

# Ave Maria Sun

MAY 2025 [www.AveMariaSun.com](http://www.AveMariaSun.com) Vol. V, No. 9

**Next-level living:**  
Community-focused, modern apartments are coming to Ave Maria  
A12 ►



**Ave Maria Night triumphs:**  
Local youths join FC Naples in victory over USL champions  
A20 ►



**Del Webb puts on a showstopper:**  
The Director's Choice Fashion and Entertainment Show shines for CAN  
A26 ►



## ENDLESS SUMMER FUN

A season of unique activities and experiences for all ages in Ave Maria

BY SANDRA YEYATI  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

**T**HEY CALL THEM THE LAZY DAYS of summer, but in Ave Maria, there are so many fun things to do from June through August that it's impossible to be lazy, bored, lonely or sad. Summer is all about making friends and creating memories while

SEE SUMMER, A8 ►

Kids can enhance their skills at The National Golf & Country Club's Racquet Sports Camp, where they will learn tennis, pickleball and bocce ball from an Elite-certified professional.

## Josh the Otter

Rotary Club of Ave Maria's impactful water safety initiative

BY SANDRA YEYATI  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

As the Rotary Club of Ave Maria approaches its first anniversary, President JD Ribali reflects on a year marked by dedication to community safety and education. One of the club's first and most significant initiatives has been introducing and promoting the "Josh the Otter" water safety program—a heartfelt endeavor aimed at preventing drowning accidents among young children.

### Childhood drowning statistics

According to the Children's Safety Network, drowning accidents claim the lives of approximately 950 children annually in the United States. Nearly half are infants and toddlers. Infants under the age of 1 are particularly vulnerable to drowning in bathtubs. Children aged 1 through 4 are more susceptible to drowning in home swimming pools.

The likelihood of drowning in natural water settings such as lakes, oceans and rivers increases with age. For every child that drowns, five more are treated in the emergency department for near-drowning. In severe cases, near-drowning can lead to brain damage, memory impairments, learning disabilities or permanent loss of basic bodily functions.

SEE OTTER, A18 ►



COURTESY PHOTO

Josh the Otter educates children on water safety through engaging materials to prevent drowning accidents.



Editorial Advisors

Erica Fish  
efish@barroncollier.com  
Michelle Mambuca  
mmambuca@barroncollier.com

Account Executives

Nicole Ryan  
nryan@floridaweekly.com  
Adam Schonberg  
adam.schonberg@floridaweekly.com  
April Swanson  
april.swanson@floridaweekly.com

Administrative Assistants

Ana Mueller • Sarah Kiernan  
Lizbeth Luna

Graphic Designers

Lindi Daywalt-Feazel • Jaimie DeVitto  
Alex Hawkins • Caitlyn Newman  
Chelsea Pumper

Graphic Design Team Leader  
Scott Sleeper

Production Manager  
Alea Feeley

Circulation District Manager  
Michaelle Snider

Director of Content Operations  
Alisa DeLargy

Director of Advertising Operations  
Megan Roberts

Published by  
Florida Media Group LLC  
2891 Center Pointe Dr., Suite 300  
Fort Myers, Florida 33916  
Phone: 239.333.2135

## BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

### Cheers to Irish heritage



1



2



3

The inaugural Shamrock Festival at Ave Maria was a vibrant celebration of Irish culture. The day featured live performances by The Crows, a themed golf cart parade and various kids' activities, including a petting zoo and an Irish Soda Bread Contest. Kellyn Celtic Dance's captivating performances also entertained attendees. 🌟



4



5



6

1. As the themed golf cart parade rolled by, crowds lined the streets.
2. One of the performances by the Kellyn Celtic Dance group.
3. Participants in the golf cart parade.
4. The Crows, a talented local Irish band, brought lively rhythms and authentic melodies.
5. Shamrock Festival attendees.
6. The petting zoo was a highlight of the Shamrock Festival, featuring friendly animals, including this adorable chicken.

YVETTE FORTE PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY PHOTOS

# Earn nearly \$450 every year with Max Checking.\*



Financial Institution	Account	APY	Approximate Annual Interest	Monthly Fee
LMCU	Max Checking	3.00%	\$450	\$0
Bank of America	Adv. Relationship	0.01%	\$1.50	\$25
Fifth Third Bank	Preferred Checking	0.01%	\$1.50	\$25
Chase Bank	Sapphire Checking	0.01%	\$1.50	\$25

Information as of 4/9/25 and gathered via competitor websites based on zip code 33901. Approximate annual interest earned and monthly fee based on a \$15,000 balance at standard rates and do not include potential overdraft/returned item fees.

**“That \$450 extra is a lot of date nights for us.”**

Nick & Bailee, LMCU members



Stop by your local branch, call (800) 242-9790, or visit [go.LMCU.org/MaxChecking](https://go.LMCU.org/MaxChecking).

Nick and Bailee are LMCU members and were compensated for their time. Federally insured by NCUA. \*Nearly \$450 is earned at 3.00% Annual Percentage Yield (APY) on balances of \$15,000. 3.00% APY is earned on balances \$15,000 and below, some requirements apply. Rate as of 4/9/25 and subject to change after account opening. Interest not paid on balances over \$15,000. Fees may reduce earnings. \$5 membership required if not a member.



# Del Webb®

## NAPLES

**Award Winning  
Lifestyle in Ave Maria  
from the Low-\$200s.**

**What are you waiting for?**

### Del Webb Naples Amenities

- 2 Clubhouses Totalling Over 30,000 Sq. Ft.
- Full-Time Lifestyle Director
- 18 Sports Courts: Pickleball, Tennis & Bocce
- Resort Pool & Spa
- Lap Pool
- Newly Refreshed 18-Hole Championship Golf Course, Panther Run (memberships optional)
- The Rusty Putter Bar & Grill
- Indoor Golf Simulator
- Fitness Center & Movement Studio
- Card & Game Rooms
- Activity Rooms for Community Events
- Catering Kitchens
- Café & Community Library

**6231 Liberty Street  
Ave Maria, Florida 34142  
(239) 842-9643**

**DelWebb.com/Naples**



At least one resident must be 55 years of age or better, a limited number of residents may be younger and no one under 19 years of age. Some residents may be younger than 55. Prices shown are estimated base prices, do not include lot premiums or options and are subject to change without notice. Community Association fees required. Additional terms, conditions and restrictions apply. Photographs are for illustrative purposes only, are not intended to be an actual representation of a specific community, and depict models containing features or designs that may not be available on all homes or that may be available for an additional cost. This material shall not constitute a valid offer in any state where prior registration is required or if void by law. Please see a sales associate for details. ©2025 Pulte Home Company, LLC. All rights reserved. CBC057850. 5-19-25



## Special Financing!

30-Year Fixed Rate Offer as  
low as 4.99%/5.035% APR  
on Select Homes

Don't miss this exclusive,  
limited-time opportunity.



## more life built in® Avalon Park at Ave Maria from the high \$300s

**9 Home Designs  
2-6 Bedrooms | 2-6 Bathrooms  
4,272+ Sq. Ft.**

**Create a home that's uniquely you, inside and out.**  
An indoor haven or an outdoor oasis. A private retreat or room to entertain. A place to play or space to relax. Everybody defines home a little differently – and we're here to build a better home for you. With innovative, consumer-inspired home designs, opportunities for personalization, and versatile living spaces, a Pulte home offers the best in livability.

**Pulte.com/AvalonPark**  
**(239) 842-1657 | 4364 Washington Pl., Ave Maria, FL 34142**

\*Rate based on participation in the Affiliate Incentive Program, including financing through Pulte Mortgage LLC (NMLS 1791), and application of all incentives toward closing costs, including any discount points, based on a conventional 30-year fixed mortgage, sales price \$500,000, loan amount \$400,000 with a 20% down payment and interest rate of 4.99%/5.035% APR effective 4/22/2025. Rate based on FICO score of 780 and a primary residence. Higher rate or discount points may apply based on applicant characteristics at time of rate lock. Rate offer is on a first come first serve basis. Loans must be locked and closed by 7/30/25. Monthly payment of \$2,144 includes principal and interest only and does not include estimated taxes and insurance. Payment does not include HOA fees. Loans subject to lender approval. Rates, terms, and conditions subject to change without notice. This is an example, and offer may not be available in your area or for all homes. Pulte Mortgage is an Equal Opportunity Lender. Licensing information: secure.pultemortgage.com/information/contactus.aspx or www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org. This material shall not constitute a valid offer in any state where prior registration is required or if void by law. Please see a sales consultant for details. Pulte Homes® and More Life Built In® are registered trademarks of PulteGroup, Inc. and/or its affiliates. ©2025 PulteGroup, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. CBC057850. 5-19-25





## Ave Maria Master Association set to launch app to enhance resident engagement

---

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

A key feature of the app is the community calendar, which will be continually updated with real-time information. By tapping on an event, residents can access more detailed information and, if needed, conveniently register and pay for it. This payment functionality extends to amenity reservations, including pavilions and sports fields at North or

The app offers a wealth of resources, including maps, links and essential documents. Push notifications keep residents informed about urgent updates from the Ave Maria Stewardship Community District, such as road closures or last-minute lifestyle event updates. Additional-



**AMMA is launching a mobile app to enhance community connections, streamline event registrations and provide important updates for residents.**

The app is free to download and use for all registered Ave Maria residents. For more information, email Andrea. [Barragan@fsresidential.com](mailto:Barragan@fsresidential.com). 🌻

With the interactive map in the



STARTING FROM \$239,975    STARTING FROM \$239,975    STARTING FROM \$295,990



Call 239-208-641 today  
to schedule your VIP tour!

LENNAR®

6098 Artisan Court | Ave Maria, FL 34142  
TheNationalVIP.com

Welcome Home Center Hours:  
Monday-Saturday 9am-6pm | Sunday 10am-6pm

ARTIST REPRESENTATIONS CANNOT BE RELIED UPON AS CORRECTLY STATING REPRESENTATIONS FROM DEVELOPER. FOR CORRECT REPRESENTATIONS, MAKE REFERENCE TO THIS BROCHURE AND TO THE DOCUMENTS REQUIRED BY SECTION 718.030, FLORIDA STATUTES, TO BE FURNISHED BY A DEVELOPER TO A BUYER OR LESSEE.

Plans to build out this neighborhood as proposed are subject to change without notice. Please see your New Home Consultant and/or home purchase agreement for actual features designated as an Everything's Included Feature. Features, amenities, floor plans, elevations, and designs vary and are subject to changes or substitution without notice. Items shown are artist's renderings and may contain options that are not standard or all models or not included in the purchase price. Availability may vary. Sq. Ft./acreage/dimensions is estimated; actual sq. ft./acreage/dimensions will differ. Garage/bay sizes may vary from home to home and may not accommodate all vehicles. Models/floorplans/photos do not reflect racial or ethnic preference. Maps are not to scale and are for relative location purposes only. Lennar does not guarantee the availability of homes within a price range above. Price subject to change without notice. Site plans, community maps and/or aerial photos are conceptual in nature and are merely an artist's rendition. They are solely for illustrative purposes, should never be relied upon, and are subject to change. This is not an offer in states where prior registration is required. Void where prohibited by law. Copyright © 2024 Lennar Corporation, Lennar, the Lennar logo, WCL, the WCL logo, and other marks are trademarks of Lennar Corporation.



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Strides for backpacks



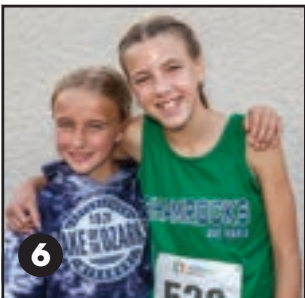
First place winner in the female 15-19 age group Laura Ruiz Hernandez. ▼



Lipman Family Farms held its 11th annual 5K Run for Backpacks on March 29 in Ave Maria, attracting nearly 1,000 participants and raising \$93,000 to support local students with essential school supplies. Now entering its 15th year, the Backpack Give-away initiative has provided over 20,000 backpacks to children, highlighting the event's significance in fostering community support and generosity. 🌟



1. Healthcare Network President and CEO Jamie Ulmer, first place winner in the female 55-59 age group Carmen Gutiérrez and Lipman Family Farms Director of Community Relations Jaime Weisinger.
2. Starting line of the Junior Fun Run.
3. David Medina, Kamila and Jaime Gallego with Emily Lopez.
4. Nicole Ricca, Matias Quintana, Franklin Hernandez, Chrissy Estrada, Phong Ho and Winston Thomas.
5. Walking the course with friends and family.
6. Paula and Joanie Webb both won first place in their divisions.
7. The Saucedo family.



# PURE WATER, PURE CONFIDENCE

## TRUSTED WATER TREATMENT BY PROFESSIONALS



With over a decade of experience serving Southwest Florida, we remove:

- ✓ Bad Taste
- ✓ Strange Smell
- ✓ Hardness
- ✓ Chloramine
- ✓ Chlorine
- ✓ Salt

Get better tasting water, healthier hair & skin, and longer-lasting plumbing.

4.9 Stars



880 reviews



Call 239.448.8277 or visit leecountyplumbing.com



CALL TODAY!



GET 10% OFF ANY WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM, A FREE QUOTE, AND FREE WATER TEST





# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Margaritas, música y más



The Ave Maria Margarita & Taco Festival featured live bands, food trucks and a variety of margaritas. Attendees enjoyed wrestling entertainment, a farmers market, local artisans, car shows and activities for kids. 🌮



1. A family posed under a colorful decorative arch.
2. A family found a shady spot to relax outside of Meltz.
3. A diverse array of vendors showcased their products at the farmers market.
4. Blue Agave and other local restaurants were serving up delicious tacos.
5. A family enjoyed refreshing drinks.
6. Deb & the Dynamics performed.



◀ He couldn't wait to sink his teeth into the taco.

AMELIA CONTE PHOTOGRAPHY

# KELLY'S

BOSTON'S LEGENDARY ROAST BEEF & SEAFOOD  
- SINCE 1951 -

## NOW OPEN in North Naples!

8900 FOUNDERS SQUARE DR, NAPLES, FL 34120  
239.387.1988

GATEWAY SHOPPES 13585 TAMiami TRAIL N  
239.799.1664

KELLYSROASTBEEF.COM @KELLYSROASTBEEF\_FL

## New & Used Quality Golf Carts in SWFL

\*ICON, \*EPIC, \*\*Club Car & \*\*EZGO Golf Carts

Sales and Rentals  
Utility and Specialty Models  
Parts & Accessories Readily Available

2-Passenger | 4-Passenger | 6-Passenger

### MOBILE SERVICE AT YOUR DOOR

## Hole In One

GOLF CARTS

Serving SWFL for 30 Years!

1301 RAIL HEAD BLVD.  
NAPLES, FL 34110

NAPLES 239-698-3180  
CAPE CORAL 239-573-9448

\*New Golf Carts & Specialty Models  
\*\*USED & Remanufactured carts

WWW.HOLEINONEGOLFCARTS.COM

Golf Cart & Charger Repair, Tires, Batteries & More



# FOOT PAIN?



## SAME DAY APPOINTMENTS

AVE MARIA, HERE’S WHAT YOUR NEIGHBORS ARE SAYING

“Dr. Pelucacci and the entire staff were friendly, welcoming, and extremely professional. As a physician, I was impressed by the thoroughness of the exam and time spent including me in the decision making. What a great experience from check in to check out.”

– Dr. William B.

“I have some pain in my feet, and I asked my Primary Care Physician who he would recommend that I see, and he referred me to Dr Lam. I called and could have had an appointment the same day! Great experience!”

– Dan W.

“Dr. Jake Powers and his staff made my visit an absolute pleasure. Dr. Powers did a wonderful job explaining problem/procedure/ expected outcomes. I highly recommend this group for all of your podiatry needs!”

– Lindsey M.



**DR. EILEEN RIVERO**  
DPM, ABPM



**DR. KEVIN LAM**  
DMP, FACFAS, DABLES, DABPS



**DR. KARAN MALANI**  
DPM, AACFAS



**DR. ROBERT BELLO**  
DPM, FACFAS, DABPS

**Surgical Podiatrist Serving Southwest Florida Since 2005**  
Marco Island • Naples • Estero • Cape Coral  
Fort Myers • Port Charlotte • Sarasota



BOARD CERTIFIED IN RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY • BOARD CERTIFIED IN FOOT SURGERY

CALL TODAY!  
**(239) 430-3668(FOOT)**  
Or SCHEDULE ONLINE!  
**www.NaplesPodiatrist.com**





# SUMMER

From page 1

splashing at the Ave Maria Water Park, slicing a tennis ball at The National Golf & Country Club, kicking the winning goal at the Olfos Sports Academy, dancing hip hop and ballet at the Ave Maria Dance Academy, or receiving world-class mentorship from the professors at Ave Maria University. Check out all these amazing summertime opportunities.

## Soccer and touch rugby

Nothing says summer like kids enjoying organized sports in the great outdoors. It's an awesome way for them to take a break from screens, make new friends, learn teamwork and enhance their physical abilities. The Olfos Sports Academy, which hosts a slew of soccer leagues at North Park during the year, will be running two soccer leagues from June through August at Emmanuel Community Park, located at 2770 Oil Well Road, in Naples.

CEO Jose Olfos said, "We need to let the fields at North Park recover from our last season of soccer play, so this summer we are moving to a park that is just 15 minutes away." Olfos, who is licensed and certified as a soccer instructor, nutrition coach and personal trainer, will be on-site throughout the summer providing guidance and inspiration.

Soccer leagues will run every Tuesday and Thursday (except July 6 to 19) from 9 to 10:30 a.m. for 8- to 11-year-olds and from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for 12- to 16-year-olds. Boys and girls play together, and all abilities are welcome. The cost per child is \$200 for all three months.

Although touch rugby is popular in other parts of the world, it is new to Ave Maria, thanks to the Olfos Sports Academy, which will host free, coed touch rugby Tuesdays and Thursdays all summer long from 6 to 8 p.m. at North Park. Coaches will be on hand to teach people the rules and strategies of the game. A free, introductory class will be offered at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, June 3.

"Rugby touch is a non-contact sport, equivalent to flag football, and the United States has its own national team," explained Olfos. "Our program is designed to teach the fitness and sportsmanship benefits of this amazing game. It is open to all genders, ages 14 and up, that want to have fun, get stronger and even lose weight."

Online signup for soccer and touch



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

The Ave Maria Water Park offers a variety of summer activities, including swimming lessons, a progressive swim team for advanced young swimmers and water aerobics classes.

rugby is at [OlfosSportsAcademy.com/plans-pricing](http://OlfosSportsAcademy.com/plans-pricing). For more information, email [OlfosSportsAcademy@gmail.com](mailto:OlfosSportsAcademy@gmail.com) or visit [OlfosSportsAcademy.com](http://OlfosSportsAcademy.com). To learn more about touch rugby, visit [USATouch.org](http://USATouch.org) and [InternationalTouch.org](http://InternationalTouch.org).

## Leadership Conference at Ave Maria University

Designed for up-and-coming high school juniors and seniors from around the country, the Summer Leadership Conference is hosted by The Institute at Ave Maria University. The weeklong program from June 22 to 27 promises to be steeped in the Catholic faith with challenging academics, hands-on learning, mentorship, talks and plenty of fun. In addition to receiving core lessons in theology and philosophy, the students will be able to choose a study track that interests them, such as literature, history, science, technology, engineering or physics.

This is a wonderful opportunity for high schoolers to get a sense of what it would be like to be full-time AMU students learning under the tutelage of the school's world-class faculty. In the evenings, students will be split into smaller groups to design, develop and deliver a team challenge project. AMU students who join The Institute gain real-world experiences that prepare them for future vocations or careers. The program is designed to complement their education at the university, helping to form them into

future leaders.

"This is a unique summer program in the sense that the students aren't just having fun—they're actually learning what leadership looks like from renowned professors," said Summer Program Director Charles Mickens. "The students leave with a changed perspective of who we are as an institution, and with a desire to return back for more. Some students say, 'I wish it was longer than just a week,' and those are the ones that often come back and join our community as full-time students. It is amazing to see the bonds that they create at the program, and then to see them become leaders when they come back."

The \$500 summer conference fee includes all meals, on-campus housing and transportation during the program. Airfare is not included. To apply online or for more information, visit [AveMaria.edu/summer-leadership](http://AveMaria.edu/summer-leadership).

## Racquet Sports Camp for kids

This summer, kids are invited to swing into action at The National Golf & Country Club's Racquet Sports Camp. The camp features tennis, pickleball and bocce ball under the guidance of an Elite-certified professional who specializes in working with children. Participating youngsters will thrive and enjoy learning the fundamentals of each sport in a relaxed, upbeat environment.

"It's never too early to learn how to hold a racquet correctly, take a confident stance and connect with the sweet spot," said Director of Racquet Sports Aly Dashiell. "Racquet sports build hand-eye coordination, strength and sportsmanship, and our campers have an absolute blast. It's all about learning while having fun and making new friends."

Bocce ball is an entertaining and easy-to-learn game that resembles bowling but is played on grass or a court. The goal is to roll your balls as close as possible to a smaller target ball called the "pallino." You can either knock your rivals' balls out of the way or gently roll yours into the perfect spot. The game is about strategy, aim and friendly competition. Children do well with bocce because it is extremely inclusive, requiring little strength or speed so everyone can play. It is played in teams, allowing kids to work together and create new pals.

Camp runs from 8 a.m. to noon, with three weeklong sessions available: June 2 to 5 or June 16 to 19 for ages 6 to 10; and June 9 to 12 for ages 11 to 15. The cost is \$220 per child per week or \$65 for a daily drop-in. All of the necessary sporting equipment, including balls, racquets and paddles, will be provided. Campers should bring water, a snack, lunch, a hat

and sunscreen.

The National is located at 5925 Double Eagle Circle in Ave Maria. Space is limited and dates are subject to change. Preregistration is required. Call 239-867-9095 to reserve your child's spot.

## Ave Maria Water Park

Without question, the best place to be on a hot summer day is at the pool, and the Ave Maria Water Park is offering several splashy opportunities to cool off and have fun this summer. Beginning in June, they will be offering swimming lessons in a safe and friendly learning environment. The two-week sessions will run from 9 to 11 a.m. Tuesday through Friday on June 3 to 13, June 17 to 27, July 8 to 18 or July 22 to Aug. 1. The price is \$65 for eight lessons.

For advanced swimmers between the ages of 6 and 16, the Water Park hosts a progressive swim team, offering an engaging way to improve swimming skills and forge lasting friendships with fellow competitors. The team practices four times a week, Tuesday through Friday, from 8 to 9 a.m. To be eligible, participants must be able to swim 25 yards of the front crawl and 25 yards of the back crawl.

Water aerobics is available from 9 to 10 a.m. Monday through Saturday for adults ages 18 and over. This enjoyable workout is the perfect way to exercise without breaking a sweat. Cost is \$5 per class or \$65 for 20 lessons. The first class is free. All necessary equipment is provided, but be sure to bring a towel, sunglasses, sunscreen and a sense of adventure.

For more information, call the Ave Maria Water Park at 239-658-5880.

## Dance Intensive for all levels

Leap into an unforgettable summer of movement, creativity and growth at Ave Maria Dance Academy's (AMDA) Summer Dance Intensive with flexible scheduling options, including half day, full day and weekly sessions. "The program is designed for dancers of all levels to improve their technique, expand their artistry, have fun and make lifelong memories," said AMDA owner Okkie Van Wyk.

From June 30 to Aug. 1, the academy will offer back-to-back, high-energy classes from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. A range of dance styles will be covered, including ballet, lyrical, jazz, hip hop and contemporary. Students are encouraged to try all styles to expand their abilities, discover new strengths and have the most fun. Guest artists, choreographers and instructors will stop in throughout the summer to offer their inspiration and guidance.

"Dance teaches you skills that you wouldn't necessarily get otherwise, like learning choreography quickly, memorization and musicality, leadership, discipline and confidence," said AMDA head instructor Adryan Van Wyk. "It's also a really fun sport that allows you to express yourself and make great friends. Dance opens up a lot of opportunities and memories, and there's always a chance to take it with you, whether you're young and taking dance classes or in college on the dance team, or when you're older, you can teach dance. There's no age limit. You can always pursue and grow and learn new skills. Overall, it's just a great way to keep your body active, and it teaches you a lot physically, but also mentally. You have to be hard-working and dedicated."

The cost is \$250 per week, \$55 per day, \$35 per half day or \$1,062.50 for all five weeks from June 30 through Aug. 1. To register, visit [AveMariaDanceAcademy.com/summer2025](http://AveMariaDanceAcademy.com/summer2025). AMDA is located at 5068 Annunciation Circle, #103. For more information, call 239-261-2606 or email [info@avemariadanceacademy.com](mailto:info@avemariadanceacademy.com). 🌟



COURTESY PHOTO

The Olfos Sports Academy offers exciting summer soccer leagues and free coed touch rugby sessions at Emmanuel Community Park and North Park.



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Hoppy Spring Festival



The Spring Festival Egg Dash & Bunny Hop at Ave Maria Water Park was a lively spring celebration. Organized by the Ave Maria Master Association, the event drew residents of all ages to enjoy activities like photos with the Easter Bunny, an egg hunt and the park's refreshing attractions. 🌸



1. The Easter Bunny dropped candy from the sky.
2. Excited children dashed across the colorful lawn, their little hands eagerly searching for hidden eggs.
3. A young girl proudly showing off the colorful egg she found during the hunt.
4. Anyone could take a photo with the Easter Bunny during the celebration.
5. Many attendees sported playful bunny ears and donned pastel colors.
6. As the egg hunt began, cheers erupted from the crowd, with eager kids racing off to find colorful eggs hidden throughout the park.
7. The girls are beaming with joy as they play together, creating cherished memories.
8. Families came together at the Spring festival.



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

# SERIOUSLY DIFFERENT

INDUSTRY LEADER  
IN MRI... MORALLY  
RESPONSIBLE  
INVESTING

MORAL  
SCREENS WITH A  
ZERO TOLERANCE  
POLICY

CATHOLIC  
ADVISORY BOARD  
OF PROMINENT  
CATHOLICS

ACTIVELY  
MANAGED WITH  
CONTRARIAN  
THINKING



1-866-AVE-MARIA

**AVE MARIA**  
MUTUAL FUNDS

avemariafunds.com

Past performance does not guarantee future results. Schwartz Investment Counsel, Inc., a registered investment adviser established in 1980, serves as investment adviser for Ave Maria Mutual Funds and invests only in securities that meet the Funds' investment and religious requirements. The returns may be lower or higher than if decisions were based solely on investment considerations. The method of security selection may or may not be successful and the Funds may underperform or outperform the stock market as a whole. All mutual funds are subject to market risk, including possible loss of principal. Request a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, fees, charges and expenses and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing. The prospectus can be obtained by calling 1-866-283-6274 or it can be viewed at [www.avemariafunds.com](http://www.avemariafunds.com). Distributed by Ultimus Fund Distributors, LLC.



# Safer streets ahead

New roundabout will ease traffic at Pope John Paul II Boulevard and Anthem Parkway

BY MELANIE PEFINIS

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Expansion is moving right along in the town of Ave Maria, and soon, traffic will be, too. Changes are coming to a busy thoroughfare that will ensure safety and efficiency in the traffic flow of the growing community.

A roundabout is set for the intersection of Pope John Paul II Boulevard and Anthem Parkway. Alleviating the need for traffic lights, the roundabout will increase flow, provide safety and reduce the pollution of idling cars at this busy thoroughfare.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHA) has determined that traffic circles, also called roundabouts, are becoming more popular due to several beneficial factors. This data is at the front of mind for Allyson Holland, district manager of Ave Maria Stewardship Community District (AMSCD). Holland spearheads the transportation project and wants to inform residents and visitors about the process.

“The intersection of Anthem Parkway and Pope John Paul II Boulevard is being converted from a three-way stop intersection to a roundabout to improve traffic flow, enhance safety and maintain continuity at intersections along Anthem Parkway,” Holland explained.

Last summer, AMSCD appointed Holland as its new district manager. With over 20 years as an engineering and utility project management expert, Holland



COURTESY PHOTO

**Allyson Holland, district manager of the Ave Maria Stewardship Community District, leads her team in improving infrastructure and ensuring safety during construction.**

has led operations to improve infrastructure and utility services in one of Florida’s fastest-growing communities.

For residents of Ave Maria, Holland and her team are eager to prepare the community and provide vital updates. “There are currently three roundabouts on the section of Anthem Parkway south of Pope John Paul II Boulevard,” Holland said. “They have proven to offer a more efficient and safer way for vehicles to move through an intersection compared to traditional stop signs.”

According to the FHA, reductions in fatal accidents as well as decreases in time spent waiting at red lights indicate that roundabout configurations benefit growing populations in both rural and urban areas.

Roundabouts reduced injury crashes by 75% at intersections where stop signs or signals were previously used, according to a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. There is also a 90% reduction in fatal collisions and a 40% reduction in incidents involving pedestrians.

“It is suggested that residents avoid the intersection if possible, during the time of construction,” Holland said. “We know there will be an adjustment to the alignment of traffic flow. Ave Maria Boulevard can be used to enter and exit.”

Ensuring safer traffic flow during construction must also be considered. The area will remain open during development if use is absolutely necessary. Holland and her team encourage residents to “use caution in the construction zone and be aware of workers and utility vehicles.”

Anthem Parkway will serve as a vital artery throughout the town as the community continues to grow. “This conversion has been planned for several years,” Holland said. “We are excited to begin. The addition of the roundabout conversion on Anthem Parkway and Pope John Paul II Boulevard will facilitate a cohesive thoroughfare along Anthem Parkway.”

Holland knows this disruption caused by the building process will be well worth the outcome. “We anticipate construction of the roundabout, combined with the extension of Anthem Parkway, which will ultimately extend to Ave Maria Boulevard (near North Park), will likely take 12 months.” 🌞

## How to safely navigate through a roundabout

- **Yield before entering:** Always let vehicles already in the roundabout go first.
- **Drive counterclockwise:** Traffic flows to the right around the center—follow the circle.
- **Take it slow:** Reduce your speed and maintain a steady pace throughout.
- **Stay in your lane:** Don’t switch lanes unless it’s necessary to exit.
- **Use your signals:** Clearly indicate when you’re exiting or changing lanes.
- **Watch for pedestrians:** Yield at crosswalks and check for foot traffic.
- **Be patient:** Wait for a safe gap before entering, especially during busy times.
- **Stay predictable:** Avoid sudden moves and communicate your intentions early.
- **Choose the correct lane:**
  - **From a one-way street:** Enter from either lane.
  - **From a two-way street:** Use the right lane to exit soon, left to go further.
- **Missed your exit?:** No problem—just loop around again.
- **Emergency vehicle nearby?:** Pull over and allow it to pass safely.

## AROUND AVE MARIA

### Del Webb Naples hosts Veterans Cup Challenge



1. A group wore matching American flag shirts.
2. A “In Memory of the Veterans Club members” sign honoring their service and dedication to our community.
3. A dedicated golfer donned a U.S. Army hat to show their support.
4. Participants buzzed with excitement as they checked in, eagerly preparing to tee off for the tournament.
5. The luncheon after the Veterans Cup Challenge was a great time for everyone to relax, chat, and celebrate the success of the event while supporting a good cause.



The Veterans Club of Del Webb Naples hosted its ninth annual Veterans Cup Challenge at Panther Run Golf Club, attracting 144 participants. Following the tournament, attendees enjoyed a luncheon, raffle and silent auction at the Grand Hall in Del Webb. Thanks to generous donations from the community, the event raised over \$50,000, aiding the club in its efforts to support homeless and disadvantaged veterans in Collier and Lee counties in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. 🇺🇸



COURTESY PHOTOS



# Infrastructure boom

## Ave Maria expands to meet growing community needs

BY ERICA FISH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

As Ave Maria continues to grow, infrastructure developments are keeping stride to meet the needs of the population. With new homes, businesses and families arriving, the master-planned community’s developer, Barron Collier Companies (BCC), is focusing heavily in recreational spaces, road improvements and future-focused facilities.

An additional phase, known as Phase 5B of Anthem Parkway is expected to begin soon. It will run from the new intersection at Hudson Way to Pope John Paul II Blvd, which will include the conversion of the intersection of Anthem Parkway and Pope John Paul II Boulevard from a standard four-way intersection to a roundabout. The project is expected to be completed in two phases, with Phase

1 comprising the roundabout conversion and a portion of the roadway to the north of the roundabout, and Phase 2 comprising the remainder of the roadway to the Hudson Way intersection. Once construction commences, they will work to complete the project as soon as possible.

“The expansion of Anthem Parkway is a game-changer,” said David Genson, BCC president of development. “With the new elementary school opening soon, it’s critical that traffic patterns are smooth and safe for families. This connection is a big step in the right direction.”

In terms of Ave Maria’s first public school, Ave Maria Elementary School (housing nearly 900 students) opening for the 2026 school year, Collier County Public Schools announced the official groundbreaking ceremony for early June.

One of the most notable enhancements is underway at North Park, where construction is almost

complete for two new baseball fields and twelve pickleball courts. These additions aim to provide more recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and solidify Ave Maria’s reputation as an active community.

The improvements were funded through a recent impact fee agreement with Collier County.

Under the arrangement, the Ave Maria Master Association (AMMA) collected community and regional park fees from new home permits, which are typically paid directly to the county. This initiative aims to support local park developments while enhancing amenities for residents, ensuring that growth in the area is matched with infrastructure upgrades.

“Our fields are not just amenities but a setting where community building activates through sporting events and social activities organized by the Ave Maria Master Association and various clubs affiliated with the community,” said Joe Lampkin, AMMA Parks & Recreation Manager.

Looking ahead, plans are taking shape for a new Sports CLUB facility in Ave Maria, driven by a capital campaign aimed at creating a large activities complex in the community. The proposed facility will offer a broad range of programs, including after-school care, summer camps, and youth sports leagues. While final details are still in development, current plans call for multi-purpose sports fields, indoor basketball/volleyball courts, outdoor

sports pavilions, classrooms and community spaces — each designed to promote the physical, educational and social development of children. Additionally, the facility will feature evening programming for adult sports leagues, providing residents with more opportunities to stay active and connected.

From recreational spaces and roadway expansions to future schools and wellness facilities, Ave Maria is not just growing, it’s evolving with purpose. Each development reflects a shared vision of a connected community, where thoughtful planning ensures that residents and community-goers not only have a place to live, but a place to thrive.

“This is more than expansion,” Genson said. “It’s an investment in the community’s future.” 🌻



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTOS

**The soon-to-be-completed dozen pickleball courts at North Park will feature spectator seating, making it a user-friendly venue for both players and fans.**



**The two new ball fields at North Park complete the park’s ball field square, creating a perfect hub for future tournaments and community events.**

# SHOP. PLAY. DRINK. TOUR. DINE. EXPLORE.

Just how big can a small town feel?





Ave Maria Town Center



New Homes from the Mid \$200s – \$800s | Visit more than 25 model homes | AveMaria.com



# Next-level living

## Community-focused, modern apartments are coming to Ave Maria

BY LARRY ELL  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

In a significant development for the rapidly growing community of Ave Maria, Barron Collier Companies (BCC) and CAPREIT have announced an exciting new residential project that promises to redefine the concept of community living. The proposed development will feature 300 premium apartment units, carefully designed to provide residents with a tranquil and connected lifestyle amidst the picturesque backdrop of a serene lake.

Located in the heart of Ave Maria, this new project is poised to cater to the growing demand for high-quality residential spaces in the area. With its strategic partnership between BCC and CAPREIT, the development is expected to set a new benchmark for community-focused living in the region.

“We are excited to continue supporting the dynamic growth of Ave Maria,” said Cee Cee Marinelli, VP of BCC’s commercial real estate. “As the community expands, the demand for new housing options for young professionals and families has expanded. This development will provide rental options for those waiting on the construction of their new home to be completed and those not yet ready to buy a home here.”

As Ave Maria and Eastern Collier County continue to grow, the need for diverse housing options increases. Currently, Arthrex Manufacturing employs 2,000 people at its Ave Maria location. In the very near future, Naples Comprehensive Health and Collier County Public Schools will open in the community, and Dialum, a glass finishing facility, will open in the next few years. This will bring new jobs and professionals to Ave Maria who will need available housing, in addition to those building a home and who need to rent temporarily.

The centerpiece of this community-focused oasis will be a state-of-the-art amenity center, designed to foster relaxation, connection and a true sense of a shared experience among residents. The amenity center will boast an array of impressive features, including a swimming pool, fitness center, dog park and social spaces for adults and children. These amenities will provide residents the perfect setting to unwind, socialize and engage in their favorite activities.

The new development was thoughtfully designed by MK Architecture and



COURTESY RENDERING

**Barron Collier Companies and CAPREIT are set to enhance community living in Ave Maria with 300 modern apartment units to meet the growing housing demand.**

will include a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units that will cater to a broad range of residents looking for a residential solution that fosters community and enhances the living experience. The design emphasizes sustainability and modern living and will incorporate energy-efficient features and landscaping to enhance the natural environment.

The apartment units will be designed with premium finishes and thoughtful layouts, ensuring residents have ample space to live, work and play. The development’s focus on community will be reflected in its carefully curated spaces, designed to encourage social interaction and a sense of belonging among residents.

“These new apartments will be garden style with modern framing and accents but a traditional color palette to make sure they fit into the Ave Maria aesthetic,” Marinelli said. “The property is designed to foster community and enhance the living experience through energy-efficient features and landscaping to enhance the natural environment.”

The Ave Maria community has been experiencing rapid growth in recent years, driven by its excellent quality of life and attractive amenities. This new

residential development project is expected to further enhance the area’s appeal, making it an even more desirable place to live, work and play.

The partnership between BCC and CAPREIT brings together two companies with a proven track record of delivering high-quality developments that prioritize resident experience. This collaboration is expected to result in a project executed to the highest standards that not only meets but exceeds the expectations of potential residents.

“The Ave Maria apartments will benefit the residents by providing them with a rental option and enabling them to live, work and play in Ave Maria,” Marinelli said. “This will lessen the cars on the roads heading to and from Naples. This helps the community by ensuring employers can properly staff their businesses as well.”

To address the potential impact on traffic in and around the community, construction will include improvements to Ave Maria Boulevard to enhance traffic flow as well as the completion of the first phase of Discovery Drive from Ave Maria Boulevard to the entrance of the apartment complex. A turning lane will be constructed on

Ave Maria Boulevard in both north and south directions to enhance traffic flow into the new road that will lead drivers to the complex, Discovery Drive, from Ave Maria Boulevard. This new road will be the main entrance of the apartment complex.

“We take into consideration current and projected traffic levels in our studies,” Marinelli said. “Ave Maria has carefully considered all of our traffic needs in our big-picture transportation planning. By offering diverse housing options in Ave Maria, residents can find the best home for them. With the addition of businesses and jobs in the area, it will eliminate people driving to and from Naples for their job.”

As the project progresses, potential residents can look forward to experiencing the best of community-focused living in Ave Maria. With its premium apartment units, state-of-the-art amenity center and picturesque surroundings, this development is set to become a sought-after address in the region. Improvements to the roadway should commence this fall. Construction on the apartments is expected to begin in early 2026, with completion expected in fall 2027. 🌅



## National Cremation SOCIETY®

*Serving families since 1973 by providing  
simple and affordable cremation services.*

**Visit Us Today  
or Call (239) 475-5510**



**13800 Tamiami Trl N Suite 106-107, Naples, FL 34110 • [www.NationalCremation.com](http://www.NationalCremation.com)**



# Ave Maria Communities



## AVALON PARK

More Quality Built-In.

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

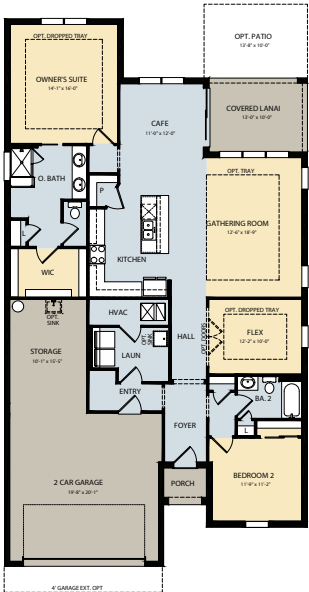
It's easy to stay active and have family fun at Avalon Park. Located within walking or biking distance to downtown Ave Maria, Avalon Park attracts families looking for exceptional schools, close proximity to neighborhood parks, and plenty of living space. Avalon Park offers spacious homesites, unique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



"As one of the nation's largest and most respected homebuilders with more than 70 years of homebuilding experience, Pulte Homes offers numerous advantages, including greater efficiency, personalized options, and a world class warranty. With modern designs inspired by consumers, energy-efficient features, greener appliances, low maintenance, a 10-year structural warranty, smart home

technology, and financing perks through Pulte Mortgage Company, buying a new Pulte home tailored to your preferences ensures a convenient and sustainable living experience. Get peace of mind, great financing options and the quality craftsmanship you deserve with a new Pulte home. That's More Life Built In®, and that's exactly what you'll find at Avalon Park."



### Mystique

- Starting from the low \$400s
- 1,889+ square feet
- Two to Five Bedrooms
- Two to Four Bathrooms
- 2-car Garage
- Loft Option Available

**Avalon Park at Ave Maria**  
**4364 Washington Place, Ave Maria, FL 34142**  
**239-842-1657**

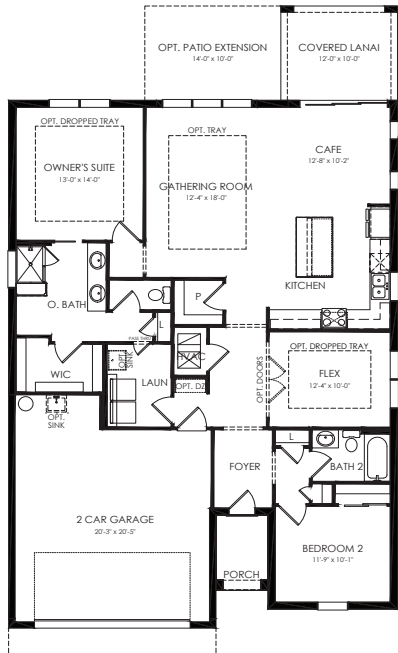




We Believe You Will Love It Here  
From the mid-\$200,000s - \$1,000,000+

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

conveniently located right where you live. No matter how full or fulfilling you want your days to be, you’ll find a way to energize your mind, body, and spirit the way you’ve always wanted to. Enjoy golf, bocce ball, bicycling, dance instruction, art, endless ways to socialize, and opportunities to give back to the community that surrounds you. No matter one’s stage in life, in Del Webb Naples you’ll never cease to be amazed at how rich your days can be. We believe you’ll like it here.



No one understands the importance of community like Del Webb. Del Webb communities are an extension of the homeowners who live there – a collection of passions and activities you love to enjoy with others. When you choose to build in a Del Webb 55+ active adult community, you get the benefit of more than six decades of homebuilding experience. With homes

designed for how you live, including the features that matter most to you, all backed by a warranty you can rely on, you’ll feel secure now and into the future. Our streamlined process makes it easy for you to build the home you’ve always wanted in the kind of vibrant community you’ve been looking for.

Prosperity

- Starting From the mid \$400s
- 1,670+ square feet
- Two-Three Bedrooms
- Two Bathrooms
- 2-car Garage

**Del Webb Naples**  
**6231 Liberty Street, Ave Maria, FL 34142**  
**239-842-9643**





# About the community

Maple Ridge at Ave Maria is a thoughtfully designed community with a myriad of home designs, all of which combine beautiful curb appeal with impressive interior layouts built for modern lifestyles. CC Homes is the builder behind this community and they are among the many reasons Ave Maria has become such a rapidly growing neighborhood attracting new residents from the Gulf Coast, Southeast Florida and beyond. With more than 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.

**Save Thousands on Your Next Home with Special Incentives!**



## Starting from the mid-\$300,000's

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.



## 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.



### Quick Move-In Homes Available Now!

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

- 1,826 a/c square feet
- Three Bedrooms
- Two and a Half Bathrooms
- 2-car Garage
- Loft, Upstairs Laundry, Large Closets & More!

**Maple Ridge**  
**5009 Alonza Avenue, Ave Maria, FL 34142**  
**833-729-1783 | [www.MapleRidgeFL.com](http://www.MapleRidgeFL.com)**



ASK ABOUT OUR SOCIAL MEMBERSHIPS!



About the community

Experience resort-style living at The National Golf & Country Club in Ave Maria, where Lennar brings its signature, Everything's Included® homes to one of Southwest Florida's most desirable destinations. Centered around a stunning 18-hole championship golf course designed by Gordon Lewis, choose from a variety of thoughtfully crafted home options—two-bedroom terrace and veranda condos, three-bedroom coach homes, or spacious single-family residences—each one including a bundled social membership. That membership opens the door to more than just beautiful amenities. It invites you

into a lifestyle filled with events, activities, and opportunities to engage—from casual poolside gatherings and themed dinners to tennis matches and wellness sessions. With a resort-style pool and spa, full-service clubhouse, fine and casual dining, yoga and aerobics studio, treatment rooms, and even a beauty salon, everything is thoughtfully designed to help you make the most of each day. Whether you're here for the season or year-round, The National at Ave offers more than a home—it offers a place to belong. Come see the clubhouse and tour our model homes, open daily. You just might find your next best chapter here.

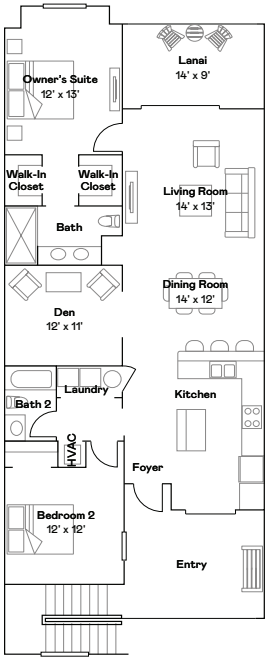


From the mid-\$200s to \$500+

Since 1954, Lennar has been building homes that combine quality, value and innovation. As one of America's leading homebuilders, Lennar is known for its Everything's Included® approach, offering modern features and finishes at no extra cost. We

simplify the homebuying experience by providing everything you need in one place—Lennar Mortgage, Lennar Title, and Lennar Insurance—taking the hassle out of the process, so you can focus on what truly matters: finding the home of your dreams.

Learn the possibilities of Everything's Included®



Bromelia II Condo

- Starting from the Mid \$200s
- 1,355 square feet
- Two Bedrooms
- Two Bathrooms
- 1-car Garage

The National Golf & Country Club  
6090 Artisan Court, Ave Maria, FL 34142  
239-208-6417 | www.TheNationalVIP.com





COURTESY PHOTOS

Cheryl McDonough, Jason Kurek, Mary Harp-Jirschele, Megan Wilson, Josh the Otter, JD and Kristina Ribali with Josh the Otter Foundation Founders Kathy and Blake Collingsworth.

# OTTER

From page 1

Drowning can happen quickly and quietly. Swimming lessons significantly reduce the risk of drowning among children aged 1 to 4 by 88%. Additionally, installing four-sided isolation fencing around home swimming pools can reduce a child’s risk of drowning by 83%. It is imperative that children wear life-jackets while boating and that they are actively supervised in and around water by designated adults.

## “Josh the Otter” water safety campaign

The inspiration behind the “Josh the Otter” program stems from the tragic story of 2-year-old Joshua Collingsworth, whose accidental drowning led to the creation of the Joshua Collingsworth Memorial Foundation, with the mission to educate children about water safety and provide resources for families to prevent similar accidents.

“Accidents like this can happen so quickly,” Ribali explained. “Joshua’s family was having a get-together and all it took was a moment when neither parent had an eye on their little boy for him to fall into the family pool and sadly lose his life.”

“It’s a two-pronged problem: It’s the mental education, and it’s the physical education,” expressed Blake Collingsworth, Joshua’s father, in a recorded video on the foundation’s website. “The easiest, fastest way to make a difference is to mentally get children to understand they don’t go around water unless they’re with an adult. The other aspect of it is getting children into the water as early as you possibly can. There’s a part of the foundation that’s Float 4 Life, and that’s teaching infants as early as 6 months to hold their breath and float on their back.”

The program encompasses a range of materials, including the “Josh the Baby Otter” hardcover picture book, the “Learn to Float” song, a water safety ac-



Incoming Rotary Club of Ave Maria President Jason Kurek, Rotarian Mary Harp-Jirschele, Kristina Ribali, Rotary Club of Ave Maria President JD Ribali and Josh the Otter with a class.

tivity booklet, games, coloring pages that depict the topic and a water safety pledge that asks both children and their parents to promise they will not go near the water without adult supervision.

A mobile app, which can be downloaded at JoshTheOtter.org, complements the program, featuring fun songs, coloring activities and interactive lessons designed to engage young learners. Kids can also read “Josh the Baby Otter” in the app free of charge.

## Rotary Club’s efforts in Ave Maria

Recognizing the urgent need for water safety awareness in our community, the Rotary Club of Ave Maria chose this as their flagship program. “We have so many canals, waterways and swimming pools here in Ave Maria, and too often you see young kids playing around those bodies of water without adult supervision. So, we felt there was a need to bring awareness

to that, and also help people understand what to do if a child falls in,” explained Ribali.

To date, the Ave Maria Rotarians have distributed more than 500 copies of “Josh the Baby Otter” at various community events, starting with the Trunk or Treat extravaganza last October. They have also participated in the Taste of Ave and other festivals held in Town Center. Their goal is to place a book in every Ave Maria household with one or more young children.

Thanks to successful fundraising efforts, the club has secured approximately \$5,000, allowing them to purchase more than 2,000 books, along with coloring books, stickers, Josh the Otter puppets and other fun items. These resources are provided free of charge to families, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder access to vital water safety information.

The Ave Maria programming extends beyond reading. In March, the Rotary

Club of Ave Maria welcomed Certified Josh the Otter Instructor Megan Wilson, from The Neighborhood Mermaid, to lead an interactive classroom session. To the delight of attending children, the Josh the Otter mascot was also there, accompanied by program founders Blake and Kathy Collingsworth.

Looking ahead, the Rotary Club is planning future water safety classes in collaboration with local homeowners’ associations and the Immokalee Fire Department. The club remains steadfast in its goal to reach every family within the community.

“We hope to have events at the Ave Maria Water Park and The Club at Maple Ridge in the near future to enable the instructor to get in the water and show the kids what they need to do for their safety,” stated Ribali. “Otters are trained as babies to roll on their backs immediately and float. We teach kids, if you fall in the water, don’t keep your face in the water. Roll over on your back, because then you can at least breathe until you can get your balance back. We want to have the classes at a pool, so we can demonstrate that.”

“We have a few items we intend to raffle at events,” said Ribali. “One is a Josh the Otter floatable toy that instantly rolls on its back whenever you throw it in the water.” This delightful bath toy perfectly illustrates the reason for using an otter as the mascot, as otters are naturally adept at floating on their backs. It doesn’t hurt that they’re really cute, too.

The Joshua Collingsworth Memorial Foundation has reached more than 1 million children. Through their Rotary Club partnership, hundreds of thousands of copies of “Josh the Baby Otter” have been distributed globally.

For more information about the Josh the Otter program and upcoming Rotary events, visit AveMariaBiz.com/rotary. 🌟



# Avalon Park

Where friendships grow, kids play and everything’s close to home

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Avalon Park stands as a testament to community living, where families thrive and connection is a way of life. This welcoming neighborhood is just a stroll away from essential amenities like the bustling downtown area, Ave Maria Parish Church and Donahue Academy, all contributing to the unique charm that draws residents in.

For Jessica and Jamon Copeland, moving to Avalon Park was more than just a change of scenery; it was an opportunity to embrace a lifestyle that perfectly aligns with their family’s values and active routine. With a spacious home and a playground of children in the neighborhood, the Copeland family embodies the spirit of this close-knit community, savoring the slower pace and the rich tapestry of relationships that Avalon Park fosters.

“Avalon, out of all the neighborhoods that we visited, felt like it had most of what we wanted, which was a really family-friendly atmosphere,” Jessica said.

Jessica shines as the assistant director of sports performance at Ave Maria University, while Jamon passionately leads the men’s basketball team.

They previously lived in Hampton Village, another Pulte community, but were drawn to Avalon Park’s family-focused design and small-town feel. Their decision to move came quickly because “the prices were going up every week,” Jessica said.

Now settled in a 3,200-square-foot home, the Copelands appreciate both the layout and the lifestyle. Jessica calls it “living back in time”—a throwback to a more connected, neighborly way of life.

Jessica said, “It just has a slower pace.”

The family’s five children—Corban, Blaise, Asher, Judah and Mikel—range in age from 4 to 15. “We’ve got 37 kids on our street, and we actually have seven more moving in next month, so we’ll be at 44,” Jessica said.

“All they do is play,” she added. “They all play together. The little kids. The middle school kids. The high school kids. Everybody’s close in proximity and the town is so small you can go across town to a friend’s house, and they don’t have to get in a car. They ride their bike. So it’s just constant activity.”

Walking is part of their daily routine. “It’s less than half a mile,” Jessica said, referring to the children’s commute to school. “It’s not even a mile to the Town Center. We walk everywhere. We walk to the farmers’ market. That’s kind of our favorite Saturday outing. We all just head down there. Walk to all the festivals so we don’t have to try to find parking.”

Sales manager Michael Egan shares that view of the town’s special character. “Ave Maria is more than just a community,” he said. “It’s a special ‘throwback’ neighborhood that aligns beautifully with the desires of today’s homeowners and their newly clarified priorities.”

As Avalon Park continues to grow, it is nearing completion with 251 homes planned. Seventy-five percent—188 homes—are already occupied, while 63 are still available for new residents.

Pulte Homes offers two home series in Avalon Park. Distinctive homes start at \$389,990 with 1,662 square feet and up, while Echelon homes begin at \$469,990, and offer 2,298 square feet and up.

Pulte is redefining residential design with its innovative sales center and mod-

el homes at Avalon Park. “What makes the home purchasing experience at Avalon Park truly revolutionary is the unique level of personalization offered to our buyers,” Egan said. “From the moment they walk through the door, customers can select their homesite, choose the floor plan that best fits their lifestyle, and then personalize it even further with structural modifications and thousands of design options and upgrades. It’s an unmatched, highly personalized experience that allows every buyer to create a home that’s truly their own—a level of choice and customization available exclusively to Avalon Park residents.”

That personalization goes hand-in-hand with a greater mission. “Pulte strives to deeply understand and meet the specific needs of our customers, and that commitment is at the heart of our collaboration with Ave Maria,” Egan said. “We appreciate Ave Maria’s thoughtfully planned design, its vibrant town center and the strong sense of community it fosters—all of which contribute to an exceptional quality of life for our homeowners.”

“Pulte and Ave Maria share a commitment to excellence and a genuine understanding of what makes this town so special for those who choose to call it



COURTESY PHOTOS

**The Copelands thrive in Avalon Park’s family-friendly environment and have embraced a lifestyle that prioritizes community connections and active living.**



home,” he added. “It’s this shared vision that

gives us great confidence that our partnership will continue to thrive for years to come.”

As one of America’s largest builders, Pulte has nearly three-quarters of a century of experience, but it continues to innovate. Its homes are designed for the 21st century and are smart homes, pre-wired to ensure residents stay connected. 🌟

## BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

### Ave Maria University’s graduation ceremony



**Michael Knowles receiving his honorary degree.**



**Michael Knowles giving a speech to the Class of 2025.**



**President Mark Middendorf shaking a student’s hand.**

Ave Maria University celebrated its largest graduating class to date, with 352 students receiving their degrees in a heartfelt ceremony at the Tom Golisano Field House. The event featured a thought-provoking commencement address by political commentator and author Michael Knowles. Knowles, along with long-time university benefactor George Peter Schwartz, was honored with an honorary doctorate during the ceremony. University President Mark Middendorf and Founder and Chancellor Thomas S. Monaghan also addressed the graduates. 🌟



**▲ Honorary degree recipient George Schwartz, keynote speaker and honorary degree recipient Michael Knowles, Provost Dr. Roger Nutt and President Mark Middendorf.**



**George Peter Schwartz with his honorary degree.**

AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY / COURTESY PHOTOS



# Ave Maria Night triumphs

Community unites as local youth join FC Naples in victory over USL champions

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

By any measure, FC Naples’ Ave Maria Night at the Paradise Coast Sports complex was a resounding success. The stands were packed with over 4,000 fans who witnessed the United Soccer League match in which FC Naples defeated the reigning USL champions, Charleston Battery, 1-0. This was the opening match of the Jägermeister Cup.

However, the event was about more than just goals, wins and losses; it focused on building communities and relationships—specifically, the bond between Ave Maria and Southwest Florida’s only professional soccer club, which is also the only professional team of any sport in Collier County.

It was a memorable night for Ave Maria residents like Ariel Hernandez and her soccer-loving son, Kael. Youth players from Ave Maria’s Olfos Sports Academy walked onto the pitch holding hands with the professionals from FC Naples, participating during the national anthem as more than 4,000 fans stood proudly. The kids traveled to the match on a chartered bus, creating quite an experience.

“They had the time of their lives,” Hernandez said of the youth players. This included her 11-year-old son, a huge fan of Portuguese legend Cristiano Ronaldo, who walked on the pitch with FC Naples forward Karsen Henderlong. “I have a couple of things you got to see,” Hernandez mentioned, referring to photos. “The smile on his face. He was super excited. They were all just kind of bugging out over the experience and being on the field.”

Hernandez estimated that there were at least 20 youth players on the field, with ages ranging from 8 to 14. “It was definitely a surreal moment for them,” Hernandez added.

Ave Maria residents William and Amelia Conte brought their three soccer-playing children to the game: their two daughters, Melania, 12, and 10-year-old Serafina, along with their 4-year-old son, Joseph. This was the Conte children’s first professional soccer game.



FC NAPLES / COURTESY PHOTOS

**Ave Maria Night celebrated FC Naples’ win and allowed local youth to engage with the professional athletes and experience live soccer.**

All of them were “very much mesmerized,” said Conte, a painting contractor with MAPA Painting LLC. Joseph, in particular, was captivated by the speed, size and power of the professional athletes. “It was almost surreal for him,” Conte explained. “His eyes were lit up in amazement.”

Melania noticed something else while watching FC Naples, especially when they kicked the ball. “She was very impressed by their accuracy,” Conte said. “They were so poised. I thought the same thing. I was blown away.”

Jose Olfos of the Olfos Sports Academy in Ave Maria seized the opportunity to provide his young athletes a chance to attend an FC Naples game. “It’s very important for us to offer these kinds of experiences,” Olfos said, adding that his young athletes were inspired by FC Naples.

Erica Fish, the marketing communications specialist for Ave Maria Development, played a key role in organizing the event, which included designing a T-shirt to commemorate the occasion.

“Designing shirts for the halftime show

was an exciting way to celebrate the partnership between FC Naples and Ave Maria,” Fish said. “For all the fans, being part of that historic night - the team’s first Jägermeister match and having it be a win - made it even more unforgettable. It’s a moment of pride for all of us, and it truly showed the connection-making of Ave Maria and FC Naples communities coming together.”

This victory was significant for FC Naples, which is in its inaugural season. “We had some good chances in the first half that we didn’t quite finish, which made things a little tougher than they needed to be,” said FC Naples coach Matt Poland. “But scoring the goal and keeping a shutout at home was exactly the way we wanted to get back on track.”

Ave Maria fans were out in full force to celebrate this special night and the victory. When asked how many Ave Maria residents attended the game, FC Naples CEO Robert Moreno replied, “It’s impossible to know, but I would say definitely in the hundreds.”

The win against a team from a higher division boosted FC Naples’ confidence. “It gives us a lot of confidence moving forward, that really we can play with anybody in the USL,” Moreno said. “It doesn’t matter what division they’re in. We’re ready for the challenge. And again,



I can’t stress this enough, the crowd and the energy really energize the players. They really feed off the crowd’s energy. Obviously, that includes Ave Maria.”

Moreno relished the sight of the youth soccer players from Ave Maria walking out with his professional team. “This might be a moment that will shape the kids, this girl or this boy, forever,” Moreno said. “I just see the faces, the high-fives they get when they’re in the tunnel waiting to come out. I’d literally think they’re about to enter Disney.”

Alessandro Martin, a 20-year-old FC Naples employee working in sponsorship and community engagement, connected with the youth players from Ave Maria, as he was once in their shoes. “That was me a decade ago,” said Martin, a Naples High graduate and current University of Florida student. “It really makes me so happy to see those kids, the joy on their faces when they see the players running into the tunnel after warm-ups.”

As game time approached, Martin noticed the FC Naples players interacting with the Ave Maria youth players. “They’re talking to the kids,” he observed. “They’re asking them: ‘Do they play soccer?’ ‘How long have they played?’ ‘What position?’ I know it makes the kids feel very special.”

The evening also featured a heartfelt wedding proposal between Collier County residents Andres Paz and Romy Andrea Rodriguez. “The wedding proposal was really magical,” Moreno said. “It added a touching human element to the night, which was really nice.”

Perhaps there will be another special Ave Maria Night next year. “We’ll be at the next game,” William Conte said. 🌟



COURTESY PHOTO

**The Hernandez family experienced the thrill of a lifetime at the game.**



FC NAPLES / COURTESY PHOTO

**Olfos Sports Academy and FC Naples players walk onto the pitch for the pregame ceremony.**



# 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.

## ■ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

### Christmas in July

Christmas in July will take place on Saturday, July 19, from 12 to 5 p.m. in the Town Center, offering live music, family-friendly activities, shopping specials and raffles, allowing attendees to enjoy a holiday-themed atmosphere while supporting local businesses and getting a head start on their holiday shopping.

## MERCHANT EVENTS

### Backwoods Feed

**backwoodsfeed.com**  
Founded in 2016, this pet boutique specializes in grooming services, pet wash stations, and holistic food and treats for all domestic pets, from household to farm animals. Email [backwoodsfeedllc@gmail.com](mailto:backwoodsfeedllc@gmail.com) for more information.

### The Bean at Ave Maria

**thebeanofave.com**  
■ Check out The Bean's drive-thru coffee cart in front of The Pub at Ave Maria from 6:30 to 8 a.m. every day to quickly 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](https://facebook.com/thebeanatave).  
■ **Join the Coffee Club.** After buying 10 hot or iced drip coffees, get the 11th one free.  
■ **Taco Tuesday** happens from 4 to 7 p.m. weekly in the Bean Courtyard and features \$3 beef tacos, beer, \$4 chicken fajitas, chips and salsa, margaritas and \$5 pork tacos. Indoor seating is available in case of bad weather.

### Cadenza Medical Clinic

**cadenzamedclinic.com**  
Cadenza Medical Clinic offers personalized health care services, incorporating functional and internal medicine, medical aesthetics and regenerative treatments. The clinic focuses on approaches for autoimmune diseases, metabolic syndrome, high cholesterol and medical weight loss. Services include micronutrient and allergy testing, vitamin infusions and PRP treatments for medical and aesthetic needs. Operating under a concierge practice model, Cadenza addresses underlying health issues and empowers individuals to enhance their wellness and overall well-being.  
■ **Dr. Raul Enad hosts a weekly health talk at 2 p.m. every Tuesday.** The talk focuses on various health topics and offers insights for those looking to enhance their physical well-being.

### Hoja De Menta

**hojadementa.shop**  
Hoja de Menta is the vision of Reina Del Mar, a highly accomplished fashion expert with over 26 years in the luxury fashion industry. As a certified fashion stylist to VIP clients, celebrities and global icons, Del Mar brings elite-level expertise to every styling experience.  
Her extensive work with prestigious brands such as Louis Vuitton, Dolce & Gabbana, Herve Leger and many others inspired her to create Hoja de Menta, which is not just a boutique but a destination for fashion lovers seeking curated luxury with a personal touch.



COURTESY PHOTO

Happy hour socials are a must-do when experiencing the town center.

Inside the boutique, you'll find a rotating collection of standout pieces influenced by top-tier fashion houses and international trends. Enjoy private one-on-one styling sessions, fresh weekly arrivals and a shopping experience tailored to your individual flair.  
Whether visiting the store or shopping online, complimentary shipping is offered on all orders.  
Follow them on Instagram, @hojadementashop, to discover their latest collections, limited-edition drops and exclusive in-store events. Experience what sets Hoja de Menta apart—where high fashion feels personal.

### Ledo Pizza

**ledopizza.com**  
The pizzeria serves up fresh, made-to-order square pizzas with flaky crusts, signature sauce and smoked provolone, along with subs, wings, pasta and more. Dine in, take out, order online or ask about their catering services for your next big event.  
■ **Sunday Funday:** Mimosas and Bloody Marys are available for \$5 all day long every Sunday.  
■ **Cheap Date Night:** On the first and third Mondays of every month, enjoy a bottle of Josh wine, two pasta dishes and a dessert for just \$35.  
■ **Every Tuesday,** get a calzone for \$6.  
■ **Wine, Whine & Whiskey:** Kids eat free with the purchase of an adult meal. Adults can indulge in \$5 Jack Daniels and wines from 4 p.m. until close every Wednesday.  
■ **LCBW Networking Event:** Connect with inspiring women in business on the fourth Thursday of every month.  
■ **Late Night Happy Hour:** Every Friday from 8 p.m. to close, enjoy \$1 off all mixed drinks and bottled beers.  
■ **Silver Saturday:** The 55+ crowd receives a 15% discount on their check every Saturday. Just show your ID and mention the offer.  
■ **On Saturday, May 17,** Scott Ehler will be the guest bartender, and the proceeds will benefit Cancer Alliance Network.  
■ **On Tuesday, May 27,** kids can enjoy making their own pizza, eating fries and

a drink, receiving a special treat, learning about pizza-making and taking home a keepsake chef hat and apron for just \$12.  
■ **Dads, this Father's Day, on Sunday, June 15,** all drinks will be \$1 off all day.  
■ **On Monday, Aug. 18,** new AMU students can get a free 8-inch cheese pizza with their student ID.

### MELTZ

**meltzicecream.com**  
A family-owned ice cream shop was founded by residents living in Ave Maria since 2021. Enjoy a variety of delicious ice cream, toppings, specialty and traditional sundaes and themed creations inspired by the youngest family members. MELTZ has customizable 100% organic Açaí bowls, boba teas, rolled ice cream and smoothies.  
■ Bring your furry friend for a complimentary pup cup.  
■ On Wednesdays, there is a 10% discount for AMU faculty and students.

### OASIS The Kitchen Lounge

**oasiskitchenlounge.com**  
At OASIS, guests can discover a new culinary offering featuring a robust menu with rich flavors and fun small bites in a breathtaking atmosphere. They can enjoy the chef's monthly specials and diverse ethnic foods. Exciting events include wine and jazz evenings, live music performances and monthly theme parties. Happy hour is from 3 to 6 p.m. on weekdays. Bookings are available throughout the year for those planning a party, catering events or celebrations.

### Oil Well Craft Beer

**oilwellcraftbeer.com**  
■ Indulge in sub sandwiches available from **11 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily.**  
■ **From 5 to 8 p.m., every Monday through Saturday,** at least one food truck is available at the Park of Commerce.  
■ **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.  
■ **During American Craft Beer Week,** which runs from **Friday, May 16 to 22,**

there will be a new craft beer tapped each day. Please note that Oil Well is closed on Sundays.  
■ **For National Armed Forces Day, on Saturday, May 17,** veterans and active military can get \$2 off all drafts with proof of service.  
■ **On Saturday, May 24,** everyone is invited to a free and fun **Karaoke Party starting at 8 p.m.** with DJ DiFlo.  
■ **SpeedQuizzing Trivia,** hosted by Carol and Tom DiFlorio, will take place **at 7 p.m. sharp on Monday, June 2 and July 7.**  
■ **Bro Night** with Broutique Cigars is on **Friday, June 6, from 7 to 9 p.m.,** and cigars will be available for purchase and beer pairings will be offered.  
■ **Family Bingo** with free prizes, hosted by Realtor Sara Callahan, will take place on **Saturday, June 7 and July 5 from 6 to 8 p.m.**  
■ **Glorified Vision Art** is hosting a **Brew and Paint Party on Tuesday, June 10 at 7 p.m.** The cost is \$35 to reserve your seat. Seats are limited, so RSVP to [glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com](mailto:glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com) as soon as possible.  
■ **On Saturday, June 14, National Bourbon Day,** enjoy \$1 off all Kentucky bourbon barrel ale.  
■ **Bunco & Wine Wednesday,** hosted by Teri Reinersman of RE/MAX Genesis and Kelli Zane of New Day Realty with Jen Givens of Isagenix as emcee, will be on **June 18 and July 16 at 6:30 p.m.,** offering fun, prizes and \$1 off wine.  
■ **Music Bingo** with Carol and Tom DiFlorio will be held on **Monday, June 23 at 7 p.m.**  
■ **Cruise Planners Adult Bingo** with free prizes is on **Wednesday, June 25 and July 23 from 7 to 9 p.m.**  
■ Bikers will receive drink discounts for **National Motorcycle Day** on Saturday, **July 12 from 12 to 3 p.m.**  
■ **Family-friendly Bingo** with free prizes, hosted by Realtor Sara Callahan, will take place on **Saturday, Aug. 2 from 6 to 8 p.m.**  
■ There will be \$1 off all IPAs all day long for **National IPA Day** on **Thursday,**

SEE ALL AROUND AVE MARIA, A24 ►





ZIGZAG  
BLACKJACK



FREE  
DRINKS WHILE  
YOU PLAY

ZIGZAG  
GIRLZ



FRIENDLIEST  
DEALERS IN  
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

ZIGZAG  
LOUNGE



FREE NIGHTLY  
ENTERTAINMENT  
& NO LAST CALL

MOREINPARADISE.COM

PLAYERS **EDGE** MUST BE AT LEAST 21 YEARS OLD TO ATTEND INDOOR SHOWS. MUST BE AT LEAST 21 YEARS OLD TO PLAY SLOTS AND TABLE GAMES OR TO RECEIVE UNITY CARD BENEFITS. IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS A GAMBLING PROBLEM, PLEASE CALL 1.888.ADMIT.IT





MEMORIAL WEEKEND ENTERTAINMENT



MAY 23 & MAY 24	THE HEROES	8PM
<b>MAY 25</b>	<b>SHEENA BROOK</b>	<b>3PM</b>
MAY 25	THUNDER BEACH	8PM
MAY 26	SIDESHOW BOB	6PM



MINUTES AWAY FROM MORE





# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

From page 21

**Aug. 7.**  
■ Get \$1 off drafts during **International Beer Day** on **Friday, Aug. 8** with from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria**  
**thepubofave.com**  
The Pub's happy hour, from 2 to 5 p.m., runs Monday through Friday featuring \$5 well drinks, \$4 house wines, \$3 domestic drafts, \$2 pretzel bites and \$1 chips and salsa.  
Keep an eye out for live music events.

**The Secret Ingredient**  
**shopthesecretingredient.com**  
■ **Celebrate your birthday** and enjoy a 20% discount on your favorite regularly priced item with a valid ID.  
■ **Active duty and retired members** receive 20% off one regular-priced item with a military ID.

■ **Every Monday is 55+ and Fabulous Day.** Shoppers aged 55 and up save 10% off one regularly priced item.  
■ **Every Tuesday,** "Twosday" shopping allows you and a friend to each receive 20% off one regularly priced item when shopping together.

■ 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 see the featured item each week.

■ **Retail Therapy Day** happens **every Thursday**, where spending \$50 gets you a free pair of sunglasses.

■ **Every Friday**, first-time shoppers receive a 20% discount on one regularly priced item. This discount is available to each new customer once.

■ **From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 17**, their huge sidewalk sale will feature a ton of new markdowns.

■ **On Sunday, May 25**, shop while sipping a complimentary glass of wine for **National Wine Day**.

■ **National Splurge Day on Wednesday, June 18** receive a free pair of earrings valued up to \$25 with a \$200 purchase.

■ **On Friday, June 20**, all flip-flops will be 20% off for **National Flip-Flop Day**.

■ On **National Pink Day**, wearing pink in-store gets you 20% off your favorite regular-priced item.

■ **National Sunglass Day is on Friday, June 27**, and there will be a Buy One Get One (BOGO) deal on sunglasses.

■ **On Wednesday, July 2**, all designers made in the U.S. will be offered at a 10% discount in celebration of **Made in the U.S. Day**.

■ Make any purchase on **Wednesday, July 9** for **National Fashion Day** to enter for a chance to win a \$50 store gift card. The winner announced at the end of the day.

■ All senior citizens can enjoy a 30% discount on their favorite item for **National Senior Citizen Day** on **Thursday, Aug. 21**.

**Stella Rose Way**  
**stellaroseway.com**  
The locally owned boutique is thrilled to enhance the shopping experience with a curated selection of gifts, artisanal items, children's products and home decor. Enjoy exclusive gifts with purchases from Nora Fleming and Brighton, and explore their new wellness lines at private

events. Subscribe to their email list for updates on events and private shopping opportunities featuring unique finds and Ave Maria souvenirs.

**Tropical Smoothie Café**  
**tropicalsmoothiecafe.com**  
Tropical Smoothie offers 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. Be sure to try the fan-favorite Tropic Bowls. Seasonal favorites are returning, including the Mango Berry Cosmo and watermelon mojitos, along with BBQ food items.

**Vicky Bakery**  
**vickybakery.com**  
Promising a delectable assortment of light, flavorful pastries, from crispy croissants to decadent cakes, each meticulously crafted for an exhilarating culinary experience, now including an expanded selection of party, wedding and special occasion custom cakes, along with a comprehensive catering service for schools, businesses and community events. This January, they will introduce a line of Bolitas (milkshakes) that will offer unique Cuban flavors and will be a great add-on to their signature Vicky Platicos, which comes with pork or chicken, seasoned rice, black beans and plantains.

**Way Out Toys & Games**  
**wayouttoys.com**  
On Tuesday nights, a Pokémon Pack Wars event costs \$20. The event runs from 6:30 to 7 p.m. and provides each player with three packs of cards to use for the event. During the three rounds played, one pack is opened at a time as a group. The winner of each round will receive a prize, and there will be a final grand prize round where all three packs provided will be used.

On Thursday nights, there is an open play event for Disney's Lorcana from 6 to 8 p.m. It's an opportunity to learn and play the game, and it is open to all ages. Even if you don't have cards, starter decks are available for purchase in-store.

**AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS**  
Games will resume in September, kicking off a new season of Gyrenes action. For more information, visit ave-

mariagyrenes.com.

■ **RESIDENT EVENTS**  
*Organizers request preregistration for these resident-only events via avemariamasterassociation.com. For more information, call 239-867-4322.*

**Elements Of Art Adult Drawing Class**  
Learn the basics of drawing—including line, shape, shading and color—through fun exercises and projects with artist Betsy Barnes. Whether you're starting a new hobby or revisiting an old passion, you'll gain confidence and express yourself creatively.

**OnSpot Dermatology**  
Located in the parking lot off of Roma Street and Avila Avenue (behind Tropical Cafe Smoothie 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 3:30 p.m. Walk-ins are currently available; however, it is recommended that you book your appointment before. Visit onspotdermatology.com to book an appointment. Upcoming dates are May 29, June 7, 14, 19, 24 and July 3, 4, 12, 18 and 26.

**Ave Maria Stewardship Community District (AMSCD) Meetings**  
Monthly AMSCD meetings are open to the public and held in the AMMA meeting room on Tuesday, June 3 at 6 p.m. and July 1 at 4 p.m., and Aug. 5 at 6 p.m. Visit avemariastewardshipcd.org for more information, monthly meeting books and schedule updates.

**Family Gametime Adventure Amazing Race**  
Do you and your family have what it takes to win an amazing race? Trivia battle of the minds and a scavenger hunt for clues are back. On Saturday, June 7, from 3 to 5 p.m., gather at the AMMA Events Room for a family pizza social and then complete indoor and outdoor challenges. The event costs only \$25 per family or team of 4 people.

**Coffee with a Twiss**  
This casual gathering with AMMA Executive Director Kim Twiss, held from 10 to 11 a.m. every second Thurs-

day of the month, allows homeowners to ask questions and get updates on the Master Association and community news. The next meeting is June 12.

**Science in the Park & Indoor**  
Register your youth ages 8 and up for this summer program with Jesse Bernstein, Ph.D., fondly known to students as Doc B. Dr. Bernstein is a chemist and retired educator for over 40 years who recently moved to Ave Maria. Classes will include learning about electricity and circuitry, constructing devices involving motors and batteries, building and launching the fun Aka-Seltzer rockets and more. Classes are 9 to 10:30 a.m., and \$5 per person. The first class is on Wednesday, June 18, at the South Park Pavilion No. 3.

**New Homeowners Social and Orientation**  
New Ave Maria homeowners, and those who have not attended this event before, are invited to a welcome meet-and-greet, followed by an informational presentation by AMMA in their meeting room. Residents will learn about living in this community and the various organizations in Ave Maria. Check the AMMA website calendar for dates and times. The next Orientation is scheduled for June 26 at 5:30 p.m.

**Independence Day Celebration**  
Celebrate July 4 at the Water Park from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Enjoy music by DJ D-Flo, delicious food and sweet treats. Families can take part in pool volleyball, a foam party, an inflatable water slide and the famous watermelon eating contest.

**Adult Games Group**  
Adults looking for a friendly group to socialize with and playing a variety of card-type games and Rummikub, etc. are welcome to join the group from 1 to 3 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays in the AMMA card room.

**AVE MARIA WATER PARK FITNESS**  
*For more details, please contact the park office at 239-658-5880.*

**Swimming Lessons**  
Resident-only summer swim lessons begin Tuesday, June 3, in a safe environment for kids. Classes run Tuesday to Friday mornings for two weeks (June 3-13, June 17-27, July 8-18 and July 22-Aug. 1), with make-ups on Mondays. The cost is \$65 for eight lessons.

**Progressive Swim Team**  
The progressive swim team is designed for advanced swimmers aged 6 to 16, allowing them to improve their skills while enjoying swimming with peers. Practices are held four times a week, from Tuesday to Friday mornings. To join, participants must be able to swim 25 yards of both front crawl and back crawl.

**Water Aerobics**  
Water aerobics for adults 18 and over is offered Monday through Saturday at 9 a.m. The first class is free, and subsequent classes are \$5 each. Participants can save by purchasing a punch card for 20 classes for \$65. Equipment is provided, but remember to bring a towel, sunglasses, sunscreen and a sense of adventure.

**MORE SPORTS & FITNESS**  
**Tai Chi**  
Every Tuesday morning at 9 a.m.,



ANDREA MELENDEZ/WGCU  
**The Ave Maria Veterans Association and Veterans of Del Webb Naples held a Memorial Day Ceremony at the Ave Maria Veterans Memorial Monument, which included a guest visit from Senator Rick Scott.**



# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

classes are held that occasionally take place at South Park Amphitheater during the cooler months. These sessions provide a meditative workout designed to increase strength, mobility and much more. For more information or to register for the fall season, contact instructor Mylyn Vedel at myvedel@gmail.com or 239-220-4181.

### Senior Yoga

Yoga instructor Alexandra Salazar offers specialized classes for seniors every other Friday at 10 a.m. For more information about when classes will resume, please email salexa2009@gmail.com.

### Outdoor Zumba

These classes are on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in the South Park Amphitheater. For more information, cost and updates, visit the AMMA website.

### Quest Martial Arts Academy Classes

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

Ave Maria has several seasonal independent sports leagues and organiza-



COURTESY PHOTO

**Water aerobics for adults 18 and over is offered Monday through Saturday at 9 a.m.**

tions. For current availability, check the AMMA calendar on their website for approved fitness and sports activities led by independent contractors. Also, refer to the Friday Flash and the Lifestyle Fitness & Sports tab on the AMMA website for updates on Summer Programs.

### Men's Pick-Up Soccer

Players ages 16 and older looking for

a good workout and team camaraderie are invited to join these resident-organized games at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays and Sundays at soccer field No. 2 in North Park.

### BTL Developmental Basketball League

Brandon Dean, a former NBA skills coach, is hosting a youth basketball league

in North Park. The BTL Developmental League includes divisions for 4-7 years, 8-11 years and 12-14 years, with 10 practices and 8-10 games. For more info, contact Brandon Dean at 786-365-1645 or bdean@btlhoops.com.

### Ave Maria Little League

Check out the summer season info for Ave Maria's inaugural official league. Offering baseball, tee ball and softball for kids ages 4 to 14, this league has a winning history. For details and registration, visit ave-marialittleleague.com or contact avemaria-baseball@gmail.com.

### Carry Permit Fitness

Calling all fitness lovers, Carry Permit Fitness, an outdoor mobile training gym, will visit South and North Park in the coming months. Founded by Certified Fitness Professionals Meleik and Ahna Carry, this unique workout experience is perfect for Ave Maria residents. For visit dates and more information, contact 878-348-0278 or visit carrypermitfitness.com. 🌞

## Curb Appeal Done *Right*



Locally owned and operated for over 10 YEARS!

Landscaping • Maintenance • Pavers  
Lighting • Irrigation • PestControl

EXPERIENCED LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS AND INSTALLERS

- Local Owners
- No hidden fees
- 100% guarantee

Nothing says "welcome to our home" like a perfectly manicured yard. Fresh cut grass. Smooth, clean edges. Healthy trees, shrubs and flowers.

At Cheney we make it our business to keep the exterior of your home looking perfect!

With over 20 years of experience, we know the area better than anyone else. We are experts in helping design, install and maintain breathtaking landscapes.



# Cheney

## Landscaping

239-919-9167  
www.cheneylandscaping.com



Open for Lunch and Dinner

## Made from Scratch Menu

Inspired by Land and Sea with the *Freshest* Seafood, *Finest* Cuts and Raw Bar



Join us for **Social Hour!**  
Mon-Fri 3pm - 6pm

Sun-Thurs 11:30am - 9pm • Fri-Sat 11:30am - 10pm  
8850 Founders Square Dr • 239.427.3335 • oarandiron.com



# Del Webb puts on a showstopper

## The Director's Choice Fashion and Entertainment Show dazzles for CAN

BY SANDRA YEYATI  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

On March 29, The Club at Del Webb Naples transformed into The Grand Theater for the highly anticipated Director's Choice Fashion and Entertainment Show, an annual event now in its sixth year. The spectacular production not only dazzled attendees with choreographed dances, live vocal performances, and the latest fashion trends but also served a noble cause—raising funds for the Cancer Alliance Network (CAN), which supports individuals and their families battling cancer in Collier and Lee counties.

Welcoming more than 220 attendees, the event was a resounding success, raising \$48,500 to date, with additional donations expected. The cinematic theme was expertly curated by volunteers Janet Pepi and B.J. Parkhill, who created an immersive movie theater atmosphere complete with a popcorn machine, red carpet, velvet ropes and themed decorations. OASIS The Kitchen Lounge catered a delicious, light dinner buffet.

"The number one thing we aim to do is preserve the dignity of those we help, ensuring no one faces their cancer journey alone," CAN CEO Neftali Feliciano noted. "And we can't do it without the generosity of our community. If somebody donates to us, we want them to know that for every dollar that is donated to CAN, 93 cents goes to the actual mission."

The fundraiser featured stunning fashion pieces from the Panther Run Pro Shop and The Secret Ingredient, selected and styled by Del Webb residents Mimi Martin and Dee Lamb, along with Daneé



SHERRI MARK DOVE PHOTOGRAPHY / COURTESY PHOTO

**The Director's Choice Fashion and Entertainment Show raised \$48,500 for the Cancer Alliance Network.**

Williams, owner of The Secret Ingredient. The runway came alive as Ave Maria residents modeled outfits ranging from casual to evening attire, while Williams created excitement as the evening's master of ceremonies. Eight dancers and three vocalists from Del Webb also took center stage—each performance a testament to the community's talent and dedication.

Barbara Mariano, the driving force behind the event, has been tirelessly organizing fundraisers in Ave Maria since 2016. She led an enthusiastic team of over 20 Del Webb volunteers to help with every detail—selling tickets, recruiting sponsors, producing the entertainment,

organizing an extensive raffle of products and services by local businesses, and so much more.

"It's all about giving back. Every volunteer pours their heart into this event," Mariano shared. Her personal connection to cancer, having lost close family members and recently her husband Terry of 50 years, deepens her commitment to CAN's mission.

The evening's excitement peaked with a raffle for a seven-night Celebrity Cruise generously donated by Dan and Jackie Rategan of Cruise Planners, who were also models in the show. The lucky winner, Sara Callahan, a local Realtor at Real-

ty ONE Group MVP, couldn't contain her joy, dancing with delight upon hearing her name.

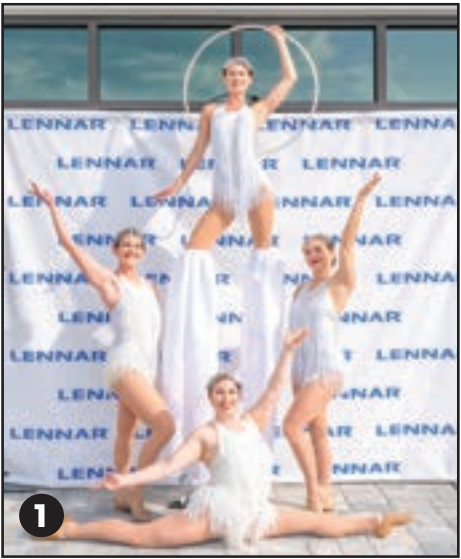
CAN Program Director Kristie Sammons stated, "Our organization provides non-medical financial support to qualifying cancer patients for things like rent, mortgage payments, utilities, gas, groceries, car payments and phone bills. We also offer free programs, including a cancer support group, a free wig program, mastectomy bras and breast forms for breast cancer patients, and free classes by a certified nutritional chef to help people improve their eating habits and health profiles."

Reflecting on the event, Sammons said, "We are absolutely in awe of Barb Mariano and all the volunteers at Del Webb and Ave Maria. They put on a phenomenal show every single year. We love them, and we all try to attend so that we are there to thank people in person for all their hard work and for supporting us. Some of the people involved are cancer survivors themselves or have had loved ones with cancer. There's a passion in their hearts to help us continue to do what we do, and that is amazing to see in action. We're all very passionate about what we do, and to have people like them that are determined to support us the way that they do is just wonderful."

With plans already underway for the seventh annual show on Friday, March 27, 2026, the Del Webb community continues to exemplify how compassion and teamwork can make a significant difference, offering hope for those struggling with cancer. To support CAN's mission, visit [CancerAllianceNetwork.org](https://CancerAllianceNetwork.org). 🌟

## BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

### The National Golf & Country Club unveils new clubhouse



1. The entertainment included captivating stilt walkers and lively girls performing with hoops.



2. The new clubhouse features an expansive fitness amenities and spa facilities spanning 6,446 square feet.
3. The Getaway Spa of Ave Maria showcased their services and products.
4. The joyful family posed together in their matching blue outfits.
5. People gathered under the shade at the outdoor bar.
6. Adults can unwind by the pool under spacious umbrellas.
7. Guests were treated to an array of indulgent desserts.
8. Children swam in the resort-style pool.



# New wave

Kelly Hood returns to Florida to run Ave Maria’s water park with energy and heart

**BY GLENN MILLER**  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

New Ave Maria Water Park director Kelly Hood is back in Florida, her home state. Although she graduated from St. Petersburg High School, which is a 151-mile drive from Ave Maria, her journey to Ave Maria was much longer. Kelly and her husband, Christian, relocated from Sun Prairie, Wisconsin—a distance of 1,527 miles—where she had worked at a Great Wolf Lodge.

“After the second winter, we said, ‘enough is enough,’” Kelly recalled. In Sun Prairie, the average January low is 19°F, with an average high of 27°F. In contrast, Ave Maria averages 57°F as a low and 74°F as a high in January, meaning the average low in Florida is 30 degrees warmer than the average high in Wisconsin.

On the day they left Sun Prairie, the temperature was just 18°F. “Being back in Florida has been really fun for me,” Kelly said. “I love the weather patterns in Florida... I’m excited to be back in the heat.”

The couple arrived in Southwest Florida in March and now lives in Lehigh Acres, Lee County. Christian works on dry land and has been in the motorcycle industry for about 15 years. He currently works with safety equipment for an Italian firm and can do so from home. “I love warm, hot weather,” he said.

Now settled into the Florida lifestyle, Kelly is focused on the community of Ave Maria and enhancing the water park experience for its residents.

In many ways, Kelly has been preparing for this role her entire life. She learned to swim in her grandfather’s backyard pool and started her first job as a lifeguard at the age of 14 at Tampa’s Adventure Island water park.

Kelly chose to major in geology at the University of South Florida in Tampa, as she wanted a career that would keep her outside rather than confined to a desk. The role of water park director requires strong people skills, which she possesses.

“I love interacting with people,” Kelly stated. She remembers her early experiences as a teenage lifeguard and now has the opportunity to help give young people their first jobs.

“One of the unique aspects of my job is working with many individuals for whom this is their first job,” she said, adding that she also hires retired people seeking part-time work. This makes for a

diverse workforce in terms of age. Kelly appreciates the family-focused lifestyle in Ave Maria.

“I enjoy interacting with families,” Kelly commented, particularly noting the joy of watching children learn to swim and gain confidence in the water. “You’ll spend all summer with a child who is learning how to swim,” she said.

So, what are her responsibilities at Ave Maria?

“What don’t I do?” Kelly said.

Her managerial and administrative skills are essential in her role. For starters, she hires and trains the lifeguards and schedules swim lessons and water aerobics classes.

“The water park doesn’t run itself,” she explained. “Somebody has to manage its numerous functions and programs,” which is where Kelly comes in. She oversees day-to-day operations and long-term planning, particularly as the team prepares for summer activities.

“The long-term planning and everything under the sun,” Kelly said. “So, right now we’re really prepping for summer, so I’m really focused on hiring and training lifeguards and also preparing for swim lessons.”

Additionally, she is responsible for running the swim teams.

Upon arriving in Southwest Florida, Kelly wasted no time getting to work. One of her first tasks was hiring nearly 50 lifeguards for part-time positions.

“We’re very, very flexible when it comes to hours,” Kelly said. “We hire a lot of either retirees or high school and college students, who have a lot of other things they’re doing.”

“The number of hours they work usually ranges from five to 20,” Kelly explained, though during the summer, some may work 30 to 40 hours a week. Since this is her first summer at the water park, she is uncertain how the demand will play out.

Lifeguards need to be strong swimmers, but that isn’t all. The job requires teamwork and conflict resolution skills.

With a passion for people, a love of the outdoors and a lifetime of aquatic experience, Kelly is bringing energy, heart and leadership to her new role at the Ave Maria Water Park. As she settles into life back in Florida, her focus is firmly on building a welcoming, safe and family-friendly environment where both residents and staff can thrive. Under her guidance, the water park will make a splash this summer. 🌊



COURTESY PHOTO

**Kelly Hood, the new director of Ave Maria Water Park, combines her experience with a passion for community service to enhance the park’s offerings.**



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

**Hood schedules and oversees swim lessons and water aerobics classes at the water park to ensure smooth operations.**



## ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY

### AVE MARIA SUN

**NEXT PUBLICATION DATE: AUGUST 6, 2025**



**SPACE/CREATIVE:**  
Wednesday, July 23rd • 12pm

**CAMERA READY ADS:**  
Tuesday, July 29th • 2pm

Contact your account executive today to learn more about advertising in the Ave Maria Sun.  
**239.333.2135**





Visit us online at [www.AveMariaSun.com](http://www.AveMariaSun.com)



# We are local, national *and global*

---

Founded in 1958, John R. Wood Christie's International Real Estate is Southwest Florida's oldest major real estate brokerage. Family owned and operated, it is a nationally recognized company with more than 65 years of market experience and broad international exposure.

---



CHRISTIE'S  
INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE

**THE UNRIVALED LEADER IN REAL ESTATE**

Family owned and operated since 1958

Contact us to market your home today | [JohnRWood.com](http://JohnRWood.com) | (239) 262-1900