

DIALUM

MAJOR EMPLOYER COMES TO AVE MARIA

Sundays on the Diamond: Ave Maria's Unofficial Adult Co-Ed Softball Team

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Every Sunday morning, a group of about a dozen to possibly two dozen Ave Maria residents convene in South Park for casual, lively games of slow-pitch softball.

The gatherings are delightfully informal; in fact, the group doesn't even have an official name. Yet, what they lack in formality, they make up for in sheer enjoyment.

Warm-ups begin around 9:30 a.m. and the first pitch is about 10:00 a.m. The games have no umpires, and a four-run limit per inning is imposed to maintain balance and prevent runaway victories. Modifications to the rules are made when insufficient players turn up, ensuring everyone gets a chance to participate.

For example, a right-handed batter may be allowed to hit only to left field. Or if there aren't enough players for four infielders, outs may be recorded simply by catching the ball before the runner reaches first base.

The players do not have uniforms, but jerseys have been ordered. They will say Ave Maria on the front and players can choose a name and number for the back.

The games attract a diverse crowd, from former collegiate athletes to senior citizens and even children, fostering a sense of inclusivity and community spirit. Although labeled as co-ed softball, the majority of players are male, spanning ages from their 20s to their 70s.

Ave Maria resident Justin Chervets is a regular. Although only one woman played the morning the Sun stopped by, he said

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GLENN MILLER / AVE MARIA SUN

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

DIALUM, A CHILEAN COMPANY that processes glass for various commercial and residential uses, will open its first U.S. facility in Ave Maria by early 2025. Site preparation has already commenced for a \$25 million, 100,000-square-foot building just east of Arthrex Manufacturing. An expansion of another 60,000 to 80,000 square feet is anticipated at a later date.

"Right now, we're doing the horizontal part of the construction," said Director Fernando Diez Vidal from the company's headquar-



DIEZ VIDAL

SEE DIALUM, A19 ►

COURTESY PHOTOS AND RENDERING

COVER: A rendering of the Dialum facility in Ave Maria. LEFT: Various projects by Dialum around the world.



Ave Maria Welcome Center

Set for Summer Revamp
A10 ►



Taking the Safer Route

Adapting to New Florida State Golf Cart Laws
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Youthful Bonds

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Ave Maria Sun

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Published by

Florida Media Group LLC
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Phone: 239.333.2135

Introducing Ave Maria's Civic Association Members

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The Ave Maria Civic Association (AMCA) was launched as a joint effort by residents to tackle community issues together, announced by Collier County Commissioner Bill McDaniel in January, marking a step towards active community involvement.

The AMCA's members are a diverse group of Ave Maria residents, aged 45 to 77, from various northern hometowns, united by their sense of belonging in Florida.

These mini biographies, provided by the Ave Maria Civic Association members, offer a glimpse into the rich tapestry of experiences and backgrounds shaping their collective vision for Ave Maria's future.

Jose "Joe" Cortina

Originally from Cuba, Joe Cortina is 74 years old. He moved to Ave Maria from Chicago six years ago after a career in manufacturing and supply chain management. With an MBA/MIS from Dominican University, Cortina, now retired and living with his wife Bridget, aims to contribute to Ave Maria's development as an AMCA member, focusing on aligning community plans with residents' needs.



CORTINA

Ronny Lambotte

From Columbus, Ohio, Ronny Lambotte has been a key member of the Ave Maria community since 2016, with his family and dog. At 45, his background in management adds significant organizational and leadership skills. He's drawn to Ave Maria for its ideal setting and community activities, aiming to enhance family life and create lasting memories. Motivated by community spirit, Ronny actively contributes to the town's development, focusing on overcoming challenges and cultivating a cohesive community ethos.



LAMBOTTE

John Lanham

A 64-year-old retiree from Owensboro, Kentucky, John Lanham discovered his retreat in Ave Maria in February 2018, accompanied by his devoted wife and three children. His commitment to family radiates through every facet of his life. Although retired, Lanham's dedication to serving others remains steadfast as he eagerly embraces the role of a facilitator and mediator within the AMCA, aiming to address concerns, foster understanding, and enhance communication among its members. With his warmth, empathy, and unwavering dedication, Lanham stands as a

cherished pillar of Ave Maria, embodying the spirit of service and community.

Holly L. Powers

Holly L. Powers, 77, has lived in Ave Maria since 2010 with her husband, Warren Powers. Originally from Quincy, Massachusetts, Holly has a rich background in the hospitality industry, currently serving as President of Powers Travel & Event Management. She's known for her contributions to the travel sector and involvement with Skål International. Beyond her professional life, Holly is an active participant in the Ave Maria Civic Association, focusing on community engagement in town planning and ensuring the residents' perspectives are included in the town's development.

Kevin Schang

Kevin Schang, a 67-year-old retiree from Pinckney, Michigan, has been living in Ave Maria for 5 years with his wife, two daughters, and two grandchildren. As an active member of the Ave Maria Civic Association, he aims to be a reliable resource for residents by offering information and advocating for initiatives that will improve the community. 🌟



SCHANG



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Marking Achievements at Ave Maria University’s Commencement Day

BY SANDRA YEYATI
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The Ave Maria University (AMU) commencement on May 4 at the new Golisano Field House celebrated the achievements of 277 graduating students, awarding 251 bachelor’s degrees, 24 master’s degrees and two doctorates. Nearly half of the graduates were originally from Florida. The others came from 36 states and five countries, including Aruba, Canada, France, Germany and Spain. Women represented 57% of the class.

“One interesting anecdote that is worth mentioning is that this class entered in the fall of 2020 in the height of COVID-19 uncertainty, so they showed a lot of courage in leaving their homes and coming from around the country and around the world to come to school here, and have shown an enormous amount of perseverance getting to this day,” said Provost Roger Nutt, who holds a doctorate in theology and is responsible for academic programming at the university.

In a heartwarming homecoming, Nicholas Healy, the school’s first president from 1999 to 2011, received an honorary degree in recognition of his foundational commitment to the university that continues to this day. Mr. Healy and his wife Jane, who have been married for 60 years, spend their winters in Ave Maria.

Delivering an inspiring commencement speech, Father Mike Schmitz also received an honorary degree. He is the director of the Youth and Young Adult



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN
ABOVE: Proud Ave Maria University graduates celebrate. RIGHT: Provost Roger Nutt (left), commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient Fr. Mike Schmitz and President Mark Middendorf (right).

Ministry for the Diocese of Duluth, chaplain for the Newman Center at the University of Minnesota-Duluth, and the widely popular podcaster of “Bible in a Year” and “The Catechism in a Year,” produced by Ascension.

Eleven students completed their master’s degrees in business administration. It is the largest MBA class in AMU’s history, underscoring a noteworthy trend.



“The number of MBA graduates were in the ones and twos a couple of years ago, and by next fall when we reconvene, there will be nearly 50 students in the program, so the popularity of that program is really accelerating. We see exponential growth in future years already,” Nutt remarked.

Another significant showing was in

health- and science-related studies, including exercise physiology, health science, nursing, biology and biochemistry. “There’s a strong healthcare and pre-med culture on the campus,” explained Nutt. “Nursing is very strong, but four of the top 10 or 11 majors at the university are in the biology department.”

Philosophy and theology have always been core strengths at the university, and this year is no different, with 12 and 19 bachelor’s degrees, respectively, as well as 13 master’s degrees in theology and two doctorates in philosophy. Regardless of their major, every AMU student must fulfill a core curriculum that includes three theology and three philosophy classes.

According to Nutt, “For the committed student who knows that they want to be an entrepreneur or a doctor or a lawyer or a nurse, Ave Maria University has become a very attractive place.” All students must also complete courses in literature, math and languages, with an emphasis on writing skills and the ability to communicate effectively. The idea is to help AMU students become well-rounded individuals able to confront an ever-changing world and job market.

“It’s tempting for schools today to be hyper-specialized such that three or three-and-a-half of the four years are taken up by courses directly related to the major, but we find that the blend between the liberal arts foundation and the spe-

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cialized courses in the major is a better overall formation and gives them more agility,” Nutt said. “At some schools, you can be challenged somewhat academically, but the unique thing about Ave Maria University is that the students are challenged simultaneously to pursue human and professional excellence while also being challenged to grow spiritually and make it their own.”

“The blend between students in science, business and pre-professional programs like nursing and elementary education, and then the traditional humanities like theology and philosophy, shows the maturation of Ave Maria University as a comprehensive university,” Nutt asserted. “That was part of our founder Tom Monaghan’s vision from the start. Because of our Catholic identity and liberal arts mission, he wanted to make sure that we were very strong in philosophy and theology and the humanities, but he also wanted to found a comprehensive university in the sense of having majors across the disciplines. I think the spread seen among the students and their interests shows that as we now mature into our third decade, we are realizing the vision of being comprehensive in nature, and not just one or two specialized programs.”

According to Nutt, AMU students are in an enviable position, uniquely poised to find satisfying futures. In nursing, for example, where there is a high demand, students are often recruited by headhunters and sometimes even receive signing bonuses. Several students, both men and women, are entering the seminary or religious life. Many students will go on to impressive and attractive graduate programs, too.

“I’m happy for them,” Nutt reflected. “They’re a coveted bunch of people in



ABOVE LEFT: Valedictorian Leila Joy Castillo delivers her address. TOP RIGHT: A graduation message. ABOVE RIGHT: Fr. Joseph Lugalambi delivers the invocation. LEFT: Nursing graduate Danielle Latelle (left) and theology alumnus Josh Carlson (right). BELOW: Grads in prayer.



SANDRA YEVATI / AVE MARIA SUN



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Donahue Academy’s Largest Senior Class Achieves Unprecedented Success

BY JULIANNA PEREZ
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

As the school year ends, Donahue Academy bids the graduating class of 2024 a farewell after years of continued academic excellence.

Marc Snyder, Donahue Academy’s principal, believes students’ success can be attributed mainly to the structure of the continuous curriculum and the staff’s collaborative efforts to identify where students need the most assistance.

“It really starts from the early ages because every grade really builds on the previous one,” said Snyder. “When you have a K-12 school, you have a curriculum that is horizontally and vertically aligned. You also have teachers that are working side-by-side, constantly communicating with one another about how the students are doing.”

Donahue Academy’s class of 2024 has exceeded standards in more ways than one. With 32 graduates, this year will see the school’s largest graduating class to date.

The school’s pristine 100% college acceptance rate remains untouched. About two-thirds of the senior class will attend Ave Maria University, reflecting the school’s values and the importance students place on their education during college. Out of that pool, almost half of those students will receive \$15,000 dollars or more annually in merit-based scholarships.

Among the other colleges and universities chosen are the University of Notre Dame, Thomas Aquinas College, Christen-

dom College, the University of Dallas, the Franciscan University of Steubenville and St. John Vianney College Seminary.

Out of 32 students, 13 of them have qualified for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, which establishes lottery-funded scholarships to reward Florida high school graduates for high academic achievement.

Donahue Academy is acclaimed for its student body’s high-performing SAT scores, even being named Southwest Florida’s Highest Scoring School in 2022. This year was no exception!

With an average SAT score of 1195, the class of 2024 performed 167 points above the 2023 national average of 1028. The highest SAT score in the grade was 1530, only 70 points shy of a perfect score.

Mary Fairchild, a senior at Donahue Academy, was named a National Merit Commended Scholar. The award is given in recognition of a high-performing PSAT score, as well as an overall outstanding academic performance.

Almost half of the Donahue seniors who took the challenging National Latin Exam earned honors, further underscoring the academic rigor and dedication of the student body.

In addition to academics, Donahue Academy’s sports teams performed well this year.

Both the girls’ and boys’ high school basketball teams were named the Paradise Coast Athletic Conference (PCAC) champions. The high school boys’ soccer team also took home the PCAC championship



COURTESY PHOTOS
TOP: Donahue Academy’s SSAA Central Division Conference Champs and Sportsmanship Award winners.
RIGHT: Dominic Jahnke will study at St. John Vianney College Seminary.



for their sport. The high school football team was awarded the Sunshine State Athletic Association Central Division Conference Championship, as well as the SSAA Football Sportsmanship Award.

Both inside the classroom and out on the court, Donahue Academy’s class of 2024 has been a shining example of young excellence. The senior class’s unbridled desire for success and drive to learn is something Principal Snyder hopes students will take with them beyond graduation.

“We believe in instilling a love for learning in students,” Snyder said. “We want to place value in terms of not just using

school as a platform to get some job down the road, but really embracing the educational experience. We want our students to be lifelong learners.” 🌟



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Ave Maria Welcome Center Set for Summer Revamp, Promising Exciting Lifestyle Concept

BY ERICA FISH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

In a bid to enhance community engagement and provide an elevated experience for visitors, the Ave Maria Welcome Center is gearing up for a comprehensive summer renovation. The temporary closure is part of a strategic initiative aimed at rejuvenating the space to better showcase the community culture and exemplary growth of the town. Upon completion, the revamped center will introduce a vibrant lifestyle concept that promises a variety of engagement and an enhanced greeting when visiting.

Beginning Saturday, June 1, the Welcome Center will be closed for renovation. During the closure, staff will continue servicing all visitors at the Ave Maria Master Association office. The Ave Maria Development contact information remains the same, email info@avemaria.com or call 239-352-3903. The refreshed Ave Maria Welcome Center is set to open in October 2024.

The most exciting features of the upcoming transformation are the dedicated photo sections perfect for capturing Instagram-worthy

moments when posing going down a water slide, taking a swing on the green or sitting in a real vintage golf cart. The new Welcome Center will also include a beverage and snack bar, where visitors can sit down and relax while going over community information with staff.

The overarching goal of the renovation project is to future-proof the Welcome Center, ensuring its relevance and appeal for years to come. By embracing a forward-thinking lifestyle concept, the facility seeks to cater to the diverse needs of Ave Maria's growing community, offering a seamless blend of hospitality, community engagement and vibrance.

Commenting on the upcoming renovation, Donna Marquez, Community Representative & Events Coordinator for Ave Maria Development, expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming transformation. "Our team is thrilled to begin this new chapter of the Ave Maria Welcome Center. Our goal is for anyone who comes into the new center to feel right at home. We want this place to reflect what our community is to many people, and that is comfort and a sense of belonging." 🌟



ABOVE : Get ready to say cheese and take photos at more than three interactive photo-op sections for all ages. RIGHT: At the heart of the Center, visitors will find an open-concept sitting area adjacent to the reception desk and the highly anticipated drink and snack bar.



COURTESY RENDERINGS

RUNNING FOR EDUCATION

Lipman 5K Raises Funds for Backpack Giveaway



In early April, families, serious runners and weekend joggers converged at Annunciation Circle for the Lipman 5K Run for Backpacks. The event served a noble cause, with all proceeds dedicated to purchasing backpacks, bicycles, shoes and other school supplies for Lipman's Annual Backpack Giveaway in Immokalee, celebrating its 14th year. Participants reveled in the picturesque 5K course encircling the lakes at Ave Maria, while others embraced the 1 Mile walking course. Children aged 10 and under delighted in the free Junior Fun Run. Every race registrant took home a commemorative long-sleeved shirt, and winners in various age categories proudly received trophies. 🌟



Left to right: Juan Cantu, Roberto Facundo, Alex Castro, Fernando Banderas and Juan Santillan



Jamie Ulmer, CEO of the Healthcare Network



Event volunteers, left to right: Ceselie Mudron, Mariana Barrera and Maria Jose Gonzales



Mary Bartoshuk



SANDRA VEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

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AVE MARIA COMMUNITIES



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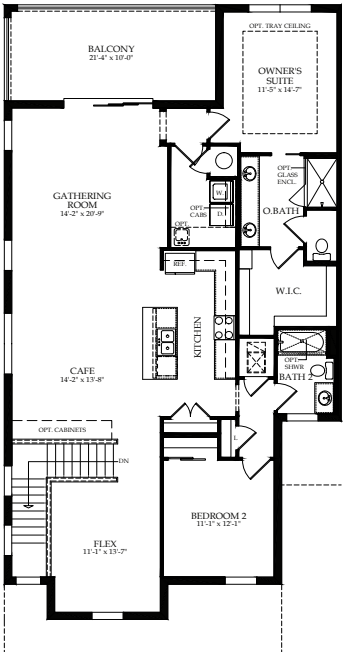
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- Starting From the mid \$300s
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 - Two-Three Bedrooms
 - Two Bathrooms
 - 1-car Garage

Del Webb Naples
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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.

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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.



Fairway

- 2,588 a/c square feet
- Three to Four bedrooms
- Two and a Half to Three Bathrooms
- Two Walk-in Closets in Primary Bedroom
- Covered Terrace
- 2 or 3-car Garage

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



About the community

As part of the highly sought after new home community, Maple Ridge at Ave Maria-Silverwood offers exciting residential choices to buyers. Silverwood provides homeowners the perfect home at a great value. All of these single-family homes are beautifully designed with Mediterranean, Coastal or Contemporary 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 primary bedroom features double sinks with quartz vanity tops and a spacious shower.



Now Selling - Silverwood Vista!

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.



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



Cascada

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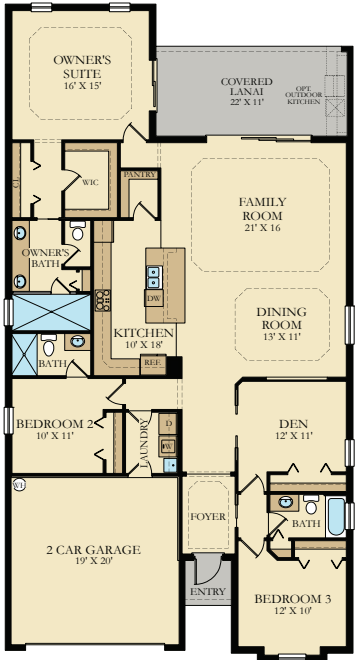
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About the community

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.



Maria

- Starting from the \$500,000s
- 2,247 square feet
- Three Bedrooms + Den
- Three Bathrooms
- 2-car Garage



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SOFTBALL

From page 1

usually two or three women will play. “We welcome everybody in our community,” Chervets said.

That means everybody from former collegiate linebackers to men in their 70s and female pharmacists and children. “We’re not trying to intimidate anybody,” Chervets said. “We want them to come back.”

Jessica Nguyen, a pharmacist at the Ave Maria Publix, enjoys playing softball every other weekend. Hailing from Minnesota, where she played high school softball, Nguyen finds the game to be “way fun” and an enjoyable way to stay active. After a sharp hit resulting in a flyout to center, Nguyen remarked, “It’s a fun way to exercise.”

One of the returning players this week was Chervets’ 26-year-old younger brother, Shawn Chervets. Shawn was visiting and said he has played four or five times and likes the relaxed atmosphere.

“We all make sure everybody is safe,” Shawn said. “That’s the main thing. Make sure everybody is taken care of.” By the way, the pitchers pitch from behind a screen as a safety precaution so nobody is winged by a line drive.

All are welcome, with the informal age limit of 18-plus being more of a guideline than a strict rule. Occasionally, children as young as 10 join in, encouraged to enjoy the game and contribute. “We let them play and let them get a base hit,” said Angel Rivera, one of the regulars at age 53.

However, amidst this diversity, three things remain constant across generations: camaraderie, exercise and fun. The atmosphere is vibrant and jovial.

When George Prieto hit a powerful shot to the outfield fence, fellow players teasingly shouted “WTP! WTP!,” an acronym for “Warning Track Power,” acknowledging his impressive hit without quite making it a home run. Such good-natured banter typifies the spirit of the games.

A couple innings later, George’s brother blasted one over the left-field fence. A little brotherly joshing was in store for him. “I’ll say, ‘Hey, you have to hit the weights a little more,’” George Prieto said.

Athleticism is valued, but the essence of these games extends far beyond mere physical prowess. They’ve evolved into a cherished ritual for many, offering a refreshing change of pace. Rivera estimates these games have been a consistent fixture for about two years now.

Competitiveness inevitably creeps in, but it’s balanced with a sense of sportsmanship. Rivera, who oversees the games, emphasizes the importance of keeping the spirit light and injury-free.



GLENN MILLER / AVE MARIA SUN

Ave Maria residents gather on Sunday mornings in South Park.

In addition to the fun, there’s a collective longing to relive youthful vigor, as expressed by Glenn Gaudio, a 41-year-old father of three, who leisurely drives his golf cart to the field.

One Sunday morning, 24-year-old Jared Dewinne played and was clearly faster than the older men in their 50s, 60s and 70s.

Ave Maria resident Kendrick Towles may have been the best athlete on another Sunday and has no prior baseball or softball experience before playing.

He was an outside linebacker at Tennessee Tech and the school’s football website lists him as lettering from 2008 to 2012.

Now, at 34 and more than a decade since his last collegiate football game, Towles is a recreational athlete.

Sunday morning softball at South Park is much more laid back compared to his college football days.

“I was looking for ways to stay active,” Towles said. He first heard about the softball community when looking on Facebook.

In one at-bat he flew out to the outfield but didn’t seem upset. He seemed to be absolutely beaming.

“It’s a good time for sure,” he said with a smile. “I’m glad I came back.”

Ave Maria resident Steve Cohen at 67 years is more than three decades older. But on this Sunday morning, they played in the same game.

“I just enjoy playing softball,” Cohen said. “It’s something different. There’s just so much golf, pickleball, weightlifting, jogging and swimming you can do.”

He has no problem playing with much younger people.

“Not yet,” Cohen said.

Cohen wasn’t the oldest player in the

game.

Bob Mullane is 75, which means he’s roughly a half-century older than the younger Chervets brother.

“Oh, it’s energetic,” Mullane said of the game-day atmosphere. “It’s fun. It’s another way of exercising.”

Making errors is part of the game at any level and they seem to be graciously accepted on Sunday mornings.

“If you make a mistake, no one is going to say anything,” Mullane said. “We just regroup.”

Players keep returning, week after week for good times under the Ave Maria sunshine.

“There’s a lot of us who come every week and then there’s people who come and go,” Rivera said.

But count on seeing Rivera again at South Park on Sunday mornings. 🌞

“I just enjoy playing softball. It’s something different. There’s just so much golf, pickleball, weightlifting, jogging and swimming you can do.”

— Steve Cohen, Ave Maria resident



Angel Rivera



Jessica Nguyen



Steve Cohen



Glenn Gaudio





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MEET A TOWNMAKER

Donny Diaz, Operations Manager for Special District Services

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Donny Diaz may have been given a new title last October, but he is certainly not new to Ave Maria. As Operations Manager for Special District Services, he oversees public works for the town. This position feels almost like destiny for a property management professional who has been working here in one capacity or another since 2009. Although he lives in Lehigh Acres with his wife Jenny and teenagers Anthony and Mariah, he considers Ave Maria his second home.

Leading a two-person crew (soon-to-be three), Diaz is responsible for maintaining the safety and aesthetics of all common roadways, sidewalks, landscaping, waterways, fountains, streetlights and street signs within the Ave Maria Special District. Under his supervision, lead technician Michael Davis Campbell and maintenance tech Jose Concepcion Escobedo are out in the field in their trucks, picking up fallen trash, clearing storm drains, maintaining doggie stations and patrolling public areas to identify any infrastructure issues proactively.

If there's a pothole in the road, a fallen branch blocking a sidewalk, a rogue irrigation head or a broken fountain, Diaz will document it, assess the damage and manage the repairs. When the team can't fix it themselves, he may call in an approved contractor for smaller or emergency items. For larger expenditures, Diaz must bring a proposal to the Ave Maria Stewardship Community District Board for discussion and approval, at which point he will assist in any required bidding process.

"My role is basically to manage all public assets, make sure they are being maintained correctly, and make sure we set and follow budgets," he explained. "I sign off on all the work orders to make sure that the contractors we hire are doing the job up to our standards before they get paid." Diaz can often be seen on-site with the Davey Tree landscapers. He also manages relationships with a range of vetted contractors, including an electrician who conducts monthly streetlight inspections and repairs; fountain repair companies for complex jobs; and roadway resurfacing teams when it's time to add a new layer of asphalt.

Storm drain maintenance is another focus. "We want to keep our waterways and infrastructure systems flowing, making sure we don't have flooding, so we're constantly looking to make sure that nothing is getting obstructed," Diaz explained. Mulch is no longer applied because rainstorms were causing it to flow into the storm drains. "We're constantly adjusting, learning and asking, 'What can we do better?' Right now, we're working on a contractor to come out at least once a year and inspect our storm drains and make sure that we vacuum them out as regular maintenance."

The safety of the residents is always job number one. "With any contractor, if they're going to work on sidewalks or roadways, I've got to make sure they have reflectors and set up a safety zone around their vehicles to provide the appropriate level of safety," Diaz said. "Before we even



COURTESY PHOTOS
Donny Diaz, Ave Maria's Operations Manager for Special District Services, overseeing the town's public works.

"I want residents to know that I'm here for them. My job is to make sure that they are safe and that their town is beautiful."

— Donny Diaz

hadn't intended to make it a career, but fate had other plans. "I just wanted to make some money until I figured out what I wanted to do, but it just took off," he reflected. "I had a mentor at the landscape company, Clarence Grim, and he saw the potential in me. 'Stick with it. You're going to be my guy,' he said, and sure enough, he came through. He was our operations guy and eventually became a branch manager."

Grim put Diaz through the ranks, from the bottom up. "I started as an edger, to weeder, blower, mower, then irrigation, before he sent me out to do route jobs as a foreman of a crew driving the truck, where you have 45 to 60 minutes at each house, and if you don't get all your contracts done, you're working late," he says. "That's when my management kicked in, and I would tell my guys what to do so we could knock those out with no problem. Then Grim put me on an on-site job where you're at one site all day, but now you're responsible for 900 homes to mow, and the expectations are different."

After experiencing every aspect of the landscape business, Diaz was ready to take on more responsibility. That's when he was promoted to account manager, a well-paying, high-responsibility position with 36 workers under his supervision. "By then, the management was easy," Diaz said. "Grim told me later on that the reason he put me through every part of the landscaping business was so that when I became an account manager, I would know what to expect from every position. When you know how hard it is, you know how to treat people and how hard you can push them. Grim also taught me about budgets. 'Treat it like it's your money,' he told me."

In 2009, one of his landscaping accounts became Ave Maria, where he built a great rapport with the property manager, sharing his ideas about how to oversee landscaping, as well as his vision for this community. When an opening came up to be maintenance supervisor for the Ave Maria Master Association, he was offered the job. Feeling an affinity for the town, he accepted the position in 2013.

Diaz has been committed to the betterment of this town ever since. "I want residents to know that I'm here for them. My job

is to make sure that they are safe and that their town is beautiful, and when they step outside, they say, 'This is where I want to be.' I take so much pride in this town. Ask anybody. I've stuck through it here, and I want to see it out. When my time comes, I want to know that I gave them 10,000 percent, that I laid it all on the line."

For questions about infrastructure within the Ave Maria Special District, call 239-867-4322 or email sdangelo@amsd.org or akarmeris@sdsinc.org. 🌿

don't want them to have anything to complain about."

Diaz comes from humble beginnings. He was born and raised in Robstown, Texas, a poor town where his father worked in an oil refinery. He still remembers the terrible oil smell on his dad's clothing, vowing never to get into that kind of work. In 1996, when he was 15, the family moved to Immokalee, and he fell in love with Florida. "Besides the heat, mosquitos and love bugs, Florida is beautiful," he quipped.

His first job was in landscaping. He

let them come out, I want to make sure they have all the necessary equipment like safety cones, men-working signs and reflective clothing."

Diaz embraces the customer service component of his job. "Sometimes, a resident may be irate about something we did or didn't do, and I always tell my team, you have to listen to their concerns, always be kind and professional, never get mad, and tell people the facts and the rules that you're following," he said. "But what I'm really trying to do is get ahead of all that. I

DIALUM

From page 1

ters in Santiago. “We are clearing the land, grading and compacting the soil, installing drainage and we hope to start building in less than three months.”

Dialum’s commitment to exceptional architecture is evident in its selection of Gonzalo Mardones to design its cutting-edge facility in Ave Maria. With a distinguished career defined by architectural brilliance and imaginative design solutions, Gonzalo Mardones brings a wealth of experience to this exciting project.

Born in Santiago de Chile, Mardones graduated with top honors from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He has since garnered numerous accolades, including the prestigious First Prize in the Architecture Biennale for his outstanding contributions to architectural design.

As an honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and author of several acclaimed books, Mardones’ expertise will elevate Dialum’s new building into a true architectural marvel.

Dialum does not manufacture raw glass; it buys ready-made sheets of glass with different features from global suppliers and applies various laminates and treatments using cutting-edge technology to add functional and aesthetic properties. Its products include impact glass, favored in Florida for its hurricane-resistant features; fireproof and bulletproof glass for public buildings, banks or applications that require high security; anti-slip and shower glass for bathrooms; lacquered glass for wall and furniture uses; and privacy glass, commonly used for conference rooms, which is clear but turns opaque with the touch of a switch.

“To make impact glass, for example, we apply two treatments called tempering and lamination, in which we take the raw glass into a high-temperature oven and then lower the heat very quickly,” Diez explained. “This gives the glass many mechanical properties. Then we join two, three or more sheets of this glass with an intermediate layer called SentryGlass, which is a plastic material that glues the sandwich together.”

Using digital printing capabilities, Dialum can also add color, photographs and other artistic elements to the glass for interior design applications. Using a waterjet cutting machine, the glass can be transformed into shapes or perforated with customized logos or other geometric elements. In the furnace, giant glass



COURTESY PHOTOS

The Starlight Lumina in San Isidro, Buenos Aires, Argentina, spans 460,000 square feet and blends avant-garde with sustainable design.

sheets are curved for architectural uses.

The plant at Ave Maria will also serve as a showroom where homeowners, window contractors and interior designers can see the applications for themselves and make custom orders. “A showroom is very important because people need to see, touch and try things before they buy them,” Diez said. “Our plant is already a showroom. We are very proud of it. We are a very orderly and very clean operation.”

In Chile, Dialum is recognized as a leading company in sustainability and ecological practices, according to Diez. “Although in Ave Maria we will consume a lot of electricity, we are a company that does not generate pollution,” he asserted. “Both in Chile and soon in the U.S., we will maintain corporate policies committed to environmental protection, while also worrying about the well-being of all the people and local communities around us.”

Dialum employs a closed-circuit, reverse-osmosis system to recycle the water used in glass cutting, allowing for its continuous reuse. None of the company’s operations use fossil fuels, thus eliminating CO2 emissions. All of its machinery, including vehicles, forklifts and cranes, runs on electricity. The company does not produce waste because any leftover glass and other leftover or damaged materials are returned to the manufacturers to be melted down and turned back into usable material.

Dialum is a family business founded in 1987 in Talcahuano, Chile. “My father

founded the company and is currently the president, while I, the eldest son, am also deeply involved in the business,” Diez explained. From humble beginnings, they have grown the organization to encompass more than 300,000 square feet of production space, employing approximately 300 people. In addition to the Santiago headquarters, they have additional facilities in Concepción, as well as one in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

“The Florida market is very huge, and we are very excited to go over there,” Diez noted. “Establishing a plant in Florida is going to give us the ability to reduce our response lead time for customers significantly and to offer a much better sales service. But this is the tip of the iceberg—the first, but not the last, plant in the United States.”

Diez found Ave Maria to be an obvious choice for several compelling reasons. Its strategic location between Miami and Tampa, with easy access to Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale for glass shipments, made it highly favorable. Collier County’s generous incentives and welcoming environment further solidified the decision.

When Dialum engaged the Tabla Group to locate an optimal site for their Florida facility, they conducted an extensive statewide search. Their criteria included convenient transportation links for distributing products across Florida and Georgia, as well as a skilled local workforce, appealing residential options for employees, and a hospitable community and municipality.

“We just want to offer jobs and do things the way they should be done. Without exploiting employees or the environment. We are on the same path with the county and trying to do things the right way.”

— Roberto Alvarez Vela,
CEO of Talba Group

“The search stopped in Ave Maria,” said Roberto Alvarez Vela, CEO of Talba Group. “Furthermore, Barron Collier Companies was the right partner to work with. They have the infrastructure, knowledge and interest in developing the county. With the support of Bill McDaniel, District 5, Commissioner, they made it all possible.”

“We have a very good relationship with the county; it was a smooth negotiation,” Diez said. “They were very excited for us to be there, and we share common aspirations. We just want to offer jobs and do things the way they should be done. Without exploiting employees or the environment. We are on the same path with the county and trying to do things the right way.”

Another plus for Ave Maria was its proximity to Immokalee, Florida Gulf Coast University and several technical schools from which Diez intends to recruit his labor force—approximately 60 to 80 people initially. Diez is already discussing promoting Dialum as an excellent employment opportunity for the right candidates with a few organizations.

“We’re looking for people who want to grow with us. This is a long-term career opportunity where they can learn skills in emerging technologies,” Diez noted. “We are a company of professionals, and we take good care of our employees. We can provide transportation to and from their home. All security equipment like boots, helmets and safety glasses are provided by the company. And then we have lots of parties. In Chile, we have a soccer field in our facility, and we have a local league. I play, too. So, we have a very close relationship with our employees. They are like family to us.” 🌻



Dialum’s installation of 10-foot clear ceilings on every floor enhances the modern ambiance of 360 Rosemary in downtown West Palm Beach.

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MINUTES AWAY
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Taking the Safer Route: Adapting to New Florida State Golf Cart Laws

BY GLENN MILLER,
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Collier County Sheriff Cpl. Lee Van Gelder knows something about golf carts that not everybody knows but probably should.

“They are not toys,” Van Gelder said. “People sometimes think of them as toys.”

Golf carts are mechanized vehicles subject to laws and regulations.

They are as ubiquitous in Ave Maria as sunshine, palm trees and friendly people.

A drive or walk around town backs up that observation. Also, the statistics back it up.

Sal D’Angelo, the director of operations for Special District Services, estimated that there are approximately 1,544 Ave Maria carts registered with the community as of mid-April. However, this number is likely increasing daily, and there may also be additional unregistered carts in use.

They share the road with larger, more powerful vehicles and also bicyclists and pedestrians.

Even first-time visitors to Ave Maria can’t help but notice it is a golf cart community. The vehicles are used for transportation to work, the gym, The Bean, Publix, Tropical Smoothie Cafe, and practically everywhere else, serving as the primary mode of transportation for residents across various activities and errands.

The Sanchez family is an example. “I tell people we’re a golf cart town,” said Serafin “Serf” Sanchez.

As with any vehicle from a motorcycle to a 747, there are rules, regulations and laws that govern the use and operation of golf carts.

In 2023, a new Florida law, HB 949, took effect regarding golf carts. It raised the minimum age for drivers to 15 and they must have a learner’s permit to operate a cart.

Golf carts are not toys for children, as Van Gelder is well aware. In 2023, a 7-year-old boy in Fort Myers was tragically killed by a cart driven by a 3-year-old.

Van Gelder is concerned with golf cart safety. He urges drivers to stay below 20 miles per hour and not get souped-up carts, ones he calls “golf carts on steroids.”

He knows many families drive around town with their kids. “Kids are our primary concern,” Van Gelder said.

Carts with four seats should have only four passengers. “It’s not uncommon to see one with six people hanging on to it,” Van Gelder said.

Tallahassee attorney Alyssa Willson, special counsel for the Ave Maria Stewardship Community District, said that golf carts may be operated within Ave Maria “in accordance with the Collier County Ordinance 2016-14 requirements.”

They are included, said Willson, who works in the Tallahassee office of Kutak Rock LLP, in the Ave Maria Golf Cart Drivers’ Handbook.

A detail that likely all golf cart owners know is the maximum allowed speed is 20 miles per hour. They are considered low speed vehicles.

“While they may look visibly similar, low speed vehicles are a different classification of vehicle with different legal requirements,” Willson said. “Low speed vehicles have a top speed of greater than 20 miles per hour but not greater than 25 miles per hour.”

The rules are clear and definitive about golf carts. “Critical to the classification is not the speed at which the vehicle is driven, but the maximum speed at which the vehicle could be operated,” Willson said.

Low-speed vehicles are allowed to be



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTO

Ave Maria residents take advantage of close by amenities by using their golf carts, whether it’s a quick ride to the water park or Town Center.

driven on roads or streets with speed limits of 35 miles per hour or lower. These vehicles must be equipped with seat belts, headlights, brake lights, turn signals, tail-lights, reflex reflectors, parking brakes, rearview mirrors, windshields, and vehicle identification numbers. Additionally, they must be registered, insured and titled.

This is how a state statute defines golf carts, “A motor vehicle that is designed and manufactured for operation on a golf course for sporting or recreational purposes and that is not capable of exceeding 20 miles per hour.”

Van Gelder has been stationed in Ave Maria since 2019 and has seen the number of golf carts grow as the community has grown.

D’Angelo knows what those ubiquitous and colorful golf carts mean to Ave Maria and the community.

“The golf cart is just an extension of the community,” D’Angelo said.

Blue stickers indicate that a cart is registered and legal.

The Sanchez family has a six-passenger Evolution brand cart that is almost always in use. Sanchez said the family cart now has 7,500 miles on it.

Serf and his wife, Lourdes, have five children. They range in age from 6 to 18 years old. The cart has a festive look to it.

“It looks like a Carnival Cruise ship,” Sanchez joked.

Serf uses the cart in his job as a real estate professional with The Keyes Company showing clients and potential clients around town.

The cart is also used by his wife and kids for trips around town. Cart time is valued and often becomes a race between Serf and his oldest daughter, 18-year-old Sera, to see who can get in the driver’s seat first.

As they venture out from their Maple Ridge residence, whether for a quick trip to the Town Center for a meal, workout session, or grocery run at Publix, they frequently encounter friends and neighbors cruising around in their golf carts.

“You feel a kinship with people,” San-

chez said.

The cart is the family’s connection to the wonders of Ave Maria. That definitely includes all five kids.

“They love the freedom,” Sanchez said.

He understands the need for regulations and making sure everybody, from drivers to passengers to pedestrians, are safe in a community with more than 1,500 golf carts.

“They’re trying to cut down on the younger kids driving,” Sanchez remarked.

One of the many beauties of Ave Maria, of course, is how convenient everything is to everything else.

It takes only five to seven minutes for the Sanchez family to travel by golf cart to Publix.

Their cart is electric so there is no need to gas it up. “It’s easy to charge,” Sanchez said.

Go anywhere in the community and one will see golf carts. Stop by South Park on Sunday mornings when residents gather to play softball and one will see several carts parked near the field.

Softball player Angel Rivera drives his cart to the field. In addition to the convenience there is another factor.

“I get all smelly and I hop in my car, and it ends up smelling,” Rivera said.

That’s not an occurrence with golf carts. Sports and scents are a reason why softball player Glenn Gaudio often drives his three children to and from sports events in a golf cart. He has sons, Dominic, 12, and Vincent, 9 and a 3-year-old daughter Julianne.

In addition to not getting in the car smelly and sweaty from whatever sport they may have played, there’s another reason the Gaudio family use a golf cart to zip around town. The kids enjoy the cart rides, particularly Julianne.

“She always wants to go for a ride,” Gaudio said.

She is far from alone in Ave Maria. It seems nearly everybody wants to go for golf cart rides! 🌞



Golf Cart Driving Safety Tips

- Use seatbelts, if available, since they may be required when driving on public streets.
- Advise all passengers to keep feet, legs, hands and arms inside the vehicle at all times.
- Do not start driving until all passengers are fully seated.
- Operate the golf cart from the driver’s seat ONLY.
- Check that the direction selector is in the correct position before accelerating.
- Obey and follow all traffic rules, whether on the golf course or public street.
- Slow down before and during turns.
- When turning, use turn signals or hand signals.
- Bring the golf cart to a full stop before changing the selector to forward or backward.
- Check behind you before operating in reverse.
- Always yield to pedestrians.
- Do not text and drive the golf cart; distracted driving applies to golf carts just like cars.
- Do not allow anyone to stand in a moving golf cart.
- Do not drive the cart while under the influence.
- When parked, always fully engage the parking brake.
- Remove the key before leaving the vehicle.

BUSINESS INSIDER

Ave Maria’s Rising Business Scene

BY JULIANNA PEREZ

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

As home sales in Ave Maria continue to break records each year, a number of new businesses have also made their way into the town, providing an insurmountable number of new experiences and services to the community.

Ave Pack & Ship

Ave Pack & Ship has unpacked its boxes and moved into Olmi Medical Supply, located in the Publix Retail Shops, bringing the community a solution to all their packing and shipping needs.

Owner Nicole Manning was inspired to make the addition after observing the necessity for a nearby location that offered this essential service.

“The decision to open Ave Pack & Ship in Ave Maria was primarily driven by demand. The community also lacked a nearby medical supply store, with the closest one being at least 30 minutes away,” Manning said. “I saw this as an opportunity to not only fulfill a need but also to contribute to the community by providing a much-needed service.”

Ave Pack & Ship gives visitors the option to browse the medical products offered in-store, ship off their packages, or partake in any of the other services provided by the business.

“We sell boxes, provide passport photo services, and are working on adding additional services based on community feedback,” Manning said. “We offer copy machine and fax services for our customers’ convenience. Additionally, we have access to hundreds of thousands of medical supplies and can drop-ship directly to our customers’ homes.”

Manning emphasizes customer satisfaction as a pillar of her business’s values. She believes that feedback from the community and their support allows her to cater to her customer’s needs.

“Ave Maria is a great location to own a business because of the town’s passion for bringing entertainment, services, and retail options to the area,” said Manning. “Business owners in Ave Maria work hard to provide the best customer service and cater to the needs of the community.”

Blue Agave Mexican Restaurant

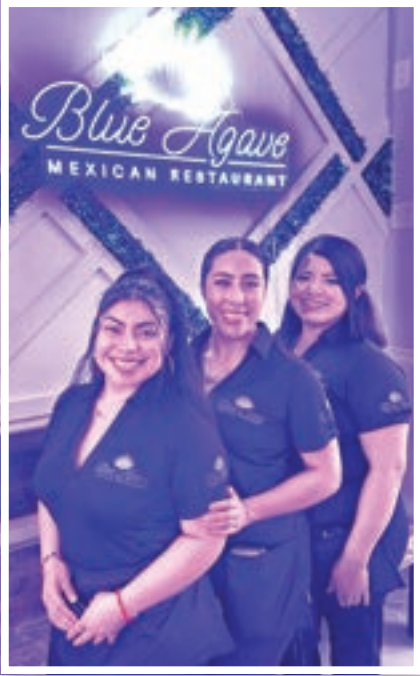
On May 1, Blue Agave Mexican Restaurant opened its doors to the public, debuting a fresh, modernized take on authentic Mexican cuisine.

Allan Garcia, owner of Blue Agave, based the restaurant’s menu off of his own



ERICA FISH / AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT

Blue Agave owner Allan Garcia with his family and staff.



Blue Agave serving staff.

mother’s recipes. With the aid of his team, Garcia conceptualized an expansive menu of authentic Mexican dishes altered to wow any American palette.

“The whole menu was built and bred by the whole staff. My mama’s remedies and recipes came in and, essentially, we changed them and Americanized them with a little Mexican spice,” Garcia said. “We want it to be an experience as soon as you bite into the food.”

Teamwork and collaboration are at the core of Blue Agave’s company values; Garcia attributes the success of his endeavor to his close-knit and supportive staff.

“I have a team of awesome people,” said Garcia. “This did not happen alone, it happened with the whole team. It takes something that big to run an operation like this.”



JULIANNA PEREZ/ AVE MARIA SUN

Ave Pack & Ship employee Joseph Alvarez

In addition to the amicable staff and flavorful dishes offered at the restaurant, Blue Agave’s clean-cut and cool interior creates an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere to enjoy your meal. From the eye-catching neon signage to the painted mural dedicated to Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, Blue Agave offers the perfect background for your next Instagram post.

“We made it very Instagrammable for you to take out your phone and show the world that your memories and experiences are happening at Blue Agave,” said Garcia. “We want to give the experience of an upscale restaurant without the upscale prices.”

Vicky Bakery

Owned and managed by local businessman Phong Ho, Vicky Bakery brings to Ave Maria an array of authentic Cuban pastries, dishes and desserts, perfect for anything from breakfast on-the-go to a delicious afternoon treat.

“We want to keep it authentic since it is a family-owned business. For over 50 years they’ve had the product and now they want to share it across the country; I’m happy to be a part of the family brand,” Ho said.

Vicky Bakery has been one of the most

highly anticipated and sought-after franchises by members of the community, with some even taking to local Facebook pages to voice their wishes. Upon seeing this demand, Ho decided to take action.

“A lot of people in town are from Florida’s east coast and the name has popped up hundreds of times, so I looked into it. I met with the corporate office, we chatted and I was sold,” said Ho. “There has been an extremely high demand for a business like this. For one, it has a nice hometown feel and I think that the demand for a variety of breakfast options was always in the picture.”

A longtime resident of Ave Maria, Ho is always looking for new business ventures that would cater to the needs of the community. Since opening a Tropical Smoothie Cafe 16 years ago, the businessman has brought a number of eateries to the Town Center.

“I’ve been here since 2008. I have always wanted to help develop and grow this town,” he said. In a way, it makes me feel good to provide what I feel are some essential things for this town, whether that’s dinner, breakfast, or a fun treat like Tropical Smoothie, which has been my rock since I started.” 🌻

“I’ve been here since 2008. I have always wanted to help develop and grow this town. In a way, it makes me feel good to provide what I feel are some essential things for this town.”

— Phong Ho, local businessman and owner of Vicky Bakery



JULIANNA PEREZ / AVE MARIA SUN

Ho inside Vicky Bakery.

Youthful Bonds: Kid & Teen Playgroups Flourishing in Community

BY JULIANNA PEREZ
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

There are few things more powerful and influential than a mother’s love. In Ave Maria, mothers across the community are showcasing their devotion by forming playgroups that help their children create meaningful connections while also keeping them active and engaged.

Upon moving to Ave Maria, stay-at-home mom Llusi Oliverio found herself unsure of how to help her children settle into a new environment. Eager to help her family navigate this new chapter, Oliverio went to Facebook.

After observing one of her daughter’s hesitant demeanors at a social event, Oliverio was inspired to reach out to the community. In a Facebook group for local moms, she made a post asking if any families were interested in setting up a playdate.

“When we moved here, the very first thing I did was sign her up for a class at the Maple Ridge Clubhouse. I’ll never forget that my daughter walked in and did not know what to do,” Oliverio said. “Now, my daughter is the most social butterfly, she talks to everybody and everything. But at that time, she didn’t know how to socialize. That was honestly one of the motivating factors to start it.”

Since then, Oliverio’s initial Facebook post has transformed into a pillar of the community. What started as one mom reaching out for help has now become an opportunity for families to share both valuable advice and memorable experiences.

“We are very much about supporting each other,” Oliverio said. “It’s not just



moms that show up. We have babysitters, dads, and grandparents who show up with their little ones to talk and learn from each other. I’ve learned so many things from other parents and vice versa.”

On Thursdays, attendees of Oliverio’s toddler play group gather at South Park to participate in a wide array of activities.

“We don’t just get together at the park; we do all kinds of different things. We’ve done field trips and our biggest event every year is our Easter egg hunt,” Oliverio said.

The toddler playgroup is open to children ages 0-4 at no cost. Participants are encouraged to bring games or toys to share at the gathering.

“I never want anybody to feel excluded by it for any reason. We always want to make it 100% free, accessible, and open to the entire community,” Oliverio said. “That’s why we host it, not at any particular neighborhood, but at the park, so the whole community can get together.”

Organized by local mother Stefanie Lynn, Fun Friday is a weekly gathering where children of all ages from local ho-

meschooling groups can get together to participate in physical activities.

“Every week, I do a sport with the kids that show up and want to play,” said Lynn. “But there’s also a whole group of moms that hang out on the playground together and chat while the kids play.”

Lynn’s involvement with Fun Friday started as a participating mom. As she continued attending the group, she eventually stepped into the role of coordinating. Throughout her time, Lynn has observed how the playgroup has grown and developed.

“It seems to be growing as our community grows. More and more people seem to show up to North Park on Friday morning and either participate in the sport or just hang out,” Lynn said. “There’s got to be like 30 to 40 kids out there every week.”

While each group is focused on catering to the needs of different age demographics, both moms agree that the playgroups have made it easier to connect with other members of the community.

“If you’re struggling with meeting people or trying to connect with people,



I think that Fun Friday would be a good place to start,” Lynn said. “I always say that it has something for everybody as far as just having a nice Friday morning.”

The playgroups sprouting across the community have created a network of support for parents and caretakers of all experience levels, creating a mutually beneficial experience for parents and children.

“The community really looks out for each other. To me, that’s such a beautiful thing,” Oliverio said. “It is nice to be able to count on your neighbors and I think that if you were to give us a shot, you’ll more than likely find an amazing community that you can reach out to.” 🌟



New Phase Opens at Maple Ridge

BY SANDRA YEYATI
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Maple Ridge by CC Homes is among the fastest-selling communities in Ave Maria. The builder has completed several distinctive enclaves of homes throughout town. With Maple Ridge sales in full swing, this March, they introduced their latest phase of new home designs in the popular Silverwood neighborhood, Silverwood Vista. This expansion of the community features one- and two-story homes and eight open-concept floor plans with brand-new exterior façade styles. Measuring from 1,200 to 2,300 square feet under air, these modern two-to-five-bedroom sanctuaries are priced from the low \$300,000s to low \$400,000s.

“You’re getting more bang for your buck here,” said CC Homes sales associate Lisette Alvarez, who is fluent in both English and Spanish. “You don’t see these prices anywhere else in Florida. They’re untouchable, and the fact that homeowner’s insurance rates tend to be more expensive the closer you are to the oceanfront, so this is a really nice, sweet spot. You’re only a 40-minute drive from Naples and you’re also only about an hour west from Broward County.”

Silverwood Vista residents have exclusive access to the Club at Maple Ridge. “The clubhouse is phenomenal,” Alvarez said. “You have a resort-style pool, grills outside, cabanas, a gym with a jacuzzi and sauna, billiard room, game room, craft room, reading room, kids’ playroom; it’s really impressive. Maple Ridge is very pet-friendly, too, so we have two dog parks, and it’s super close to the Publix and Town Center.”

Alvarez noted the Silverwood Vista col-



lection introduces new exterior finishes, adding a contemporary look to the exterior of the homes, emphasizing their modern look inside which include high ceilings, large windows and expansive closet space.

“What really sets us apart is that we follow the Miami-Dade County building codes, which are the strongest in all of Florida, so our second floors are not wood frame; they’re concrete block construction from top to bottom, and impact glass comes standard with all of our homes,” she said.

Another benefit of a CC Homes build is its vast selection of options, which can be considered and planned out before they break ground. “That’s the nice thing about building a home versus buying a home that has been already built,” Alvarez pointed out. “You can really customize it to your style and needs. You get to choose your own countertops, cabinets and floors. As a builder, we offer standard finishes and features that come with the home, but also offer many options to customize a home at an upcharge.”

Because so many options are possible, CC Homes has a large showroom in the Town Center where homebuyers can meet with professional design specialists to select interior and exterior finishes, color schemes



and other personalized elements to fit the buyer’s vision. This valuable consultation is included in the purchase price.

The floor plans also allow for modifications based on what each client needs. “I try to find the best fit for a family,” Alvarez explained. “Sometimes people don’t realize what they need. They may say they want three bedrooms, but maybe they also need a den because they work from home. If it’s an older couple, perhaps a one-story floor plan is best for them, or we can get them a two-story home with the master bedroom on the ground floor. The best thing about my job is that I am able to guide people in the right direction. Maybe you don’t need such a big kitchen, or you need more bedrooms, or you want a big yard... I love people, and I love helping them find their dream home and seeing them move in all excited.”

Prospective buyers are invited to visit the CC Homes sales center in Maple Ridge to tour eight designer-furnished model homes. Although walk-ins are welcome



CC HOMES / COURTESY PHOTOS

from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. seven days a week, appointments are recommended for personalized attention. On most weekends, a home lender is on-site to review mortgage options. “Some prospects think they can only afford a certain model, but when we sit down and crunch the numbers with a lender, they may realize that they can afford upgrades or a bigger home,” Alvarez said.

For more information or to make an appointment, call 833-729-1783 or visit MapleRidgeFL.com. The sales center is located at 5009 Alonza Avenue. 🌿



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ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

Dates and details are subject to change. Call the Ave Maria Welcome Center at 239-352-3903 for more information. Follow Town Center businesses on social media for updates and special promotions.

SUMMER CAMPS

Ave Maria Dance Academy Summer Dance Intensive

Experience nine weeks of daily instruction in various dance styles at the AMDA Summer Dance Intensive, running from June 10 to Aug. 9. With over 5 hours of training each day, rapid improvement is inevitable. Choose from flexible registration options tailored to suit your schedule and goals. For more information and registration, visit avemariadanceacademy.com.

Fellowship Church Student Camp

Embark on a summer of adventure at Fellowship Church's Summer Camps for Kids & Students! From June 10 to Aug. 2, discover enriching experiences tailored to every age group. Camps include K + 1 Camp, Kids Camp, Creative Arts Camp, MVMNT Camp for middle school students, MIX Camp for rising 5th and 6th graders, MVMNT Camp: High School, and Students Creative Arts Camp. Register at christfellowship.church.

Love All Summer Racquets Sports Camps at the National

Led by USPTA Professional Aly Dashiell, Love All Summer offers tennis, pickleball, and bocce for kids aged 6-9 and 10-14. Sessions run from June 3-6 and July 8-11 for younger participants, and June 17-20 and July 22-25 for older ones, with each camp day from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Bring water, lunch, and sunscreen. Weekly rates are \$200, with a \$60 daily drop-in option. Register at thenationalavemaria.playbypoint.com or call 239-867-9095.

The National Golf & Country Club Junior Golf Camps

Golf enthusiasts aged 7 to 13 can enjoy two exciting Junior Golf Camps with comprehensive instruction and engaging activities. The first week is June 10, 12 and 14, and the second is July 15, 17 and 19. Registration is now open at \$300 per person for the week, with the itinerary details soon to be revealed. For more information and registration, visit thenationalgcc.com.

■ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Ave Caribbean Fest June 29

Visit the Ave Maria Town Center for the inaugural Ave Caribbean Fest! Experience an afternoon of island vibes with various vendors and artisans, shopping and dining specials, authentic cuisine, tropical entertainment by a reggae cover band, a Caribbean violinist, a steelpan ensemble and more. Family-friendly activities will also be present from noon to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 29.

Christmas in July July 20

On Saturday, July 20, from noon to 5:00 p.m., Ave Maria's Town Center shops, restaurants and Publix are coming together to celebrate a time when kind of fun doesn't happen just once a year. The town will have Christmas-themed décor, holiday-themed music, activities and entertainment, food and drinks. Participate in a free raffle activity to win fantastic prizes.

Back to School Bash August 17

To kick off the new school year, visit the Ave Maria Town Center for one last summer hoorah! From 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., there will be DJ entertainment, kids' activities, a school supply drive, bike helmet giveaways, dining specials and shopping incentives by Ave Maria's businesses for teachers, faculty and staff. Students are encouraged to present their student IDs for purchase discounts; exclusions may apply.

Trunk or Treat October 26

After the success of last year's event, Trunk or Treat has become an annual tradition in the Town Center! Scheduled for Saturday, October 26 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., this family-friendly gathering promises an abundance of treats. Participants can expect DJ entertainment, face painting, pumpkin carving, costume contests, and the opportunity to showcase their creativity in the best-decorated trunk competition.

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.

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 oasiskitchenlounge.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 Crowlers and \$2 Off Growlers.

Wine Wednesdays: \$1 Off Wine.

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

On Saturday, May 25, celebrate **National Wine Day** with \$1 off wine, available

from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

On Saturday, May 25, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., attendees can enjoy the **"Best of Collier County," featuring award-winning food truck, gelato, and brewery selections** as highlighted by Gulfshore Life magazine.

Join realtor Sara Callahan for a **free Family Bingo** event with free prizes. The event will occur on Saturday, June 1, Saturday, July 6 and Tuesday, August 6 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Glorified Vision Artis hosting a **Brew and Paint Party** on Tuesday, June 11, at 7:00 p.m. RSVP at glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com to secure your seat. Admission is \$35 and drinks are available for purchase.

Get ready to dance the night away on Saturday, June 15, at the **Freestyle & 80s Dance Party!** DJ DiFLO will be spinning the greatest hits of the 80s from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Music Bingo, hosted by Tom and Carol DiFlorio, promises an incredible night of fun on Monday, June 17, starting at 7:00 p.m. Best of all, it's free!

Cruise Planners is hosting an Adult Bingo night with free prizes on Wednesday, June 19 and July 17. The event will run from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. It's widely known that seats fill up very quickly, so arrive early to secure a spot!

The Speed Quizzing Trivia event with Carol and Tom DiFlorio will be held on Monday, July 1 at 7:00 p.m.

Celebrate **National Motorcycle Day** with Oil Well Craft Beer on Friday, July 12, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Bikers will enjoy drink discounts, and Monjara's Kitchen food truck will be on-site to provide delicious meals!

Enjoy \$1 off IPAs all day for **National IPA Day** on Thursday, August 1!

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!

On Saturday, May 25, to celebrate **National Wine Day**, receive a complimentary glass of wine with a purchase!

Wednesday, May 29 is **National Alligator Day!** Pick an alligator to reveal a discount of 10%, 20%, 30%, 40% or 50% off one regularly priced item.

Wednesday, May 29 is **National Flip Flop Day**. Of course, all flip-flops will be 10% off!

Honoring **Flag Day** on Friday, June 14, all flag ponchos and earrings are 20% off.



Kids aged 7-13 can join The National Golf & Country Club's Junior Golf Camp on June 10, 12, 14, and July 15, 17, 19.

For **National Pink Day**, on Sunday, June 23, The Secret Ingredient offers a 25% discount on all pink apparel. It is a perfect opportunity for shoppers to indulge in their love for pink and add a splash of color to their wardrobe.

Buy one pair of sunglasses and get another free on **National Sunglasses Day**, Thursday, June 27!

Attention fashionistas! On Tuesday, July 9, for **National Fashion Day**, get a 20% discount on your favorite item.

Visit The Secret Ingredient on Saturday, July 20, for **National Lollipop Day** and choose a lollipop to receive a discount of 10%, 20%, 30%, 40% or even 50% off one regularly priced item.

The Secret Ingredient is excited to join the festivities for **Christmas in July** on Saturday, July 20, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Town Center, offering fabulous shopping, holiday decor, drinks, music, raffles and more!

On Thursday, August 8, **National Pickleball Day**, customers can win a pair of pickleball earrings! Limit one entry per person.

Stella Rose Way

Stella Rose Way, a local boutique, offers a curated selection of gifts, artisanal items, children's products, and home decor. With monthly events, it's a go-to destination for Ave Maria souvenirs and specialty decor. Visit their Facebook page or stellaroseway.com for more info.

Tropical Smoothie Café

Indulge in fresh, made-to-order smoothies, wraps, sandwiches, and flatbreads at Tropical Smoothie Café, offering a mood-boosting experience for healthy eating. Whether you're grabbing curbside, ordering via the app, or opting for delivery, enjoy a taste of sunshine with every bite. Don't forget to try their fan-favorite Tropic Bowls! Check out their menu and order online at tropicalsmoothiecafe.com.

Vicky Bakery

Prepare to enjoy the flavors of Cuba at Vicky Bakery, led by Ave Maria's Phong Ho. With a delightful array of pastries from crispy croissants to decadent cakes, each treat promises a memorable culinary experience. Stay updated on their Facebook page and website at vickybakery.com!

Way Out Toys & Games

On Tuesday nights, don't miss **Pokémon Pack Wars!** For just \$20 cash, players receive three packs of cards each from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Experience the thrill

ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

as packs are opened one at a time for three rounds, with winners of each round claiming a prize. The final grand prize round is where the three provided packs can be used, creating the peak of excitement. It's an exhilarating opportunity for Pokémon fans to compete and emerge victorious!

Then, on Thursday nights, immerse yourself in **Disney Lorcana Open Play** from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Discover the enchanting world of Lorcana while mingling with fellow enthusiasts. Suitable for all ages, Lorcana offers a blend of kid-friendly fun and strategic depth, appealing to players aged 8 and above. No cards? No problem! Starter decks are available in-store, ensuring everyone can join in on the fun.

AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

For the latest updates on game schedules, visit avemariagyrenes.com/calendar. Games are set to resume in mid-August and will be featured in the next Ave Maria Sun, coming out on Wednesday, Aug. 7.

■ 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.

Adult Games Group

Adults seeking a welcoming social circle to engage in various card games, including Rummikub, are invited to join the Adult Games Group. Gatherings occur on Mondays and Thursdays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the AMMA Card Room.

Family Portraits – A Mosaics Art Class

Ready to transform glass fragments into cherished memories on Thursday, May 23, at 6:00 p.m.? Whether you're a seasoned artist or a first-time creator, unleash your creativity and let the glass pieces tell your family's unique story. All materials are provided, including glass tiles, grout and sponges. The non-refundable registration fee is \$25 per person, and covers all material costs. Secure your spot at paintandbakestudio.com.

Family Gametime Adventure Amazing Race

Families are invited to test their skills in a trivia battle and scavenger hunt on Saturday, May 25, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the AMMA Events Room. Competitors will tackle challenges indoors and throughout the Town Center! The cost is \$25 per family or team of 4 people. For additional team member costs, prizes and registration/payment information, visit avemariamasterassociation.com.

Memorial Day Events

On Monday, May 27, the Ave Maria Veterans Association and the Veterans Del Webb Naples Club will host their **Memorial Day Ceremony** from 11:00 a.m. to noon at the Ave Maria Veterans Memorial Plaza, located at 169 Ave Maria Boulevard.

Following the ceremony, the Master Association and Knights of Columbus will host the annual **Memorial Day Family Picnic** and Showcase at South Park. The event begins at noon with a welcome address, patriotic and family music by DJ Di-Flo, family activities and a hot dog lunch. The festivities will continue with

the USO Trio Showcase. All residents are invited to attend this patriotic event.

The **Ave Maria Water Park** will also be open on Memorial Day, inviting families to enjoy a relaxing day together.

Blood Drive

Make a life-saving difference by donating blood at the OneBlood Bloodmobile! Join us on Tuesday, June 11, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The Big Red Bus will be stationed in the parking lot off Roma Street and Avila Avenue. Remember to bring your ID and eat while staying hydrated before your appointment. Schedule at oneblood.org.

Coffee With A Twiss

This casual gathering with AMMA Executive Director Kim Twiss is held from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. every second Thursday of the month. Mark your calendars for the next Coffee With A Twiss on Thursday, June 13 and Thursday, August 8! It's an opportunity for homeowners to ask questions and get updates about the Master Association and community news.

Ave Maria Stewardship Community District Meetings

These monthly meetings are open to the public and will be held in the AMMA Meeting Room. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, June 4 at 6:00 p.m. and Tuesday, July 2 at 9:00 a.m. Visit avemariastewardshipcd.org for more information, monthly meeting books, and schedule updates.

Fraud Awareness Seminar

Learn how to safeguard yourself from fraud and scams at the Fraud Awareness Seminar presented by the Collier County Sheriff's Office on Wednesday, June 5, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. This free event offers valuable insights into current trends and methods for identifying potential scams. Gain knowledge on the appropriate steps to take if you suspect fraudulent activity. Register now on the Ave Maria Master Association website to secure your spot.

OnSpot Dermatology Mobile Office

Located in the parking lot off Roma Street and Avila Avenue, OnSpot Dermatology's mobile office offers dermatological services from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on select dates: June 17 and 24, August 9 and 20. Book your appointment in advance at onspotdermatology.com!

Hot Summer Nights

Experience Sheriff Kevin Rambosk's Summerfest programs with the Collier County Sheriff's Office at Hot Summer Nights! This free, family event is open to the community on Thursday, June 20, at Ave Maria North Park from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.. Don't forget to bring your bug spray and arrive early for an evening of summer fun!

Kicking off Summer

Join the community for "Wet and Wild" family fun at North Park on Saturday, June 22! From 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., enjoy interactive experiences and challenges for all ages, including the Hydro Battle-field and Hydro Battle Maze by Tropical Extremes. Admission is \$10 per person, with free entry for kids 4 and under. Visit the Ave Maria Master Association website



COURTESY PHOTO

Kids aged 6-14 can enjoy tennis, pickleball and bocce at Love All Summer Racquets Sports Camps at the National from June to July.

for registration and more details.

The Wonderful World of Art Series

Unleash your creativity with The Wonderful World of Art Series! From mosaics to pottery, wine bottle painting, and more, these classes offer diverse artistic experiences for all ages. Led by talented artists, explore various mediums and techniques to bring your masterpieces to life. Register now and stay tuned for our Creative Corner addition, perfect for younger participants!

Youth Summer Art Classes

Let your kids explore art this summer with Youth Summer Art Classes led by resident artist and teacher Betsy Barnes. Designed for students in third to twelfth grade, each four-day session offers 90-minute classes. Choose one session or join all four! Classes run on June 4, June 18, July 2, and July 16 at the Ave Maria Master Association. Register on their website for schedules and more details.

Adult Art & Craft Classes

Explore your creative talents with Adult Art & Craft Classes hosted by Betsy Barnes every second Thursday of the month from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. This summer, classes will be held on Thursday, June 13, July 11 and August 8. Delve into various artistic mediums and techniques while enjoying the camaraderie of fellow art enthusiasts. For monthly class details, registration and payment, visit the Ave Maria Master Association website.

Ice Cream Pottery Painting Social

Held at the Ave Maria Master Association on Thursday, June 20, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., participants can enjoy pottery painting alongside sweet treats. It's a unique opportunity to unleash creativity while savoring delicious ice cream. The event registration fee is \$15 per person, and it covers all materials. Don't miss this chance to enjoy a fun-filled evening of art and ice cream! Secure your spot at paintandbakestudio.com.

New Homeowners Social and Orientation

Those new to Ave Maria and the ones thinking about moving into the community, are invited to the New Homeowners Social and Orientation. Meet fellow residents, mingle with committee members, get an overview of community activities and learn about Ave Maria's organizations to settle in smoothly. The following Social and Orientation is on Thursday, June 27, at 5:30 p.m. in the AMMA Meeting Room.

Independence Day Celebration

Families are invited to join the annu-

al Independence Day Celebration at the Water Park on Thursday, July 4 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This grand event promises a day of fun and great music for all attendees. Be sure to take advantage of the exciting watermelon eating contest!

Summer Pottery Painting Picnic

Unlock your creative potential and transform simple pottery into delightful picnic essentials amidst the warm summer breeze. Whether seasoned artists or first-time painters, guests are promised a day filled with fun, laughter and lasting memories! The event is scheduled for Thursday, July 25 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Ave Maria Master Association. The registration fee is \$15 per person and covers all materials. Secure your spot at paintandbakestudio.com!

SPORTS AND FITNESS (RESIDENTS ONLY)

Ave Maria Little League

Discover the summer season details for the Ave Maria Little League, the inaugural and home-based league with a storied history of success! Catering to children aged 4 to 14, the league offers baseball, tee ball and softball. For detailed information and registration instructions, visit avemarialittleleague.com or reach out to avemariabaseball@gmail.com.

Quest Martial Arts Academy Classes

Led by Kenny Quintero, a 20-year veteran instructor, these martial arts classes cater to students of all ages, from kids to adults. Held at 5 p.m. on Mondays and 9:30 a.m. on Saturdays in the AMMA Event Room, participants learn valuable discipline and self-defense techniques while sharpening their focus, enjoying themselves and improving their fitness. For more information, contact 239-371-6073 or go to questmartialartsacademy.com.

Sports Leagues & Organizations

Ave Maria hosts several seasonal independent sports leagues and organizations. To find details on any approved fitness and sports activities independent contractors conduct, visit the Ave Maria Master Association Website Calendar.

Tai Chi Fitness

Prepare to secure a spot for the fall season of Tai Chi Fitness! Held on Wednesday mornings at 9:00 a.m., occasionally at the South Park Amphitheater during cooler months, these classes offer a meditative workout that enhances strength, mobility and more. For further details, expressions of interest in a potential pop-up summer class or registration for the Fall season, 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 toward senior adults. Classes will be held at 10:00 a.m. and will occur every other Friday. For more information and to register, email Alexandra Salazar at salex2009@gmail.com.

Zumba Classes

With instructor Genesis North, these classes are on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in South Park at the Amphitheater. For more information, cost and updates, contact Genesis North through their website, genesiszumba.as.me. 🌟

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