The spa menu includes Botox and Dysport, three-phase facials, lip rejuvenation and nonsurgical facelifts using PDO threading. The science side combines principles of internal, functional and regenerative medicine for healing from within.

"I approach illness and wellness with a deep dive to the cellular level," says Dr. Enad. "I consider metabolic health as the key factor to containing inflammation of the body, which is the key to health and wellness; inflammation causes aging and disease. I offer regenerative medicine applications for aesthetics, skincare and common rheumatologic conditions like joint pain from arthritis, bursitis, tendinitis and myofascial pain."

Sleep deprivation along with mental and physical stress — all prevalent in modern lifestyles — also impact overall wellness, as Dr. Enad discovered during a personal life-changing experience. Supraventricular tachycardia elevated his heart rate to 220 beats a minute, caused lightheadedness, palpitations and chest pain. As a result, he started exploring functional and regenerative medicine.

His practice conducts in-depth testing that leads to individualized treatment plans that might include platelet-rich plasma therapy packed with growth factors and anti-inflammatory properties, IV vitamins to boost immune function and target oxygen radicals, and Christian-based meditation to calm the sympathetic nervous system. 🌻



More than two dozen vendors are expected to set up booths in Mercato at Ave.

New executive suites in Town Center welcome a diverse tenant lineup

All but one of Town Center's six new executive suites were leased quickly by medical and business professionals, including a membership-based pediatrician and chiropractors who make house calls. The 66- to 144-square-foot suites, located above the center's restaurants and boutiques, are also the new global headquarters of a company making a major impact in stadiums and arenas throughout the country, an online tax preparer and the first American outpost for a Canadian firm specializing in kitchen design software.

The suites offer kitchenettes, share a communal kitchen and multiple waiting areas and have 24-hour access.

"There's so much demand," says Donna Marquez, events coordinator and community representative for Ave Maria who helped

with the leases. "Some of the suites were leased to folks building homes here and professionals who have been working from home and wanted quiet space away from the kids."

■ **America's Tax Online Services:** The 17-year-old company relocates with owner Wilson Rodrigues Jr., a new Ave Maria resident, providing online-only tax prep, bookkeeping for small businesses and business incorporation services to more than 30,000 clients throughout the U.S. – Suite 210; www.america-tax.com; 800-590-9618

■ **Bin Box Lockers:** The Orlando Magic, Miami Heat and major stadiums are installing these mobile and permanent lockers to the joy of sports fans everywhere who no longer have to face the dreaded walk of shame back to the car with an oversized bag.

Bin Box Locker founder and owner Dan Flynn and CFO Tim Barone are residents of Ave Maria. – Suite 234; www.binboxlockers.com

■ **Cienapps:** The Quebec-based software developer creates time-saving, design-forward programs exclusive to the needs of mom-and-pop cabinetmakers. President Frederic Pare, a future full-time Ave Maria resident, says the company has been looking to expand into the American market. – Suite 236; www.cienapps.com; 450-323-1003

■ **Little Flower Pediatrics:** Pediatrician Emily Walkey left an insurance-driven, payment-centered practice to establish this direct primary care clinic offering memberships based on patient age. Monthly fees — from \$50 for one child to \$250 for a family — cover annual visits, school and sports

physicals, well baby and child exams and unlimited sick visits for newborns to students attending Ave Maria University. Plus, parents can call or text Dr. Walkey directly. – Suite 239; www.littleflowerpediatrics.com; 239-291-4210.

■ **Chiropractic Home Services:** Chiropractors Duane and Stephanie Olson provide at-home concierge care for patients dealing with back and neck pain, sports and head injuries, Parkinson's disease, dizziness and strokes. The married couple have more than 20 collective years' experience in pain relief, sports injury rehab and family wellness care. – Suites 230-232; www.chirohomeservice.com; 239-990-7068 🌻

— For more information about businesses in Ave Maria, visit www.avemaria.com/community/dining-shops-services.



COURTESY RENDERING

A Dunkin’ with patio seating and a drive-thru will anchor the left side of the new plazz.

MIDTOWN

From page 1

lier Companies for two years since they expressed to us that Ave Maria residents were very interested in access to health care,” says Jack Ullrich, executive director of NCH’s corporate real estate and construction division. “Eastern Collier County is expected to experience rapid growth in the next few years.”

The NCH center is expected to open in spring 2024 and will also offer primary care physicians for all ages and basic lab services. “As we grow, we’ll define what the community needs, whether it’s providing cardiology or pediatrics for families,” says Margaret Dimond, chief administrative officer of NCH Physician Group.

Dunkin’, which serves more than 3 million daily customers, will offer a drive-thru, its beloved coffee and a full menu.

Ledo Pizza introduces Southwest Florida to a 68-year-old Maryland tradition with the arrival of its first Florida location and Ave

Maria’s newest residents, franchise owners Scott and Colleen Taggert. The company is known for its roll-to-order rectangular pies, pasta dishes, subs and family atmosphere.

“We are excited to move to Ave Maria and open a new pizzeria in town. We know the town is growing and we want to grow with it,” Mr. Taggert says. “One of my main goals is to continue giving back to my community and providing leadership opportunities to youth wanting to be in this type of business.”

With end-of-year 2022 home sales propelling Ave Maria to No. 18 on the list of the fastest-selling communities in the U.S., more

national brands and locally owned businesses are focusing on expansion in Southwest Florida’s fastest growing community.

“Ave Maria is just shy of 4,100 homes, which has led to significant interest in new businesses and services wanting to locate within the community,” says Ms. Marinelli. “To complement the continued residential growth, we look forward to providing more services to Ave Maria and the surrounding communities.”

Additional commercial and office space is available in Midtown Plaza. 🌟

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“We feel that it is the responsibility of parents to be the main educators of their child not only spiritually but also academically.”

— Timothy Pigg, Lead Pastor at Fellowship Church



Secondary students on a class trip to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

COURTESY PHOTOS

K-12 Fellowship Academy offers in-person and home-based instruction



Secondary students on a class trip to the new safety complex in Ave Maria.

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Armando Yzaguirre was executive pastor at Fellowship Church, which has locations in Ave Maria and Immokalee, when his son was about to enter high school. In April 2019, Mr. Yzaguirre approached Lead Pastor Timothy Pigg to ask about alternatives to public high school.

Mr. Pigg mentioned Florida Virtual School and Liberty University Online Academy, but then began to think that Fellowship Church could offer this type of program. Just four months later, Fellowship Academy launched.

“We move fairly quickly when an idea comes and we think that’s the direction the Lord wants us to go,” Mr. Pigg says.

Fellowship Church opened in Ave Maria in 2017 as a campus of First Baptist Church Immokalee, which was established in Immokalee in 1916.

Fellowship Academy is a hybrid home-based and in-person educational program for grades K-12 that emphasizes the role parents play in teaching their children.

“We feel that it is the responsibility of parents to be the main educators of their child not only spiritually but also academically,” Mr. Pigg explains. “The main idea of Fellowship Academy is to put back into the hands of parents the authority of disciplining their child.”

Forty students from Ave Maria, Immokalee and Naples attend classes at Fellowship Church’s Ave Maria campus from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. four days a week. Mr. Pigg explains that these hours were selected to give parents more time to invest in their children.



Sisters Elisha and Naomi sell their homemade dog treats at the Biz Kids Expo.



5th grader Layne (10) helps 1st grader Selah (6) with writing in her notebook.



Timothy Pigg leads students in Bible reading during the monthly chapel session.

“Public school has captured the mind of a child for 40 or more hours a week, and we think that time should be with the parents,” Mr. Pigg says

At the Fellowship Academy location, students gather in the primary room and the secondary room to do academic work on subjects such as math, science and language arts at their own pace under the supervision of six instructors and their success coach. The coaches work with parents to track the children’s progress and provide parents with support for home-based instruction.

Headmaster Deniece Giovinazzo won a 2019 Golden Apple teacher’s award from Champions for Learning in recognition for her work at East Naples Middle School. A Fellowship Church member, she left Collier County Public Schools to help launch Fellowship Academy. Megan Gallegos, an East Naples Middle School colleague, joined her the next year, followed by Mr. Yzaguirre, who had been a math teacher at Immokalee High School.

Mr. Pigg, his wife Jessica, and Family Pastor Jeremy Breitag also serve as instructors.

The state requires students in home-based education to demonstrate academic achievement through standardized testing or by showing their portfolio to a licensed, state-certified teacher, which Fellowship Academy instructors are.

“We wanted our faculty to maintain their certification with the state and understand the curriculum, to make sure we meet the academic benchmarks for the standards of public school,” Mr. Pigg says.

This curriculum is augmented with Fellowship Academy’s Baptist curriculum and its “History of Ideas” four-year program for high school students who study the major thinkers and philosophies of history.

“One of the concerns I had in launching Fellowship Academy was that our students be equipped to go to a public college or university having read the primary sources about evolution, Marxism, existentialism and the great books of the western world,” Mr. Pigg says. “We want students who graduate from Fellowship Academy to be equipped to go into the most challenging places and defend their faith.”

Fellowship Academy will celebrate its first graduate this May. Dallas Yzaguirre, whose father’s inquiry about alternative schools led to the academy’s founding, is planning to study journalism. 🌟

Fellowship Church and Fellowship Academy

5330 Ave Maria Blvd., Ave Maria
www.fellowshipacademy.com
239-657-2694

>> **Tuition** is \$4,000 per year plus \$500 for materials. Scholarships are available.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Fifth graders Izzy and Delaine on the class boat trip.



Layne works on his Thanksgiving diorama project.



Mrs. Giovinazzo, Delaine and Layne on the first day of school. Layne and Delaine are two of the academy’s original students, starting there as second and third graders.



The Fellowship Academy Class of 2022-23



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FUN AROUND THE TOWN

Grand opening of The Palm Preschool of Ave Maria



1. Kamden and Kinlee Wilson
2. Teachers Jaylynn Cuarezma and Nahomi Ballester
3. Cierra Bekich, director of The Palm Preschool of Ave Maria
4. A prospective family chatting with The Palm Preschool team in the classroom for 4-5 year-olds (maximum capacity is 28 kids)
5. Robbie, a prospective student
6. Nataasha Norgart, executive director, and Lanie Hill, owner
7. Luciano Spavento, 23 months

SANDRA YEVATI / AVE MARIA SUN

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FUN AROUND THE TOWN

Grand opening and ribbon cutting at Kibitz N’ Play



- 1. Co-owners Sabena Black and Shantavia Chong
- 2. Jhem Robinson and Spade Black on the mini-trampoline
- 3. Romper room fun and games
- 4. Representing the Immokalee Chamber of Commerce: Office Manager Cherryle Thomas, Secretary Barbara Melvin, Executive Director Melissa Silva and board members Jimmy Nieves and JD Ribaldi
- 5. Fred Nicholas Thomas Jr. and Daniel Melvin
- 6. Sabena Black and her son Mekhi Black
- 7. Luka Romera
- 8. Mother and daughter, both named Mirna Castillo

SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

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Then to now: How Ave Maria became A Big Kind of Small Town

BY ERICA FISH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

A Big Kind of Small Town.

The phrase has been used to describe Ave Maria in the town’s marketing materials for several years, but what does it really mean?

Ask anyone who lives or works here, and they know: It’s a place where they enjoy all the conveniences of today, but where all the intrinsic characteristics of small towns of yesteryear still thrive. Characteristics such as a community of people who know almost everyone, of kids riding their bikes to the ice cream shop down the street and playing until the streetlights turn on. Of neighborhood cookouts and families reminiscing on the front porch while the grandkids race around the yard.

That’s the beauty of A Big Kind of Small Town.

And that’s Ave Maria, the hidden gem of Southwest Florida.

To understand how Ave Maria came to be, the clock needs to be rewound to 2002 when the intersection of two remarkable visions created a groundbreaking opportunity. Domino’s Pizza founder Tom Monaghan and Barron Collier Companies then-President and CEO Paul Marinelli combined their innovative approaches to education and land planning to form their dream community, one where all ages could learn, live, work and play.

The two visionaries formed a partnership with Pulte Homes as the town’s main home-builder. And in the spring of 2006, the first shovel of dirt was turned.

To document the beginning of this new community in eastern Collier County, Joe Marinelli (no relation) of Naples Transportation and Tours was engaged to bring the first group of news reporters and photographers out to cover the announcement and groundbreaking of Ave Maria.

“For miles I drove this group through cattle fields, orange groves, tomato fields and sod farms and I kept thinking to myself, ‘Where even is this town?’” Mr. Marinelli amusingly recalls. “The only thing there was a field with massive pieces of steel stacked together, which we would later learn were materials for the church.”

A town expert

After that first media tour, Ave Maria Development decided to offer weekly tours that would let members of the public watch the progress of the town’s construction. “Every Saturday and Sunday we would show people what was coming and this dream that would soon come to be,” Mr. Marinelli says.

Now in his 18th season of conducting trolley tours in Ave Maria, Mr. Marinelli still begins every outing by sharing the town’s history. He tells people about the first families who moved here, and about the academic and athletic accomplishments of Ave Maria University. He points out the original oak trees planted in town that now dwarf saplings in front of the newest homes.

“I’ve been studying Ave Maria history since the day I was introduced to the town,” he says. “You think I could graduate with an honorary doctorate from the university?” he jokes.

“I’ve been out here for 18 years and continue remaining fascinated by the town and the people here who have created a diverse and relevant community.”

Mr. Marinelli says he originally thought the tours would be of interest for just one season. But when he soon realized how much was happening, and how quickly it was happening, he knew public interest in visiting the fledgling town would continue. “During the initial phases of construction, more than \$1 million a day was spent, with as many as 1,500 workers present each day,” he says. “That’s just unheard of.” And there was always something new to add to the tour.



COURTESY PHOTOS



The 2023 season of tours started Jan. 17. Through April 25, the trolley departs from the Town Center Welcome Center every Tuesday at 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. In addition to learning about the town’s history and its newest developments, tour-goers receive a trolley bag with swag items and coupons. (Reservations are encouraged and can be made by calling 239-352-3903.)

From ranchland to thriving town

One individual who has been around since the earliest days of Ave Maria is Brian Goguen, the CFO of Barron Collier Companies. He initially oversaw financing of the town’s infrastructure projects and served as a board member for the Ave Maria Stewardship Community District for a number of years.

“In 2004 it was just a small group of us financing and planning this project,” Mr. Goguen says. “In order to create the town of Ave Maria, we had to establish the stew-



ardship district that enabled us to build core structures of the project, like La Piazza in the Town Center.” The stewardship district, he adds, helped catalyze the building of the town.

“We owe great credit to Pulte Homes for partnering with us to build traditional homes and awaken what once was a field of dreams into a full-blown reality,” he says. “Activity breeds activity.”

There’s no better testimony to that than simply looking around at everything that’s here today: From seemingly endless ranches

Big towns bustle, small towns breathe. Big towns offer conveniences. Small towns offer connection. Big towns may have all you’re looking for, but small towns have the things you can’t see: Trust. Belonging. Neighborly bonds and quality time. Ave Maria is the best of both.

and farmland has come a town of commercial, medical and service businesses surrounded by homes, shops, restaurants, parks, playgrounds and several schools providing residents and visitors all the conveniences a mere walk away.

“During the town’s initial design process, commercial was at the forefront because you can’t begin a concept without giving it a pulse,” says Cee Cee Marinelli, Barron Collier Companies director of development for Ave Maria. “Commercial was needed to provide necessary conveniences — a grocery store, dining and shopping options, and health resources — for residents and visitors. The building of the Town Center gave Ave Maria that sought-for activation.”

Several things that were thoughtfully built during the town’s beginning made Ave Maria a definite winner, she adds. Things like parks and trails that make easy connection points among neighbors, a bustling Town Center and recreational amenities all purposefully designed to spark that person-to-person interaction.

“Kids come together, then families come together and they all form relationships.

Social components create connections for people, which was a primary goal for those who started the town.”

The quality of life people seek these days aligns with the small-town charm that was the vision of Ave Maria’s pioneers. “People are gravitating here because the town was designed to house all the staple conveniences.”

Looking ahead, she adds, “We’re on the edge of major commercial growth.”

Forward thinking

A commitment to looking ahead epitomized Ave Maria’s team of developers during the Great Recession of 2008. The town was no exception to economic downturn, and it was anybody’s guess what would become of A Big Kind of Small Town. Even in those times of uncertainty, however, the plans — and the planners — proceeded. It wasn’t until 2012, however, when progress took a significant turn once CC Homes joined the team and created Maple Ridge.

“We had great builders with a variety of products and potential for more commercial opportunities,” Mr. Goguen says. “It just took patience and willingness to proceed with this dream we had in mind for the town and for everyone who called it home.”

Willingness defined Karen Ledesma, her husband and four daughters, who were among the first 80 families to move to Ave Maria. Soon after settling in, they were given the opportunity to become one of the first businesses established in the Town Center.

“There are opportunities for everyone that go beyond just a home,” Ms. Ledesma says. Her daughter Isabelle taught dance to some neighbors’ kids, never dreaming it would lead to a popular request for the family to open a dance studio.

“We couldn’t afford something like that, but we decided to take the chance and propose the idea to Ave Maria Development,”

she says. “They convinced us that this was something the community needed. I was very blessed in the time of a bad economy to be able to create more for my family,” she adds. “I thank Cee Cee Marinelli for giving us the opportunity to make this dream come true.”

The Ave Maria Dance Academy started its first year with 35 students and currently

enrolls more than 200 dancers per season. As the town grows, so do the people who call it home.

“We chose to live here, knowing we had to use our imagination to see what would become of this place,” Ms. Ledesma says. “My family trusted more would come — and here it now is. There are families everywhere, smiles on every street corner and memories made by those who have found contentment in a town that has plenty to offer.”

Choices don’t always have predictable outcomes that stand the test of time, and it took a lot of chances and unpredictable happenings to create the town, communities and history of Ave Maria.

“We took a chance ... but now, people can see all that has gone on since its beginning. A lot more will continue to happen in Ave Maria and the communities surrounding it,” Mr. Goguen promises. “We never gave up, and we worked hard to create a strong destination of living and conveniences.” 🌟

COURTESY PHOTOS



Joe Marinelli collecting tickets from trolley passengers.



Tiny dancers at Ave Maria Dance Academy.



Mr. Marinelli behind the trolley wheel.



Mr. Marinelli welcomes riders aboard the trolley.



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On the Platform plays jazz at The Pub



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- 2. Johnny McKay, breakfast chef
- 3. Lani and Moises Diaz
- 4. The Flores family
- 5. Tony Burgos, Nic Martinez, Yolanda Burgos and Zoraida Martinez
- 6. Men's group from Grace Romanian Baptist Church, in Naples
- 7. Purisima and Dario Marvel (left) and Kathy and Mike Mayo
- 8. Maria Berniz



- 1. Jordon Henry, Keila Esther, Donald Jocelin and Isaiah Suriel
- 2. Betsy and Greg Barnes
- 3. Randy Rees of Fort Myers
- 4. John Kroemer and Debbie Kroemer
- 5. Bartenders David Curley and Mike Sepulveda
- 6. Matthew and Susan Darwin of Naples
- 7. Beebe and Ron Shapiro of Del Webb



Kathy and Rob Robinson

ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

Dates and details are subject to change. Visit www.ave maria.com and the www.ave mariamasterassociation.com calendar before venturing out and call the Welcome Center at 239-352-3903 for more information. Follow Town Center businesses on social media for updates and special promotions.

■ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC SIGNATURE EVENTS

Taste of Ave

Celebrate all that Ave Maria has to offer from 1-6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 28, in the Ave Maria Town Center. Enjoy plenty of shopping, local food, entertainment by hometown bands the Back Country Boys and Steinbeck Way and family-fun activities like face painting, Adam's Animal Encounters and the D.A.R.E. car by Immokalee Fire & Rescue and the Collier County Sheriff's Office. There will also be a raffle for prizes sponsored by the town's four premier builders and area businesses.

Arts and Crafts Festival

Original art and skilled craft work by more than 30 sculptors, painters, jewelry makers, photographers, ceramicists and other creative people will be for sale in the Ave Maria Town Center from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 4. Live music from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., a car show by Paradise Region Porsche Club and our favorite farmers market vendors will add to the festive atmosphere. Admission and parking are free.

Ave Maria Marathon

Run! Don't walk to this exciting competition from 7 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 11. Athletes at all fitness levels can choose to run the mile, 5K, 10K, half marathon or marathon. Races start and end at the Town Center, where there will also be a vendors' expo from 6 a.m.-2 p.m. For more information and registration, visit alpha.win/event/ave-maria-fl.



Blues, Brews & BBQ

Blues aficionados don't want to miss this annual festival from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18, in the Ave Maria Town Center. Bring your lawn chair, grab a cold one from the beer tent and fill your plate with barbeque from a variety of food trucks. Enjoy live performances by Little Eddie and the Fat Fingers, Deb and the Dynamics, Steve Arvey, Kelly Rucker and Biscuit Miller. Activities include a car show by the Cool Cruisers and the Bonita Corvette Club, a mechanical bull, farmers market, face painting, Adam's Animal Adventures and more. Admission and parking are free, rain or shine. No coolers, please.

Margarita & Taco Festival

Family-friendly fun abounds at this popular event from 3-6 p.m. Saturday, March 18, rain or shine, in the Town Center. Enjoy live music by West Side Tropico while eating delicious tacos and sipping margaritas. Activities include Brazilian dancers, a Cool Cruisers car show, a farmers market and face painting and Adam's Animal Adventures for the kids. Admission and parking are free.



Relaxing at the 2022 Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival. This year's event is Feb. 18.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Lipman Family Farms 5K Run/Walk

Attend the 13th Lipman Family Farms 5K run and walk on April 1 at Annunciation Circle in Ave Maria Town Center. Event proceeds benefit the annual Backpack Giveaway for the collection of essential school supplies for Immokalee students. Registration is \$30/ adults and \$25/students.

RECURRING EVENTS

Family Fun First Fridays

These free events on the first Friday of every month combine musical entertainment with family-friendly games and activities. Commemorating heart health on Feb. 3, a live musician plays from 5-7 p.m. at Oil Well Craft Beer in the Park of Commerce. The St. Patrick's-themed celebration on March 3 in the Town Center features live Irish music by West of Galway from 4-6 p.m.

Farmers Market in the Town Center

Every Saturday from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. now through April, a well-curated selection

of vendors set up in the Ave Maria Town Center with produce, plants, arts and crafts, clothes, honey, soaps, fresh baked goods and more. Admission is free. For more information or to become a vendor, call Dennis Strausbaugh with SW Florida Markets at 239-293-6266.

Ave Maria Parish Tour

Every Tuesday through April 25 from 1-3 p.m., Ave Maria Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus offer free 30-minute tours of the parish with architectural and historic details about the church building. For more information, call 239-261-5555. Reservations are not required.

Sightseeing Trolley Tours

Every Tuesday now through April 25, Ave Maria Development conducts free one-hour guided trolley tours of the town. Guests receive a complimentary trolley bag with swag items and coupons. Tours depart at 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. Meet at the Welcome Center in the Town Center. Reservations are encouraged and can be made by calling 239-352-3903.

Live Music in the Town Center

Every Tuesday and Saturday from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. now through April, live musical performances entertain passersby at various Town Center locations. Performers this season include the Mason Williams Duo, Eric Jacques, Gerald Augustin, Chris Stultz, Wendy Rene, Harmony 2 and many more. Admission is free.

MERCHANT EVENTS

The Pub & Grill

Enjoy live music, charcuterie plates, wine and cocktail specials from 5-9 p.m. every Thursday. For details on other live entertainment events, including karaoke, visit www.thepubofave.com and www.facebook.com/thepubatave.

The Bean

It's the latest craze at Ave Maria — eating breakfast for dinner — and you can join the topsy-turvy feast from 5-8:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of every month (Feb. 1, March 1 and April 5). Expect traditional favorites like omelets, pancakes, French toast, bacon, sausage, fruit, quiche and waffles. To learn about upcoming live entertainment, visit www.thebeanofave.com and www.facebook.com/thebeanatave.

OASIS The Kitchen Lounge

Ave Maria's popular spot has launched a new selection of exotic cocktails to accompany their gourmet menu. They regularly host special events, including comedy shows, DJ nights, themed parties, music bingo and wine socials. For dates, times and reservation information, check the schedule posted on the window outside or visit www.facebook.com/oasis-kitchenlounge and www.instagram.com/oasis_kitchenlounge.

Tropical Smoothie Cafe

For a limited time now through March 28, enjoy these delicious Rise 'n' Shine menu items: Cali Breakfast Flatbread with grilled chicken, Peanut Butter Banana Crunch Flatbread and Super Sunrise Sunset Smoothie, made with tropical fruits.

SEE ALL AROUND AVE MARIA, A34 ►



The Margarita & Taco Festival is set for March 18.

ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

From page 33

Ave Maria University Athletics

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

- Friday, Jan. 27**
Men's Tennis vs. Atlantis, TBA
Women's Tennis vs. Atlantis, TBA
Baseball vs. Thomas, TBA
Baseball vs. Thomas, TBA
- Saturday, Jan. 28**
Baseball vs. Thomas, TBA
- Thursday, Feb. 2**
Men's Basketball vs. Florida National, 8 p.m.
- Friday, Feb. 3**
Women's Basketball vs. Fort Lauderdale, 5:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 7**
Baseball vs. Ohio Christian, TBA
Baseball vs. Ohio Christian, TBA
- Thursday, Feb. 9**
Women's Basketball vs. Florida Memorial, 5:30 p.m.
Men's Basketball vs. Florida Memorial, 7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 14**
Baseball vs. Warner, TBA
- Wednesday, Feb. 15**
Softball vs. Florida National, 12 p.m.
Softball vs. Florida National, 2 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 16**
Women's Basketball vs. Warner, 5 p.m.
Men's Basketball vs. Warner, 7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, Feb. 18**
Lacrosse vs. Georgetown (Ky.), TBA
- Saturday, Feb. 25**
Baseball vs. Massachusetts Maritime, 11 a.m.
Baseball vs. Massachusetts Maritime, 2 p.m.
- Tuesday, Feb. 28**
Baseball vs. Florida National, TBA
- Wednesday, March 8**
Baseball vs. Dordt (Iowa), 11 a.m.
Baseball vs. Dordt (Iowa), 2 p.m.
- Thursday, March 9**
Lacrosse vs. Benedictine (Kan.), 5 p.m.
- Friday, March 10**
Softball vs. St. Thomas, 2 p.m.
- Saturday, March 11**
Baseball vs. Lawrence Tech (Mich.), TBA
Baseball vs. Lawrence Tech (Mich.), TBA
Softball vs. St. Thomas, 1 p.m.
Softball vs. St. Thomas, 3 p.m.
- Sunday, March 12**
Baseball vs. Purdue Northwest, TBA
Baseball vs. Purdue Northwest, TBA
- Thursday, March 16**
Lacrosse vs. Franciscan (Ohio), 4 p.m.
- Saturday, March 18**
Lacrosse vs. St. Thomas, 1 p.m.
- Monday, March 20**
Lacrosse vs. St. Ambrose (Iowa), 4 p.m.
- Thursday, March 23**
Lacrosse vs. SCAD, 1 p.m.
- Friday, March 24**
Baseball vs. St. Thomas, TBA
- Saturday, March 25**
Baseball vs. St. Thomas, TBA
Baseball vs. St. Thomas, TBA
Lacrosse vs. Warner, 1 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 28**
Softball vs. Warner, 3 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 29**
Softball vs. Warner, 1 p.m.
Softball vs. Warner, 3 p.m.



COURTESY PHOTO

Vendors and patrons at the Farmers Market in the Town Center.

- Friday, March 31**
Baseball vs. Southeastern, TBA
Women's Tennis vs. Southeastern, TBA
Men's Tennis vs. Southeastern, TBA
- Saturday, April 1**
Baseball vs. Southeastern, TBA
Baseball vs. Southeastern, TBA
Men's Tennis vs. Warner, TBA
Women's Tennis vs. Warner, TBA
- Thursday, April 6**
Women's Tennis vs. Palm Beach Atlantic, TBA
Men's Tennis vs. Palm Beach Atlantic, TBA
- Tuesday, April 11**
Baseball vs. Ft. Lauderdale, TBA
Baseball vs. Ft. Lauderdale, TBA
- Thursday, April 13**
Lacrosse vs. Webber, 5 p.m.
- Friday, April 21**
Softball vs. Coastal Georgia, 2 p.m.
Softball vs. Coastal Georgia, 4 p.m.
- Saturday, April 22**
Sixth Annual AMU Golf Outing, 9 a.m.
Softball vs. Coastal Georgia, 1 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 25**
Baseball vs. Fort Lauderdale, TBA
Baseball vs. Fort Lauderdale, TBA
- Friday, April 28**
Baseball vs. Webber, TBA
Softball vs. Southeastern, 4 p.m.
- Saturday, April 29**
Baseball vs. Webber, TBA
Baseball vs. Webber, TBA
Softball vs. Southeastern, 1 p.m.
Softball vs. Southeastern, 3 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 and held in the Ave Maria Master Association meeting room. The next meetings are at 9 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, and 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 7. Visit [\[mariastewardshipcd.org\]\(http://mariastewardshipcd.org\) for more information and schedule updates.](http://ave-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Embrace Life Series

Wildlife photographer Patrick O'Flaherty presents an inspiring photography series set to music in the AMMA meeting room from 7-8 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, Thursday, March 30 and Saturday, April 8. Admission is free.

Resin Art Class

Learn how to combine epoxy with colors and pigments to create beautiful, glass-like art objects. Guided by an expert instructor, this promises to be an engaging, hands-on experience in the company of neighbors and friends. The class runs from 6:30-8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, in the AMMA lobby. The \$65 cost includes all necessary supplies.

Community Yard Sale and Services Day

Offering Ave Maria residents an opportunity to sell gently used items and offer services to neighbors, this community-building event from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 25, in North Park includes DJ music, family-friendly activities and food trucks. To reserve a booth, rent tables and chairs or learn more, visit www.avemariamasterassociation.com.

Spring Festival

Celebrate spring Ave Maria-style from 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Saturday, April 1,, in North Park, featuring the annual Easter Egg Dash and Bunny Hop. A bunny parade kicks off the day, followed by egg hunt races for several age categories, an obstacle course for older kids and an egg stroll corner for children 3 and under. Vendors and information booths will entertain and educate. Admission is \$5 per child and free for parents and kids aged 2 and under.

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. Check the AMMA website calendar for dates and times.

New Homeowners Social and Orientation

New Ave Maria homeowners are invited to a social and informational event in the AMMA meeting room, featuring a presentation by the master association about living in this community and the various organizations operating in Ave Maria. Check the AMMA website calendar for dates and times.



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.

■ SPORTS AND FITNESS (RESIDENTS ONLY)

Zumba Classes

Staying fit is pure joy at Zumba class in the AMMA event room. The fun begins at 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 7, 16 and 28; and March 9, 14, 21 and 28. Contact vane-zumba@gmail.com to register.

Swimming Lessons

Beginning in March, the Ave Maria Water Park will offer an eight-lesson program sanctioned by the American Red Cross that teaches kids how to swim and be safe in the water. The eight, 45-minute lessons are \$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.

ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

Water Exercise Classes

The Ave Maria Water Park offers one-hour morning classes alternating between cardio and muscle strengthening routines Monday through Thursday and Saturday from 9-10 a.m. Residents ages 13 and above are welcome. Cost is \$5 per class or \$65 for 20 classes. All necessary equipment will be provided, including resistance gloves, noodles, pool buoys and barbells. For more information, call 239-348-8384 or email kellie.powell@fsresidential.com.

Youth Volleyball League

Boys and girls ages 7-15 are invited to participate in a new volleyball league at South Park running Jan. 24-March 18. Matches are held from 6-7 p.m. Tuesdays and 10-11 a.m. Saturdays. For more information and registration, contact Hilda Cenecharles at 305-343-0996.

Ave Maria Little League

Spring season is here! League play includes baseball, tee ball and softball for kids ages 4-14. For detailed information and registration instructions, visit avemariablittleleague.com or contact avemariabaseball@gmail.com.



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. Wednesdays and Sundays

on soccer field #2, in North Park.

Co-Ed Softball 55-plus

Friendly softball games for neighbors aged 55 and older are held from 12:30-3 p.m. at South Park on the following dates: Feb. 5 and 19; March 5 and 19; April 16 and 30; and May 7. Players at all levels are welcome to participate. For more information, contact Artie Ginsberg at agins@hotmail.com or 516-314-1351.

Free Fitness Classes at South Park

These biweekly fitness classes at South Park start at 6:15 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. For more information call instructor Nicolas Leon at 786-436-3323.

Tai Chi

Experience a meditative workout at 9 a.m. Wednesdays in the AMMA event room. For more information, contact instructor Myelin Vedel at myvedel@gmail.com or 239-220-4181.

Quest Martial Arts Academy

Led by Kenny Quintero, a 20-year veteran instructor, these martial arts classes are at 5 p.m. Mondays and 9:30 a.m. Saturdays in the AMMA event room. Students learn discipline and self-defense techniques while honing their focus, having fun and getting fit. For more information, call Crystal at 239-371-6073 or visit www.questmartialartsacademy.com.

COURTESY PHOTO

The Blues, Brews & BBQ festival is sceduled for Feb. 18 in the Town Center.





A Place Where
LOVE WORKS

 **NAPLESCHURCH**

Sunday Mornings 9am, 10:15am, & 11:30am



We are a Bible Believing Church

We believe God has revealed Himself through the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are to be taught using sound doctrine. We emphasize every portion of Scripture, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the mission of the body of believers, and the ministering work of the Holy Spirit in the world today.

NaplesYTH (Middle and High school)

**Sunday Mornings at 10:15am and 11:30am • Midweek Service
Wednesday Nights at 7pm**

NaplesYTH is a safe, comfortable place, where youth can come as they are, everyone is welcome, and truth and grace work together to change lives.

NaplesKids (Infants through 5th Grade)

Sunday During Our Morning Services

At NaplesChurch, our kids (Infant through 5th Grade) experience a safe, age-appropriate environment where they learn about Jesus in a creative and relevant way.



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(3 miles east of Collier Boulevard on Immokalee Road)



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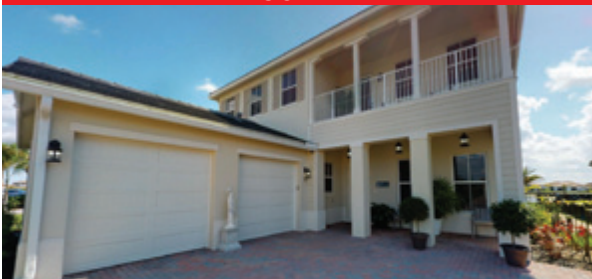
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