

Ave Maria Sun

MARCH 2024

www.AveMariaSun.com

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Community Compassion: Serafina's Wish Fulfilled in Ave Maria

BY JULIANNA PEREZ

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Serafina Feger was two years old when she was diagnosed with Neurofibromatosis Type 1 (NF1), a defect on the 17th chromosome that affects the body's production of nerve fibromas and causes tumors to form in the brain, spinal cord and nerves.

The diagnosis came after Serafina began experiencing a progression of weakness and pain, specifically on the right side of her body. Following a series of neurological tests and scans, it was revealed that Serafina had a low-grade Glioma infiltrating her spinal cord, brainstem and cerebellum.

The uncertainty of the situation was what troubled parents Elizabeth and Brett Feger. NF1 traditionally appears as a gene that is passed down from parent to child; in Serafina's case, it spontaneously developed as a de novo mutation. Additionally, the diffused nature of Serafina's brain tumor made it difficult to predict how it would affect her lifestyle.

"It was certainly shocking. You kind of go through that whole array of thoughts like, she could have all these things happen to her and there's a chance that she's going to suffer tremendously. You just don't know," Elizabeth said. "That's the thing about NF1. They can live an absolutely next-to-normal life with very little symptoms, or they could experience very severe symptoms."

SEE WISH, A24 ►



COURTESY PHOTO

Serafina's radiant smile reflects the resilience and joy that define her spirit.

MAKING A SPLASH

REVAMPED AVE MARIA WATER PARK OPENS



BY SANDRA YEYATI,

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

THE AVE MARIA WATER PARK CELEBRATED ITS grand reopening after an eight-week renovation period that beautified, resurfaced and added features to the community's resort-style recreational facility on March 16. "This was a huge project. Our park is 16 years old; it was time to give it a facelift, and it is absolutely beautiful," exalted Operations Director Kellie Powell, who oversaw the entire process alongside Aquatic Facilities Operator Lionel Chester. Every corner of the park received

SEE WATER PARK, A11 ►



TOP: Kids delight as the oversized red bucket dumps water, creating a splash-filled adventure in the activity pool. **ABOVE:** Odin Tyink and his mom Erin enjoying the heated water.

SANDRA YEYATI/ AVE MARIA SUN

Big Kinds of Small Town Fun

A Taste of Ave Recap
A4 ►



Swinging Joy on the Green

The Golfing Odyssey of Ave Maria's Jorge Pino A10 ►



Golisano Field House Transformation

Elevates Ave Maria Athletics to Greater Success
A20 ►



Ave Maria Sun

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The Ave Maria Civic Association Unites Residents for Community Solutions

BY MELANIE PEFINIS
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Commercial trucks and tractor trailers were crowding a peaceful residential neighborhood. Homeowners were frustrated and baffled to know where to turn for information. This is exactly the kind of neighborhood quandary which precipitated the need for the soon to be unveiled Ave Maria Civic Association.

Collier County Commissioner Bill McDaniel plans to establish a Civic Association which he announced in January after residents confronted community problems and were unsure who to talk to. At the January town hall meeting, the plan was set. As McDaniel explained, “We needed a way for the community to feel they have access to governance, to get answers to questions affecting their subdivisions.”

Five residents who attended January’s town hall volunteered to lay the groundwork for organizing the group. By late March they will announce the official start date, appoint officers and set up the meeting schedule.

Civic associations play a distinctive and vital role in a democratic society, developing core virtues and values that enable individuals to contribute to public life and maintain the political institutions of a free society. When the young French



COURTESY PHOTO



MCDANIEL

philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in the early 1800s, he observed that democracy in America had been especially strengthened by broad participation in a wide range of civic associations, including clubs, churches, nonprofits and community groups of all types.

“As Ave Maria continues to grow, there is a need for the community to have a voice,” McDaniel said. There are numerous subdivisions and often there is no way to communicate between one subdivision and another.” The Civic Association will highlight those issues that affect all the neighborhoods as well as the town of Ave Maria as a whole. “This way communities can come together and know where to turn with questions,” McDaniel explained.

Large features like the hospital facili-

ties, commercial entities, schools, roads, water park and playgrounds are overseen by the Ave Maria Stewardship and town developer, Barron Collier Companies. But Ave Maria’s subdivisions will now have a uniting body to discuss residential day-to-day concerns. McDaniel shared. “This will prevent feelings of fragmentation between the HOAs and separate neighborhoods. It is an alternative method to communicating with the government.”

The goal of the Civic Association will be to act as an umbrella group for united discussions of community issues. It is the necessary mid-point for a community of this size which is not yet “at the incorporating or municipality stage but has reached a point where a mechanism is needed to answer the needs that are cropping up,” McDaniel concluded. 🌟



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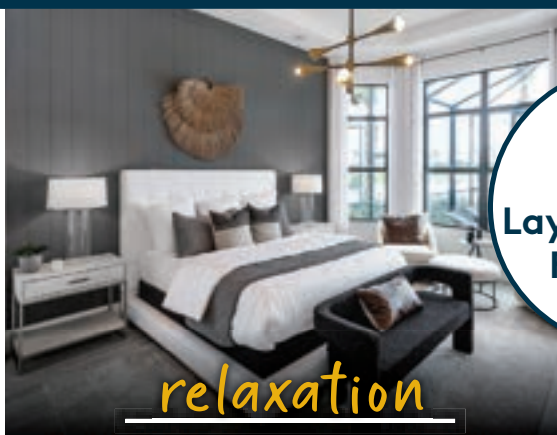
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BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

Delicious Bites at the Taste of Ave



The Taste of Ave event, held on Saturday, Feb. 3 in the Town Center, brought together Ave Maria residents and attendees for a day of community spirit and gastronomic delights. People enjoyed live performances by hometown bands, including Steinbeck Way and the Back Country Boys, while sampling a variety of culinary offerings from Ave Maria's diverse restaurants and local food vendors. Throughout the event, booths showcased products and services from small businesses, charities, and Ave Maria University, alongside the Biz Kids Expo, highlighting emerging entrepreneurs. Families enjoyed interactive sports activities, face painting, and Adam's Animal Encounters, while the Ave Maria Veterans Association and Veterans Club of Del Webb Naples hosted charity raffles. Collier County Sheriff's Office and Fire Department representatives provided valuable safety tips, and to honor their service, first responders and veterans received a complimentary drink ticket to redeem at The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria. It was a vibrant and inclusive celebration, fostering connections and support within the Ave Maria community. 🌟



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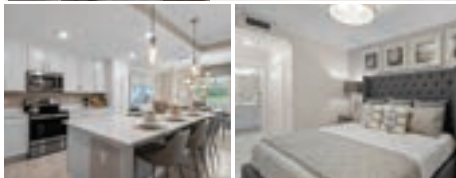
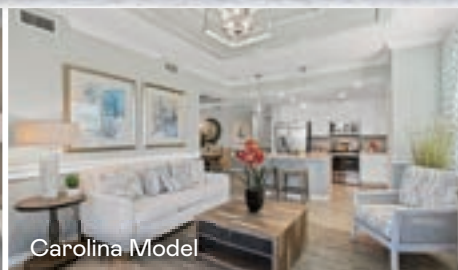
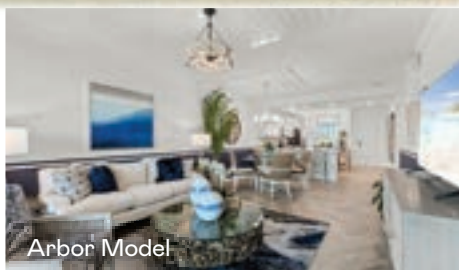


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Where Opulence Awaits: Del Webb Naples' Model Home Park Grand Opening

BY MELANIE PEFINIS

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Are you looking for a little Mystique or maybe some Prosperity? Then look no farther than Del Webb Naples' new community of homes opening soon.

When Del Webb holds its model home park grand opening on Monday, May 6, visitors can tour models such as: Contour, Prosperity, Mystique, Reverence and Renown.

Del Webb, a Pulte Homes family member, is offering potential buyers a chance to view floorplans in these new models, plus two quad model homes on Memorial Lane: the Cascadia and Seagrove.

"When we open our new model park, our plan is to showcase these models," Mike Egan said, Pulte Group sales consultant. Viewers can see the design concepts in-person and envision the community lifestyle amenities which are a part of the Del Webb strategy.

The company prides itself on offering communities that appeal to an active, healthy lifestyle and prioritizes features which instill socializing and comfort. "We're anticipating a positive reception for our new models as they come with upgraded design finishes, a new golf putting green, and three new floor plans of which we currently offer now," Egan said.

The company's reputation was built around its ability to offer what customers want. Buyers can choose from flexible floor plans and participate in Pulte's Smart Home feature, picking those amenities



COURTESY PHOTOS

that best meet their needs while encouraging energy efficiency.

"Historically, across all communities, our new models have been well-received, and we don't anticipate anything different this time around. The addition of these fresh designs and new floor plans are sure to attract attention and excitement from potential buyers and the community alike," Egan said.

Especially attractive to some buyers might be the Del Webb Carriage Homes. Combining convenience, accessibility and security features, these floor plans are an

attractive option for active retirees seeking an environment promoting social interaction and accessibility.

"Our carriage homes offer several benefits for our active residents. Firstly, the layout of four upstairs units at 1,800 square feet and four downstairs units at 1,400 square feet provide options for residents based on their preferences and mobility needs. For those who prefer not to navigate stairs, the downstairs units offer convenience and accessibility, eliminating the need to climb stairs on a daily basis," Egan explained. "Moreover, the design of Del

Webb's carriage homes provides peace of mind for residents. With the ability to lock the door by just closing it without a key, is a different sort of enjoyable sense of security, especially when there's ease knowing that their property is well-protected."

As a well-respected developer in the region, Pulte is familiar with real estate agents eager to fill their clients' needs. Homes by Del Webb participate in the company's Realtor Loyalty Program developed specifically for realtors who see value in the brand and encourage the clients to take a look at all that Pulte offers throughout South Florida, and Ave Maria in particular.

This initiative aims to strengthen the relationship between Pulte and local realtors, recognizing their valuable contribution to the community. "With the popularity and reputation of Pulte, we expect that this program will indeed be very enticing," Egan exclaimed. "Ultimately, this program underscores Pulte's commitment to working closely with real estate professionals in creating mutually beneficial opportunities and enhancing the experience for both realtors and prospective homebuyers in Ave Maria."

So, come Monday, May 6 and plan on viewing all the layouts and Contours of Del Webb Naples, and let yourself be surprised by the Mystique, one of Pulte's most popular home designs. The features and amenities will help you bring Prosperity to your social life and peace of mind as with Reverence you can choose your new home from the Renown developer Pulte's Del Webb. 🌟

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Donahue Academy's Fundraising Drive for Growth

BY JULIANNA PEREZ

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Donahue Academy, Ave Maria Parish's private catholic school, has begun a fundraising initiative to accommodate its growing student body. The endeavor aims to fund the installation of modular classroom units, granting the school the ability to increase enrollment opportunities.

Over the years, Donahue Academy has garnered a local reputation for its' exceptional educational performance. The local school boasts a 100% college acceptance rate, with 75% of those students pursuing their post-secondary education at catholic institutions. This year, it has also been named amongst the highest-scoring private schools in Florida for the SAT.

As a result, Donahue Academy has faced growing demand from community members interested in enrolling their children. The school's enrollment exceeds 400 students, spanning from preschoolers to high school seniors, with an additional waitlist of over 200 prospective students.

Principal Marc Snyder believes the addition of modular classroom units will help alleviate this demand, allowing more families to access faith-based education.

"Many are deserving of a Catholic education but are not able to come here because we just don't have the space," Snyder said. "Being able to raise funds to add classrooms will allow us to bring in more students."

"Being able to raise funds to add classrooms will allow us to bring in more students."

— Marc Snyder,
Donahue Academy Principal



A graduating class tossing their caps into the air.

The initiative is being spearheaded by the Academy's advancement director, Brigid Luzarraga, with the assistance of Snyder. While the venture is considered in its beginning stages, with financial support garnered through internal efforts, Donahue Academy is starting a more long-term solution to help fund its expansion.

"We are currently working on our future growth plans for the school, which will consist of several different phases. Currently, we're raising money towards the first phase of our growth, which would be the modular classroom unit," Snyder shared. "We're raising money right now just by asking

our families to help contribute towards our growth. We're asking them to donate money to what we're calling the 'Donahue Fund,' which essentially, is going to be a long-term, annual fund."

Snyder emphasizes the importance of supporting organizations that are considered essential in the formation of faith and education in the community.

"We are a premier Catholic, classical school. Not only in the state of Florida, but in the nation. And I think, you know, supporting what we're doing, supporting our mission, is a larger attempt to amplify and spread this kind of education, Catholic classical education, throughout the country."

Those interested in giving to Donahue Academy and supporting its expansion efforts can do so by visiting their donation page at donahueacademy.org. Con-



Fourth graders next to their insect posters.



High school students at a football game.

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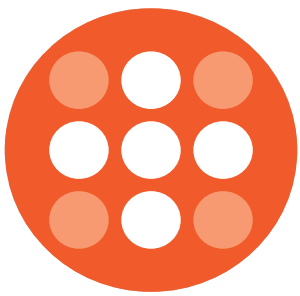
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Swinging Joy on the Green: The Golfing Odyssey of Ave Maria's Jorge Pino

BY ERICA FISH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Amidst the rolling green fairways and the towering cypress trees of Panther Run and The National – two of Southwest Florida's most popular golf courses to play – resides an Ave Maria resident who found his golf paradise and community in Ave Maria. Del Webb Naples homeowner Jorge Pino, led a Miami-based law enforcement career for 32 years and after retiring, was looking for his piece of paradise.

After hearing about Ave Maria, he and his wife made the visit and moved into their home six months later. "I knew it was meant to be when we drove the town's main boulevard for the first time," he said.

Once settled in, it was not long until Jorge started back up his golfing routine... No matter where you reside in town, residents can participate in the recreational lifestyle ranging from all-inclusive clubhouses, the parks and more than 100 miles of walking and biking paths.

He enjoys playing both courses – 18-hole Gordon Lewis-designed and open for public play – sometimes on the same day! When referring to the proximal convenience, Jorge noted residents use their golf carts for just about everything. "We go from our homes to Publix, back to home, then to the courses... It's a friendly community."

Jorge is the club champion at Panther Run located in the community where he



Jorge stands alongside the recently won Panther Run Golf Club Championship trophy. More than 120 players competed over the course of three days.

lives. When he isn't playing over there, he tees it up at The National Golf & Country Club minutes from his home. "It's wonderful for an avid golfer to have two champi-

onship courses a half-mile from each other," he shared.

Whether he's perfecting his swing or enjoying a casual round with friends, Jorge finds immense satisfaction in the sport and the camaraderie that Ave Maria's golfing scene fosters.

As a certified Blue Zones community, the town makes it easier to live an active and fulfilling lifestyle. Ave Maria adopted Power 9® – nine common principles learned from the Blue Zones longevity hotspots of the world. These principles focus on moving naturally, maintaining a healthy outlook, eating wisely and connection. Jorge utilizes the walking paths, outdoor recreation, dining options and calendar of events to feel fulfilled by staying active and connecting with his community. There's another community Jorge is a part of, too: he's a cancer survivor.

In 2001, he was unfortunately diagnosed with thyroid cancer, and it made him think about life more, especially about what he was doing with his time. "I was a City of Miami police officer, and I did not want to abandon my chosen profession, but to at least do something a bit friendlier, so I applied to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and worked in public information for the last 17 years of

my career."

Thankfully, he beat cancer and shares the old saying, 'A bad day on the golf course beats a good day at work,' but Jorge adds to the end, "And every day's a great day at Ave Maria!"

Beyond the recreational amenities, Jorge cherishes the sense of belonging that permeates Ave Maria's tight-knit community. From impromptu gatherings at Del Webb's club house to lively neighborhood barbecues, there's ample opportunities everywhere for residents to forge meaningful connections.

"If you're not from this area, and you're not accustomed to waving at your neighbors when you drive by them, you better learn how to do that quickly when you move to Ave Maria!" he jokes. "Because everyone that is driving by you is going to wave, so this is the Ave Maria wave," he demonstrated with a smile. 🌟



Jorge and his neighbors, Michael and Carrie, cool off after a few rounds at the National Golf & Country Club.



A perfect swing can still be mustered when in the sand.

The National Golf and Country Club at Ave Maria is the #1 Selling Golf Community in the SW Florida

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**by Tom Doyle
Real Estate Agent, Sun Realty**

WATER PARK

From page 1

some tender loving care. Here's a deep dive into all the improvements:

Fitness Pool

Filled with 297,000 gallons of water, the expansive fitness pool has distinct areas that cater to different forms of recreation, including a four-lane lap pool; an in-water volleyball court; a zero-deck entry for young families; and a spacious swimming area for people to hang out and chat in small groups. Two feet above the surface of the fitness pool, there is a luxurious spa and cascading waterfall that create a resort-style ambiance.

After draining the fitness pool and spa, the surfaces were ground down, resurfaced and repainted white by Naples-based contractor Finishing by Baker. They retiled the water lines with cobalt blue tiles in the recreational area and spa, and with black tiles along the lap lanes. New stainless-steel ladders and handrails were installed, 18 underwater lights were replaced with LED bulbs, the jets in the spa were repaired, and a new, in-water basketball hoop was added. Upgraded landscaping, as well as new umbrellas, tables and chairs, provide added shade and comfort.

"We also installed backstroke flags for patrons that like to swim laps on their back," Powell explains. "When they see the flags, they'll know that the wall is coming, so they won't hit their heads."



SANDRA YEYATI/ AVE MARIA SUN

Residents convene at the water exercise classes, held on Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 to 10 a.m., to engage in invigorating aquatic workouts and foster community wellness.

Activity Pool

With 99,000 gallons of water, the activity pool includes a two-inch to two-foot-deep children's play area equipped with a rope bridge; steps that lead to a green, spiral slide and two small red slides; and an oversized red

bucket which dumps water every 30 seconds onto a roof, splashing droplets on jubilant little ones. Beyond the shallow play area is a four-foot-deep catch pool at the base of two

towering yellow and blue slides that anyone who is over 48 inches tall can enjoy. A wet deck near the kids' pool offers another opportunity to have fun, as jets of water shoot up

out of the ground.

The activity pool was completely refurbished. All surfaces, slides and other apparatuses were treated for rust, deep-cleaned and



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SANDRA YEYATI/ AVE MARIA SUN

repainted. The kids' area has a brand-new rope bridge. Safe Slide Restoration, which repaired and restored the park's multiple slides, has serviced some of the largest water parks in North America. A steelworker crew worked on the tower leading up to the big slides, making sure they were all in tip-top shape. For weeks, a crew from Infinite Aqua worked on getting the wet deck up and running.

An Invitation

"I hope people will come out and experience what this place is all about," Powell said. "It's an absolutely beautiful facility and a great place to socialize. You don't have to come here and swim. You can read a book; you can grab one of the tables and a group of your friends and play cards or eat food from CJ's Pastelillos and have an enjoyable day outside. The pools are heated from December through April and chilled during the hot summer months, and this is a very inexpensive water park for Ave Maria residents and their guests. Most water parks cost between \$15 to \$25 per person to get in, so this is a great deal

and community service."

The park offers water exercise classes Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 to 10 a.m. and a progressive swim team for kids looking for a swim-team experience. During spring break in April, Powell will teach an American Red Cross water safety instructor course for individuals to learn how to teach swim lessons. "If there are any college students that want a part-time job during the summer, or even retired adults who want to teach swim lessons part time, we have an abundance of children that are in need of swim lessons, and this course is available to anybody that lives in Ave Maria," she explains.

The Ave Maria Water Park is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$5 per resident and \$7 per guest, Monday through Friday; \$7 per resident and \$9 per guest on weekends. Kids aged 2 and under are free, and if they are under 48 inches tall, they are only \$5. 🌸



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT

Splashing fun is the perfect cool-off for young residents.

Rad Dad Hibachi Delivers the Ultimate Hibachi Experience to Your Home

BY MELANIE PEFINIS

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

“Smell those shrimp, they’re beginning to boil” conjures a typical Florida vibe. But how about shrimp, not boiled but cooked by an expert in Hibachi Japanese grill cooking? Shrimp as well as steak, chicken, pork and various vegetables are all staples of Hibachi cuisine.

Hibachi, which translates to fire bowl, is a traditional Japanese cooking technique where ingredients are cooked over a grill while the chef entertains the crowd with a masterful style of cooking. It is just as much a performance as a food preparation, Hibachi is an experience appealing for both its entertaining technique and its palate enticing menu.

A visit to a Japanese Steakhouse was the only way to experience Hibachi, until now. Maple Ridge resident, Chef Michael Shapiro, and his company Rad Dad Hibachi bring the experience to your home, event or party.

“I’ve been interested in Japanese cooking for a long time,” Shapiro said. “Hibachi is both food and entertainment. Consider it a mini restaurant on your lanai!”

Fire bowl cooking is an ancient technique dating back to the Heian period in Japan which spanned from 794 to 1185. The heating device uses an open topped container and burning charcoal beneath the grill.

Originally introduced to the United States in the 1960s by the owner of Benihana restaurants, this theatrical cuisine was a hit with American diners. Shapiro’s training at Benihana honed the traditional Japanese skills needed for this display.

“I like to have fun. I have a routine where I put an egg under my hat as I’m cooking. After a while, I pull out a plastic chicken toy from under my hat as if it has hatched. Kids love that,” Shapiro laughed.

Rad Dad Hibachi arrives complete with the entire set-up for your gathering. Whether at your home or at a party, tables, chairs, the grill, coolers and a chef’s cart bring the restaurant to you. Ingredients span from fried rice and noodles to shrimp appetizers and entrees consisting of lobster, steak, pork, vegetables and of course those shrimps which, while not beginning to boil, certainly provide more fun.

For further details, please visit Rad Dad’s Facebook page, reach out via phone at 561-451-5491 or send an email to landnsea2019@gmail.com. To schedule an event, you can conveniently book through visibook.com/raddadhibachi. 🌟



COURTESY PHOTOS

TOP: Chef Michael Shapiro preparing fried rice. ABOVE: A fiery display. LEFT: A look at the table setup.



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BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

Sizzling Success at the Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off



The 14th annual Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off, hosted by the Knights of Columbus, sizzled with excitement on Saturday, Jan. 27, at the Ave Maria Town Center. Attendees indulged in a culinary extravaganza featuring lively entertainment, beer vendors, a kids' bounce house, and an Arts & Crafts Festival. Grill teams showcased their skills, preparing approximately 2,000 steak dinners, leading to \$40K raised for local youth charities. 🌟



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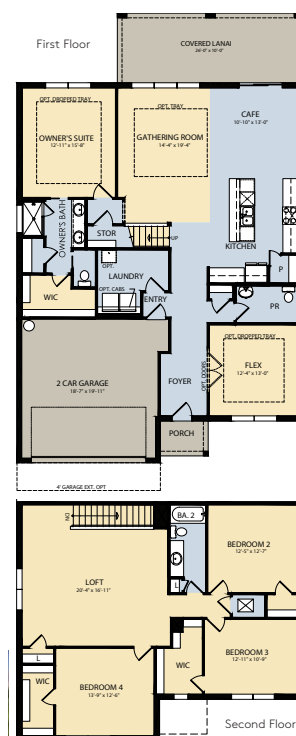
It's easy to stay active and have family fun at Avalon Park. Located within walking or biking distance to downtown Ave Maria, Avalon Park attracts families looking for exceptional schools, close proximity to neighborhood parks, and plenty of living space. Avalon Park offers spacious homesites, unique 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 6 1/2 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.



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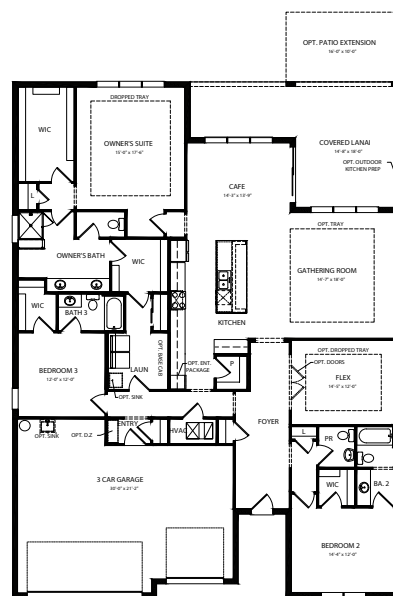
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MAPLE RIDGE
AT AVE MARIA

About the community

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

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



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SILVER WOOD
AT MAPLE RIDGE

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.



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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

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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.

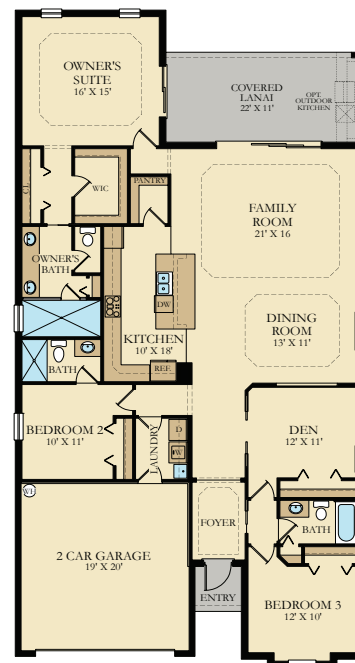


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Tom Golisano Field House Transformation Elevates Ave Maria Athletics to Greater Success

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

A new era recently dawned for Ave Maria University (AMU) Athletics when the gleaming, positively sparkling renovated Tom Golisano Field House opened.

It has more of everything. More room. More seating. More weight rooms. More office spaces. More sparkle and intangibles.

Ave Maria athletic director Joe Patterson believes the upgrades to the 40,000-square foot facility are going to propel the Gyrenes to greater heights.

"I think it goes back to the idea of energy and momentum," said Patterson, who is also head football coach and a university vice president. "It's just a sense that we achieve much more having the facilities in place."

Women's basketball coach Alex Moorehead summed up the significance of the renovated field house.

"We just feel like we're back at home," Moorehead said.

Patterson echoed Moorehead when he said, "This feels like home."

The Gryrenes had been without such a home for 1,400 days, by Patterson's count. Patterson pointed out for Ave Maria senior basketball and volleyball players in four years they never played a home game or match in the field house.

Now, the men's and women's basketball teams and the volleyball team have a facility to call their own.

"It means everything to us," volleyball coach Teigan McCormick said.

The new Tom Golisano Field House is important to all 23 of Ave Maria University's sport teams, even those who play outdoors such as the baseball and football teams.

"The weight room obviously satisfies the need for all 23 of our sports teams," Patterson said. "That is a big improvement over what we had."

Patterson doesn't know the precise square footage of the old weight room but knows the new one is bigger and offers more power racks.

Teams are now able to schedule practices at more convenient times. Previously, when using the nearby Donahue gym, practices scheduled there had to be juggled with other users of the facilities. That meant both basketball teams found themselves practicing either very early in the morning or late at night at the Donahue gym, which is owned by the Diocese of Venice.

The wait for the new home was long but it was worth it for AMU athletes and coaches.

Basketball player Miles Monchecourt certainly recalls seeing the finished field house for the first time.

"It was unreal," he said. "Just being able to play in there is such an amazing experience."

The facility was jumping with a fired-up home crowd for the first games back.

"It was a great atmosphere to be a Gyrene!" he exclaimed.

Improved facilities can help recruit future Gyrenes.

"Oh, my goodness. For recruiting, facilities are a huge deal," men's basketball coach Jamon Copeland said.

News of the upgraded field house is being spread around the country and beyond as Gyrenes tell family and friends and coaches in hometowns about where they now play and practice.

Not one male basketball player is from Florida. Monchecourt is from Rochester, New York. He has told people back home



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

ABOVE: AMU Founder Tom Monaghan (left), Field House benefactor Tom Golisano and AMU President Mark Middendorf cut the ribbon. RIGHT: AMU Associate Athletic Director Wil Hampton is joined by former educators Ginny Baxter (left) and her sister Lois Pence who contributed to build the Field House concession stand in honor of their grandfather, Sante Leonardi.



not only about the university but about the facility.

"It is super special to have access to a facility like this," he said.

The men's basketball roster has players from 10 states.

The women's basketball team has seven Floridians but also features players from New York, Ohio and Spain.

The volleyball team roster lists five Floridians but also players from Portugal, Brazil and Canada.

Sophomore volleyball player Abbey Grose is from Brighton, Mich. and is helping spread the word about the new field house.

"I have past teammates that are younger than me," Grose said. "I'm trying to get them to come here and play."

The new and improved field house should help.

"A big selling point for sure," Grose said.

The overhaul was designed by BSSW Architects and includes a sound-proof curtain between courts, a new roof, and HVAC system and plumbing.

That's all in addition to the upgrades for the teams.

"It is more functional for a collegiate athletic department," Copeland said.

Some of that athletic functionality is in the expanded weight room.

"We're in there at least three or four days a week trying to get better," Monchecourt said.

Now, teams don't have to practice very early or very late in a facility shared by a neighboring school. They have regular practice times. They have nice locker rooms and weights rooms and places to study game film and plan strategy.

"One-stop shopping," Copeland said. Moorehead also appreciates those benefits.

He said it is "great logistically."

It means having the ability for players to pop into the field house and work on their game on their own if they like.

"It's been a blessing," Moorehead said.

One of the blessings may be a byproduct of the tangible elements of more

weight racks and more convenient practice times. Sophomore basketball player Casey Humphrey suggested camaraderie could be enhanced.

"Just having the environment of our space brings us together," said Humphrey, a juror guard from Columbus, Ohio.

She recalled the sensation of walking into the field house for the first game there.

"It was nerve-racking but exciting," Humphrey said.

Athletes and coaches all appreciated the access to Donahue and the hospitality they were shown but it was not their home.

"You're always feeling like you're invading somebody else's space," Moorehead said.

The new field house is a treat for Patterson and the 600 student/athletes in a university with an enrollment of 1,200. About 100 athletes play football.

He was named athletic director in May of 2020.

"I had never had a field house," Patterson said.



Father Joseph offers the benediction with AMU Founder Tom Monaghan (left), Field House benefactor Tom Golisano and AMU President Mark Middendorf in the background.

Now, he does.

Patterson said the previous athletic director resigned the day after the old field house was condemned.

While the renovation work continued the school's sports teams persevered. Patterson appreciates how athletes coped.

"Seeing what the athletes have done in the pursuit of excellence over the last four years has just been remarkable," Patterson said.

He said he never heard a coach or athlete complain.

"They never stopped pursuing excellence," Patterson said.

Patterson then used a word beyond remarkable.

"To see the steps the teams have made the last four years," Patterson said, "has just been inspiring." 🌟

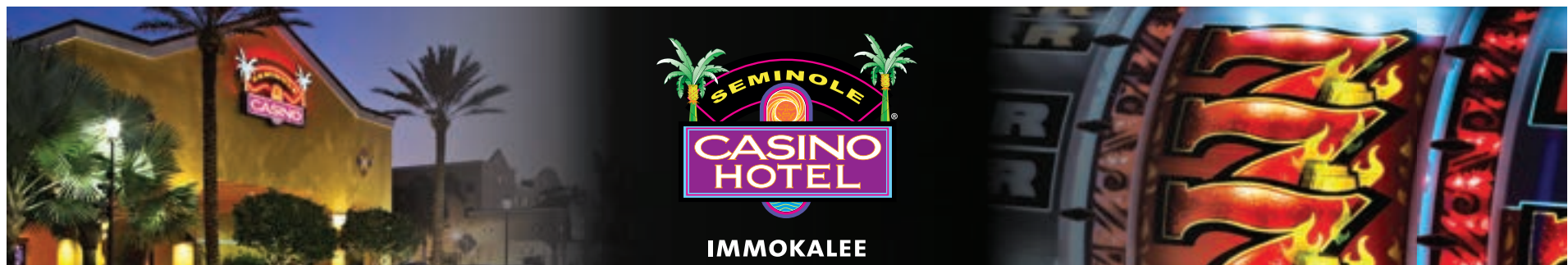
BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

We Felt the Blues, Brews & BBQ Boogie



The annual Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival in Ave Maria once again brought together blues enthusiasts and barbecue lovers for a day filled with music, food, and fun. Attendees were treated to electrifying performances by Southwest Florida's top blues bands, including Deb & The Dynamics, Old School, and Little Eddie & the Fat Fingers. The festival featured a mouthwatering array of barbecue options from food trucks like Smokin' Crow's BBQ, Gator Creek BBQ, and Big Smoke BBQ, complemented by gourmet candied apples and refreshing mocktails for all ages. Families enjoyed a variety of activities, from axe throwing and archery to face painting, balloon art, and a mechanical bull ride. The event also showcased vintage and high-performance car exhibits by the Porsche Club of Naples and the Cool Cruisers, and provided opportunities for attendees to capture special memories at the photo booth. 🌞





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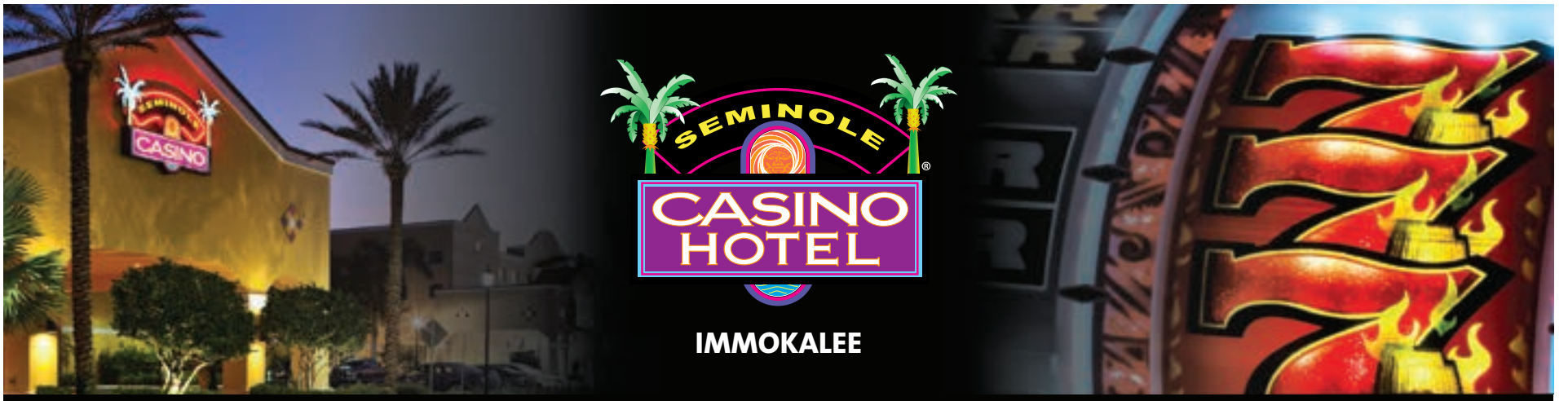


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COURTESY PHOTOS

The Feger family.

WISH

From page 1

The Fegers recounted that one of the more difficult parts of this journey was seeing the effects it had on the rest of their children, specifically Serafina's older sister.

"I think it's obviously hard at first because she lost her playmate. Her everyday playmate who was suddenly sitting on the couch in an excruciating amount of pain," Elizabeth said.

"We were really trying to make sure that she maintained as normal of a schedule as possible and that we were talking to her through it, allowing her to be a part of the experience," Brett said. "I think that's the best way that she would be able to process and cope, versus being completely removed from it and having more thoughts of 'What's going on?'"

Deeply ingrained in the town of Ave Maria, Brett and Elizabeth Feger found solace through the support of their community. As long-time town residents and staff members of Ave Maria University, the Fegers turned to their friends, family and faith to get through the difficult times.

"We were really surrounded by the community here. The support we received from the university, as well as the town, was just incredible," Elizabeth said.

In addition to the chemotherapy and MEK inhibitor used to treat Serafina's condition, the Fegers believed that supplementing treatment with natural care was imperative in aiding the young girl's health journey.

"Seek out care beyond normal medicine. We have a naturopathic oncologist in Arizona because you've got to find ways to support the body while it's going through treatment," Brett



MAKE-A-WISH SOUTHERN FLORIDA

Serafina beams with happiness as she explores her new playground set.

said. "Be flexible and seek the best care you can in multiple ways."

On the road to recovery, Serafina has now returned to doing what she loves most: playing with her sisters. This January, Make-

A-Wish Southern Florida granted now three-year-old Serafina a brand-new playset, which will serve as a long-lasting source of fun childhood memories for her and her siblings.

"Serafina loves to play with her sisters and

so, this gives her an opportunity to play with her sisters every day and even share it with her friends," Brett said. "It'll serve the girls for years to come, and even our son, who is due in a couple of months." 🌟

"We were really surrounded by the community here. The support we received from the university, as well as the town, was just incredible." — Elizabeth Feger

Don't Miss Out on These Weekly Events!

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

This year's big festivals sponsored by Ave Maria Development were tremendously successful with thousands of celebrants congregating in the center of town, dancing in the streets, and relishing first-class blues, country bands, delicious food, quenching beverages, and heaps of fun activities. The shops and restaurants along Annunciation Circle and Pope John Paul II benefited from increased traffic and enthusiasm for this big kind of small town.

But Ave Maria Development's commitment to the community does not end there. Through the end of April, they support weekly events that keep residents and visitors coming back to the Town Center for extra helpings of that Ave Maria charm. The Saturday farmers market along Pope John Paul II Boulevard is the biggest it has ever been in its eight-year history. And on Tuesdays, people are treated to a complimentary trolley excursion, live music and optional church tour.

"Our events are not just for residents and non-residents. Our goal is for people to come and see all that Ave Maria has to offer—from businesses and restaurants to fun activities and amenities," said Donna Marquez, events coordinator for Ave Maria Development. "We've really grown. Once people get here, they're always surprised by what they see and instantly fall in love with our town. After spending the day and experiencing an event here, many are ready to visit the homebuilders and shop for their future home."

Farmers Market

Saturdays Now Through April 27

This year, the Ave Maria Farmers Market is the biggest ever, with more than 60 vendors from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Saturday through April 27. It's fun to meet up with neighbors, shop for the freshest, locally sourced foods and support the many small business owners that live in the area. Live music from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. adds to the festive vibe.

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

Numerous artisanal food vendors offer delights you won't find in any store, such as European-style breads; gluten-free baked goods; homemade sauces, jams, guacamole and flavored oils; and premium meats and seafood. This is also the ideal place to get to know your farmers at two produce booths and to purchase plants and flowers to beautify your home and gardens.

Also in the mix are purveyors of creative products, such as handcrafted soaps and beauty supplies, Indig-

enous home goods, T-shirts with fun sayings and inspiring quotes, fashion-forward accessories and beautiful works of art. Expect an array of local service professionals, too—people you can meet and talk to about real estate, interior design, financial planning, solar energy or Earth-friendly cleaning supplies.

Free Music, Trolley Excursions & Church Tours

Tuesdays Now Through April 23

Every Tuesday in season through April 23, Ave Maria visitors are treated to one-hour guided trolley tours running hourly from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Led by knowledgeable local historian Joe Marinelli, the excursion begins at the New Home & Welcome Center on Annunciation Circle and travels throughout all the neighborhoods and interesting spots around town.

A rotating slate of musical entertainment livens up the Town Center from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., with performances by saxophonist Jim Blackburn, the Jeff Hughes interactive band, songstress Wendy Renee, the Kelly Mason jazz duo, Latin singers Harmony 2, folk band Patchouli, singer and acoustic guitarist Chris Stultz, and the Caribbean steel drum band Steely Pan.

As a companion activity the same day, the Ave Maria Catholic Church offers free, 30-minute guided tours of its famous parish from 1 to 3 p.m., helping visitors learn about and explore the architectural and historical details of this intriguing edifice. Visitors are also encouraged to check out the Mother Teresa Museum at Ave Maria University, as well as the many wonderful shops and restaurants in town. Tuesdays are super fun in Ave Maria. Make a day of it! 🌟



These shoppers enhanced their day with vibrant flowers purchased from the Farmers Market.

COURTESY PHOTOS



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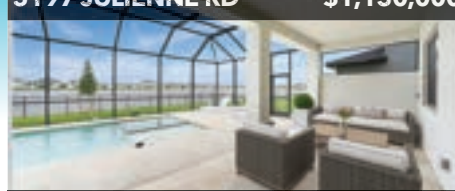


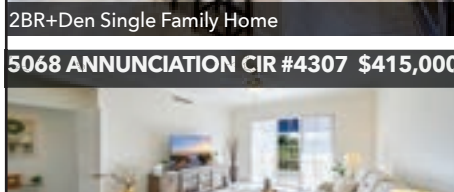
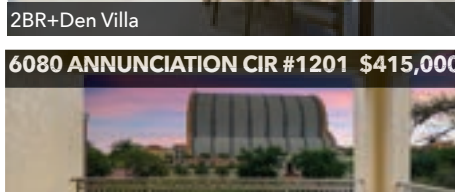

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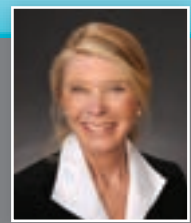
<p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">4468 MAGELLAN ST \$1,150,000</p>  <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 0;">5 BR w/custom pool and premium lot</p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">5197 JULIENNE RD \$1,150,000</p>  <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 0;">5 BR w/custom pool and premium lot</p>
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From One Flush to Thousands: Ave Maria Utility Company's Expansion

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The history of Ave Maria Utility Company (AMUC) can be traced back to the flushing of one toilet in March of 2007.

Whose toilet? Senior project manager Jason Vogel can't precisely pinpoint that but knows it was in a commercial building.

As the community has blossomed and grown, so has the demand for fresh water and wastewater treatment.

That's why the company is expanding its capacity for delivering fresh water and continuing to turn wastewater into reclaimed water for irrigation throughout Ave Maria.

The explanation is simple, according to Vogel.

"Why would we expand?" Vogel asked, sitting in a conference room at the company's second-floor offices in the First Foundation Bank building in downtown Ave Maria.

In December of 2008, the company had 196 residential connections. Now, the customer count is closing in on 4,000.

Service has not been interrupted once in all those years.

"We weathered two hurricanes [Irma and Ian] and never had a break of service," Vogel said.

He said each residence in Ave Maria averages 127 gallons per day. There are many variables such as size of the home and number of residents and whether appliances are high efficiency or not.

When Ave Maria was founded, the assumption was each house would average 250 gallons a day, but the technology of high efficiency appliances and toilets have cut into the average.

Where does all the water come from that is used for drinking and laundry and cooking?

"We are blessed with a lot of ground water in this area," Vogel said. "The state drains to the south. We enjoy that benefit. So, we take it for granted to an extent."

Florida has aquifers which supply water to millions of residents and visitors. Where precisely do Ave Maria residents

get their water?

"Good question," Vogel said.

The water source is the lower Tamiami aquifer, which, according to the United States Geological Survey website, is located beneath nearby Bonita Springs.

AMUC will move its source to the sandstone aquifer.

"It's deeper," Vogel said of sandstone. "It's harder to get to."

Sandstone's water is about 325 feet below the surface vs. 60-to-75 feet for the lower Tamiami, according to Vogel. But going deeper will pay off.

"The water is better," Vogel said.

He added that the sandstone provides "a pure water."

Will customers notice?

"Most people are not going to notice the difference," Vogel said.

It's all part of the expansion and why adding capacity is necessary in the bustling community.

Ave Maria has more residents and more visitors. Meaning it has more toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, showers, sinks and faucets.

It all started with that one toilet in 2007, 17 years ago.

"That was a significant day," Vogel said.

Now, there are thousands of customers and more nearly every day. Plant manager Paul Cortez is well aware of his mission in serving the community.

"We just got to make sure that we are not only compliant [with regulations] but that we do it cost effectively," Cortez said. "We look to take care of our clients, which are the people of Ave Maria, and we respond to any concerns, and we just try to keep everything up and running."

The wastewater plant's daily capacity is 900,000 gallons, according to Vogel. Plant expansion will allow for 1.8 million gallons a day. All of it is re-purposed for irrigation through the use of biological organisms and not chemicals.

What comes into the plant as waste goes out as irrigation.

"One hundred percent is re-purposed," Vogel said. "Not a drop wasted."

Vogel is a familiar figure around town. In 2020 an Ave Maria Sun story on Vogel carried this headline: "The Wizard of Water."

The Wizard and his



Left to Right: Chris Stewart, Ray Carter (AMUC) and Karen Miller.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Glenn standing atop the wastewater plant biological aeration basin.



Fat, oil and grease accumulation in a sanitary manhole. Improperly disposed cooking grease and so-called flushable wipes create costly system challenges.

growing staff continue working their magic as the community grows. In 2008, AMUC had seven employees and now has 27. It also moved in 2022 from a 2,025-square foot office space in the Town Center to its 4,246-square foot current location.

All those people and all that space are needed to service the needs of customers.

And then at some point, more plant expansion may be needed. As Vogel talked in the conference room he looked up at a PowerPoint on a screen with statistics and charts and projections.

"We may have to do a fourth one depending on what happens way out here," Vogel said, gesturing to a projected timeline on the screen. "Beyond my crystal ball's credibility and accuracy."

But he has to prepare.

"I have to take the worst-case scenarios so that's my job," Vogel said. "Make sure I have adequate capacity depending on what my development people [town developer Barron Collier Companies] throw at me and the developer people I say in a friendly manner because we all

work for the same group."

The projections show 13,000 to 14,000 residents around the year 2040.

"So, that's why we're expanding," Vogel said.

The goals will be the same in 2040 as they are in 2024 and as they were when the community was founded.

But Vogel believes residents will not notice anything different.

"We're going to maintain the same standards," Vogel said.

The standards are high. AMUC won an award for best tasting water in the Collier Hendry and Lee counties region in 2010, 2014, 2021 and 2022. The award was bestowed by the American Water Works Association.

The plant is located off Ave Maria Boulevard behind a berm and a copse of trees. It's essentially out of sight and out of mind.

"At the end of the day this is behind the curtain," Vogel said.

Where fresh, clean water comes from and where wastewater goes are topics most people likely don't give a moment's thought to during the course of a day. Vogel understands that.

"Sometimes I'd like them to think about it," Vogel said. "It's like, 'Mommy, does meat come from Publix?'"

No, the meat comes from someplace else and the origin of the water coming out of Ave Maria faucets comes from wells and pipes out of sight.

"We don't advertise it," Vogel said. "It just happens."

As the community continues growing Vogel knows more expansion will be needed.

"We're going to have another phase right around 2032," Vogel said.

But residents will likely be unaware of anything going on.

"People take it for granted," Vogel said. "Like they take hamburger meat at Publix." 🌻

Exotic Plant Removal: Collier Environmental Services' Role in Ave Maria's Ecosystem

BY MELANIE PEFINIS

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

When the Barron Collier Companies (BCC) embarked on the development of Ave Maria, the team knew that creating an entire community would require compliance with various county ordinances. Constructing a whole new town comes with diverse provisions and requirements, so in 2002, the Rural Land Stewardship (or RSLA) was adopted to create a land-use plan to protect agricultural areas, natural habitats, wetlands and flow ways, while directing growth to more sustainable mixed-use patterns from these areas. Since the RLSA's implementation more than 50,000 acres of Florida habitat has been preserved. BCC's master-planned community, Ave Maria, was the first town developed under the Rural Land Stewardship Area program, setting aside 17,000 acres for conservation.

"There were requirements we had to comply with to generate accumulate the credits to proceed with the development of Ave Maria," explained David Genson, President of Development for BCC. "Within that space, we have pristine wetland areas, preservation areas, as well as agricultural land and easements for future use."

In 2006, the BCC founded Collier Environmental Services (CES); a separate arm of the multi-faceted company which maintains, restores and preserves natural landscapes for Ave Maria and other Southwest Florida communities. This new enterprise proved so necessary and effective that it has now grown and evolved into an environmental consultancy that not only oversees lands within Barron Collier's properties but also helps other developers and local governments fulfill their ecological goals.

"At Ave Maria, we constantly have to monitor the lands and clear the ground of invasive plants," Genson said. Known as exotics, these plants are not native to Florida or the neighboring foliage and require teams to eradicate these invasive species and replant vegetation more appropriate for Florida's ecosystem. "Our crews are always out walking the grounds looking for bad plants."

Why is constant monitoring necessary? Florida has its own unique hurdles. Though the state is known for its weather, sometimes that weather proves problematic for sustaining natural spaces. "Florida has special problems we have to deal with," Genson said. "Hurricanes and winds really impact the preserves. The wind blows seeds that do not belong here surprisingly far distances."

Still dealing with damaged parcels from Hurricane Ian last year, Genson said some of the worst spaces are still being repaired and date as far back as Hurricane Wilma. "Wilma was more of a wind event and seeds were dispersed from miles away," resulting in botanical specimens that do not belong here.

The repair methods often require taking the spaces down to bare ground. But the results of this attention are visible in Ave Maria's natural resources and thriving wildlife. Whether it is the wetlands of Camp Keais Strand or the scenery of nearby Corkscrew Swamp, the environmental mission conceived at Ave Maria's founding is evident when you step outside and embrace the nature surrounding you. 🌿



COURTESY PHOTOS

A Collier Environmental Services crew planting cypress trees, a protected species in Florida.



Invasive exotic plants that need to be removed to maintain the integrity of the native ecosystem.



Cleared land awaiting for the nurturing touch of native plants.

"At Ave Maria, we constantly have to monitor the lands and clear the ground of invasive plants. Our crews are always out walking the grounds looking for bad plants."

— David Genson,
President of
Development for Barron
Collier Companies

ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

Dates and details are subject to change. Call the Ave Maria New Home & 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

Lipman's 5k Run/walk for Backpack

April 6

The Lipman 5K is a race the whole family can participate in. All of the proceeds will go towards purchasing backpacks and school supplies for Lipman's Annual Backpack Giveaway, hosted in Immokalee every August. This will be the 14th year that Lipman has hosted its backpack giveaway, and this is a great way for you to participate. School supplies are more essential than ever, helping us take the burden off families during an especially burdensome back-to-school season by registering for the Lipman 5K Run For Backpacks.

FIRST FRIDAYS

These free events are on the first Friday of every month in season and combine musical entertainment with various activities depending on the location. This month's event will be at the Oil Well Craft Beer Brewery. The Earth Day-themed event will feature information from Naples Botanical Gardens, live music from Kaila Love Entertainment, performing songs from a wide range of genres spanning over 80 years of music hits, Oil Well Craft Beer freshly made sangria, a food truck and more! The event is free and open to all.

MERCHANT EVENTS

The Bean at Ave Maria

Check out The Bean's **drive-thru coffee cart** located in front of The Pub at Ave Maria every day from 6:30 to 8:00 a.m. and swiftly purchase muffins, bagels, hot and iced coffee and more!

Discover the latest **weekly special drink announcements**, expertly crafted by their talented baristas, at facebook.com/thebeanatave.

Every Tuesday, dive into **family-friendly Bingo** fun where winners can snag complimentary drinks, ice cream and more!

Mercato at Ave

Revel in the atmosphere with free Wi-Fi, savor handcrafted coffee beverages, or unwind with a glass of wine or beer. Lounge areas invite you to relax, while live music creates a delightful ambiance. Don't miss the opportunity to capture memories at the specially designed mural, perfect for striking photo moments.

Explore more about their diverse range and upcoming activities on their Facebook page and Instagram, as well as their website mercatoatave.net.

OASIS The Kitchen Lounge

Step into OASIS The Kitchen Lounge, where culinary delights and captivating entertainment await. Experience the chef's monthly specials, indulge in American and Latin brunch on weekends, and anticipate the return of beloved comedy nights, Wine and Jazz evenings, live bands, and monthly Latin Socials. Join for Happy Hour from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. and enjoy unbeatable deals on drinks and appetizers. At OASIS, every moment is an opportunity to escape and savor the

good life.

Visit their website at oasiskitchen-lounge.com for more information.

Oil Well Craft Beer

Indulge in delicious sub sandwiches available daily from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Call (239) 354-4454 to place an order!

Every Monday through Saturday from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. there is at least one food truck at the Park of Commerce serving scrumptious food to go with their crafted libations.

To-Go Tuesdays: \$1 Off Crawlers and \$2 Off Growlers.

Wine Wednesdays: \$1 Off Wine.

Ladies Drink Specials on Thursdays: \$1 Off Drafts and Wine for Ladies.

Friday, March 29 is **National Vietnam War Veterans Day**, a day meant to pay tribute to veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were prisoners of war or were listed as missing in action. Please come show support for these special men and women! Oil Well Craft Beer will have Veteran's drink specials all night, live patriotic music by Ashley Breitag and a free gift (while supplies last) from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Family-Friendly Bingo is on Saturday, April 6 and May 4 with free prizes from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Seats fill up extremely fast, so get in early and secure your spot!

Glorified Vision Art will be out to host the **Brew & Paint Party** on Tuesday, April 9 and May 14. Only \$35 to secure your seat and includes one drink. Seats fill up quickly, so R.S.V.P. to (239)-354-4454.

SpeedQuizzing Trivia with duo Tom & Carol at 7:00 p.m. is on Monday, April 15 and May 6.

Adult Bingo, hosted by Cruise Planner's Team of Jackie and Dan Rategan, will take place on Wednesday, April 17 starting at 7:00 p.m.

Prepare for an exclusive evening as Viking Cruises arrives in town on Tuesday, April 23 at 6:00 p.m., with Jackie

Rategan from **Cruise Planners** hosting a special presentation at Oil Well Craft Beer, where attendees can hear the latest news and updates, receive a unique offer, and enjoy giveaways and discounts on OWCB brews.

Viking Night Dance Party is on Saturday, April 27 from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m. Dress up like a Viking and be ready to dance. DJ DiFlo will be playing all the hits! Best Viking costume will be announced at 9:00 p.m.

Music Bingo with Tom & Carol is on Monday, April 29 and May 20 at 7:00 p.m.

Adult Bingo, hosted by Relator Sara Callahan, will take place on Wednesday, May 15 starting at 7:00 p.m., 21 & up only to play! **

Karaoke is back on Saturday, May 18. DJ DiFlo will be playing songs from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m.

For more information about Oil Well Craft Beer visit their Facebook page and website at oilwellcraftbeer.com.

The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria

Enjoy Happy Hour every Monday through Friday from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., where you can indulge in a buy-one-get-one-free offer on select draft beers, well liquor and wine.

The Secret Ingredient

Celebrate your birthday and enjoy a special 20% discount on your favorite regularly priced item. Don't forget to bring your ID!

Every Monday is **55+ and Fabulous Day!** Shoppers ages 55 and up save 10% off one regularly priced item.

Discover the excitement of their **Weekly Wednesday Sale**, where a special item is offered at a discounted price. Stop in or stay tuned on their social media channels to unveil the featured item each week!

Celebrate **National Bell Bottom Day** in retro fashion on Saturday, April 6! Swing by The Secret Ingredient wearing your grooviest bell bottoms and enjoy a fantastic 20% discount on one regular priced item!

On **National PJ Day**, all PJs are 20% off

on Saturday, April 13.

Embrace the whimsy of **National Silly Earring Day** on Sunday, April 14! Treat yourself to a delightful 30% discount on one regular priced item as you celebrate the joy of playful accessories.

Get ready for the **Kentucky Derby** in style with their irresistible offer: Enjoy a fabulous 20% discount on all derby hats and fascinators on Friday, May 3!

Make **Mother's Day** unforgettable on Sunday, May 12 by discovering the perfect gift, complete with complimentary gift wrapping for an added touch of love and thoughtfulness.

Monday, May 20 is **National Straw Hat Day!** All Straw Hats will be 10% off.

Stella Rose Way

A locally-owned gift boutique and home decor store offering a curated selection of gifts, local artisanal items, children's products, home décor and more.

With monthly special events, visitors can explore the boutique's offerings and discover Ave Maria souvenirs, making it a go-to destination for beautiful gifts and specialty home decor. Stella Rose Way aims to provide both residents and visitors with a convenient and charming spot to find the perfect present or add a touch of goodness and beauty to their homes.

For more information, check out their Facebook page and visit their website at stellaroseway.com.

Tropical Smoothie Café

Every sip and bite spreads sunshine and inspires better choices at Tropical Smoothie Café. With fresh, made-to-order smoothies, wraps, sandwiches, and flatbreads that instantly boost your mood, treat yourself to an experience that makes eating better and easy breezy. Bask in the good vibes of the tropics and take a tiny vacation in the middle of your day, whether you are grabbing curbside, ordering through the app, or opting for delivery. Beyond just food, Tropical Smoothie Cafe is committed to making a splash in communities by donating smoothies and food, supporting charitable organizations and sponsoring



The spirited team at The Secret Ingredient is ready to help with all of your fashionable needs! Every Monday shoppers aged 55 and up enjoy a 10% discount on one regularly priced item.

COURTESY PHOTO

ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

local sports programs. With a dedication to responsibly sourced, safe and quality ingredients, Tropical Smoothie Cafe spreads sunshine and inspires better relationships with every sip and bite. Be sure to try their fan-favorite Tropic Bowls!

For their menu and to order online, please visit tropicalsmoothiecafe.com.

Vicky Bakery

Get ready to savor the taste of Cuba as Ave Maria eagerly anticipates the imminent arrival of Vicky Bakery, the cherished pastry haven making its debut on Florida's west coast. Led by Phong Ho, Ave Maria's foremost restaurateur, Vicky Bakery promises a delectable assortment of light, flavorful pastries that are bound to delight the senses. From crispy croissants to decadent cakes, each treat is meticulously crafted to perfection, ensuring an unforgettable culinary experience for every customer. Additionally, Vicky Bakery will offer a comprehensive catering service, delivering freshly baked goods to schools, businesses, and events throughout the community.

Stay tuned for updates on their Facebook page and website at vickybakery.com!

Way Out Toys & Games

Kids and adults of all ages and skills are invited to participate in the **Pokémon Pack Wars**, a fast-paced, bingo-style game, every Tuesday from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. For \$20, each player receives three packs of new Pokémon cards to keep and



SEE ALL AROUND AVE MARIA, A30 ► Owner Phong Ho outside the future storefront of Vicky Bakery at 5076 Annunciation Circle.

COURTESY PHOTO



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AVE MARIA SUN

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ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

From page 29

use over four rounds of play. Winners receive Pokémon prizes.

Every Thursday evening from 6 to 8 p.m., embrace the **Lorcana Open Play** experience – a gathering for all ages to delve into the captivating world of Lorcana. Whether you're a seasoned player or new to the game, this event provides an opportunity to learn, strategize and connect with fellow enthusiasts. Lorcana's blend of kid-friendly accessibility and strategic depth makes it a game suitable for everyone aged 8 and above. Need cards? Starter decks are available for purchase in-store, ensuring everyone can enjoy the fun of Lorcana Open Play.

AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

Schedule is subject to change, check avemariagyrenes.com/calendar for away games and updates.

Wednesday, March 27

Baseball vs. Fort Lauderdale, 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 3

Lacrosse vs. Keiser, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, April 5

Baseball vs. Point (Ga.), 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Softball vs. Webber, 3:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 6

Lacrosse vs. #6 Life (Ga.), 10:00 a.m.

Baseball vs. Point (Ga.), 12:00 p.m.

Softball vs. Webber, 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Friday, April 12

M. Tennis vs. #3 Keiser, 2:00 p.m.

W. Tennis vs. #3 Keiser, 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 13

M. Tennis vs. #12 St. Thomas, TBD

Rugby vs. Millenia Atlantic, 1:00 p.m.

W. Tennis vs. #8 St. Thomas, TBD

Friday, April 19

Baseball vs. Keiser, 12 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Softball vs. Florida Memorial, 3:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 20

Baseball vs. Keiser, 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Softball vs. Florida Memorial, 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Thursday, April 25

Baseball vs. Warner, 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Softball vs. Florida Memorial, 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Friday, April 26

Baseball vs. Warner, 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

AVE MARIA RESIDENTS ONLY

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

COFFEE WITH A TWISS

This casual gathering with AMMA Executive Director Kim Twiss held from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. every second Thursday of the month allows homeowners to ask questions and get updates pertaining to the Master Association and community news. Next dates are Feb. 8 and March 14.

ONSPOT DERMATOLOGY

Located in the parking lot off Roma



Street and Avila Avenue (behind Tropical Smoothie Café and Oasis The Kitchen Lounge), OnSpot provides various dermatological services in their state-of-the-art mobile office. Services will be available from 7:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. 15 minutes could save your life! Walk-ins are currently available; however, it is recommended that you book your appointment before. Please visit their website to book an appointment. Next dates are Feb. 9, Feb. 19, March 2, March 20 and March 30.

EMBRACE LIFE SERIES

Photographer and resident Patrick O'Flaherty DDS presents inspiring wildlife photography series set to music in the AMMA meeting room from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. March 19 and April 16. This presentation covers amazing wildlife shots taken on his voyages, and also has showcased enlightening photography in places he has visited with Alliance for Smiles Mission in counties all over the world. Admission is free.

SPRING FESTIVAL

Celebrate spring Ave Maria-style from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday, March 23, 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, and a lollipop drop! Vendors and information booths will entertain and educate. Admission is \$5 per child and free for parents and kids aged 2 and under. Pre-registration is required and will be available at the avemariamaster-association.com website calendar.

ADULT GAMES GROUP

Adults looking for a friendly group



old). Families must register in person at the water park. For more information, call 239-348-8384 or email kellie.powell@fsresidential.com.

FREE FITNESS CLASSES AT SOUTH PARK

These biweekly fitness classes at South Park start at 9:15 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. For more information for these and other class locations, text instructor Nicolas Leon at 786-436-3323.

TAI CHI FITNESS

Experience a meditative workout that increases strength, mobility and much more at 9:00 a.m. Wednesdays in the AMMA event room. For more information, contact instructor Mylyn Vedel at myvedel@gmail.com or 239-220-4181.

YOGA FITNESS

Yoga instructor Alexandra Salazar returns to the Ave Maria Master Association for specialized classes geared towards senior adults. Classes will be held at 10 a.m. and will occur every other Friday. If you would like to know more or would like to register, please email salex2009@gmail.com.

ZUMBA CLASSES

These classes are on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in South Park at the Amphitheater, with instructor Genesis North. For more information, cost and updates, please contact Genesis North via the website at genesiszumba.as.me.

QUEST MARTIAL ARTS ACADEMY CLASSES

Led by Kenny Quintero, a 20-year veteran instructor, these martial arts classes for kids to adults, start at 5 p.m. Mondays and 9:30 a.m. Saturdays in the AMMA event room, teach students 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 questmartialartsacademy.com.

SPORTS LEAGUES & ORGANIZATIONS

There are various seasonal independent sports leagues and organizations operating in Ave Maria, so for more information on current availability, please visit the Ave Maria Master Association Website Calendar for any approved fitness and sports conducted by independent contractors.

AVE MARIA LITTLE LEAGUE

Check out the Spring season information for this home-based and very first official league in Ave Maria who continues to have a winning history! League play includes baseball, tee ball and softball for kids 4 to 14. For detailed information and registration instructions, visit avemarialittleleague.com or contact avemariabaseball@gmail.com. 🌟





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*He is Risen,
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Just as He said...
Matthew 28:6*



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