

# Ave Maria Sun

OCTOBER 2025

www.AveMariaSun.com

Vol. V, No. 11

## A beloved October tradition

The Fall Festival returns, inspiring community spirit **A8** ▶



## Service with impact

The Rotary Club of Ave Maria celebrates its first anniversary **A12** ▶



## Cardinals take flight

The rise of Ave Maria Elementary School **A20** ▶



# STRONGER TOGETHER



The Kiss Cancer Goodbye Tournament is a vibrant annual event dedicated to raising awareness and funds for the Cancer Alliance of Naples.

## Ave Maria residents share cancer survivor stories and join in the Kiss Cancer Goodbye Golf Tournament

BY SANDRA YEYATI  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

**A**t the core of Ave Maria are its remarkable people—individuals like MaryAnn Pearson, Valerie Thompson and Cathy Mahoney, who faced life-altering cancer diagnoses with courage and emerged stronger, thanks to the steadfast support of friends, neighbors and caregivers. Their journeys demonstrate why Ave Maria is a sanctuary of resilience, camaraderie and unwavering support.

On Oct. 22, Panther Run Golf Club, in Del Webb Naples, will host the annual Kiss Cancer Goodbye Golf Tournament, a cornerstone event spearheaded by Ave Maria resident Barb Mariano. This fun and impactful 18-hole scramble unites participants from Ave Maria and beyond to raise vital funds for the Cancer Alliance

SEE CANCER, A6 ▶



COURTESY PHOTOS

A golfer winds up for a fantastic swing at the Kiss Cancer Goodbye Tournament.

## The heroes of Ave Maria

Firefighters and paramedics reflect on service deeply rooted in community

BY SANDRA YEYATI  
Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Ave Maria thrives on the spirit of its people—diverse in age and background, but united by community. Among them are the courageous first responders who not only protect and serve, but also call this town their home. Fire Chief Michael Choate, Lieutenants Ryne Rosenbalm and Mitchell Van Tine, and Lieutenant Paramedic Austin Uhrick embody the heart and strength of the town. Their important roles and unflinching dedication are to be celebrated, as we look at the reasons why they love living in Ave Maria.



CHOATE



ROSENBALM

## Leading with purpose and passion

Since 2016, Choate has led the Immokalee Fire Control District (IFCD), overseeing operations in Immokalee and Ave Maria. Under his leadership, Fire Station 32 in Ave Maria was established in 2023, marking a milestone in community safety. He is known for a strategic mindset and unwavering commitment to readiness.

“I have to maintain the 1,000-foot view,” Choate says, underscoring his responsibility for financial solvency, staff morale and operational readiness. Yet, he credits his team: “It’s all about the firefighters. Their readiness and professionalism are what the community sees and appreciates.”

Living in Avalon Park with his wife Linda, Choate embraces Ave Maria’s charm. “We love the lifestyle here where everything is a golf cart ride away,” he shares. The welcoming nature of Ave Maria, coupled with its small-town feel, resonates with him. “It’s like being

SEE HEROES, A10 ▶



# Lakeside living grows at Maple Ridge

Premium lots with lake views, oversized yards and modern floor plans expand this Ave Maria community

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

A new phase of homes is now under construction at Maple Ridge by CC Homes, a prominent and highly sought-after community in Ave Maria, just moments from Town Center's shopping and entertainment. These premium lots offer some of the most desirable locations yet—featuring stunning lake views, spacious corner lots and oversized backyards perfect for Florida living.

Within both Maple Ridge and Silverwood at Maple Ridge, buyers can choose from a broad selection of one- and two-story floor plans with three to six bedrooms and generous outdoor space. Measuring from 1,200 to 2,300 square feet under air, these modern sanctuaries are priced from the \$330,000s to \$700,000s. This newest phase of Maple Ridge has something for everyone—from young families starting out to retired couples seeking a luxurious retreat.

“As a specialist in Florida single-family home construction, we pride ourselves on offering the comfort of superior craftsmanship and the luxury of elevated design,” says CC Homes New Home Sales Consultant Alina Laureiro. “Contemporary finishes, sun-filled windows and thoughtful layouts create spaces that feel clean and inviting.”

CC Homes builds with concrete block construction on every floor of the home, reinforced-steel foundations and impact



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTO

The Club at Maple Ridge offers various social activities and fitness options.

glass windows throughout. Homes also have built-in smart-home features. CC Homes has a large showroom in the Town Center where homebuyers can meet with design specialists to select interior and exterior finishes, color schemes and other personalized elements.

“Many of our clients are looking for private, in-laws quarters or spaces that function as home offices or gyms. Our guest “casita” and other structural options are appealing for clients with distinctive needs and preferences,” says Laureiro. “We also offer countless color options for the finishes in your home, including a variety of standard options, depending on

your new home style.”

Maple Ridge residents enjoy exclusive access to the Club at Maple Ridge, which offers a wide range of social activities and fitness options hosted by the community lifestyle director. The club features a resort-style pool, a fully equipped gym, and multiple breakout rooms for billiards, table games, arts and crafts and kids' playtime. Maple Ridge is also a pet-friendly neighborhood, with a dog park and ample sidewalks for morning and evening walks.

Prospective buyers are invited to visit the CC Homes Sales and Models Gal-

SEE LAKESIDE, A11 ►

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# The heartbeat of community in Ave Maria

From fall festivals to Fortnite challenges, Events Director Jackie Ventura is shaping the rhythm of community life



Events Director Jackie Ventura oversees the lifestyle team.

COURTESY PHOTOS

BY JAMES BOJACIUK

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The event director for the Master Association plays a key role in Ave Maria. The person in this position plans and schedules many of the official resident-only events throughout the city. In creating gatherings, the director helps set the tone and pace of town life.

This summer, Jackie Ventura became the Master Association’s Events Director, overseeing the lifestyle team. The team plans everything from major events, like the Fall Festival in October and Hometown Christmas in December, to weekly or monthly events. She takes helping the cadence of connection between residents seriously, focused on what will help them make friends and new memories.

Ventura views the position as drawing on twenty years of expertise that she gained from many different hospitality ventures.

“I have been in the hospitality industry for twenty years at this point,” Ventura said. “You name it, I’ve done it. Whether it’s corporate event planning, working in a restaurant, or a country club. I was a non-profit fundraising manager for almost ten years. I’ve done trade shows, weddings, all sorts of things like that. ...I think my experience working in so many different industries in event planning has positioned me to be able to bring that knowledge and background into planning different kinds of events.”

One challenge that comes with Ave Maria is the wide range of ages and interests that residents bring with them. Ventura, particularly, is working to meet the needs of local teenagers.

“We do lots of things for residents from ages 4 through 94,” Ventura said. “I know one of the demographics that tends to get left out is teens. So, when I came in and heard that, I thought about what we could do for teens that could be fun and exciting. So, we’re hosting a Fortnite Challenge on a mobile gaming truck.

“We (also) host camps during the summer, like a craft camp and a science camp. Our teams put on a monthly Coffee with a Twiss event where people can have a cup of coffee, meet their neighbors, and learn about what’s going on in the community. Just recently, we hosted a new homeowner orientation.”

Ventura said that more events specifically focused on teenagers will be coming in the future.

“We constantly are thinking ahead,” Ventura said. “Right now, we’re planning our 2026 calendar. We want to have different things every month, hitting different age brackets and interests. There’s more strategic planning that goes into it. We try to have a wide variety of options.”

While new events are planned, Ventura also puts current beloved events under the microscope. She wants the events to offer new surprises to old residents and always stay fresh.

“There are some things that we do ev-



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“We constantly are thinking ahead. Right now, we’re planning our 2026 calendar. We want to have different things every month, hitting different age brackets and interests.”

— Events Director Jackie Ventura

ery year,” Ventura said. “Within those, how can we make them new and exciting? Our job is to say, how can we add a new flare to that every year? We have so many amenities, which plays into it too. We have a water park, we have two reg-

ular parks, we have a dog park, we have the Town Center, we have the community room—we have so many different venues, it allows a variety of different things to happen.”  
Ventura encourages residents to ex-

plore the town and take part in events. “If you’re bored in Ave Maria, I’m not doing a good job,” Ventura said. “We always have something happening. Sports leagues, yoga, pickleball. There’s always something to do and we’re excited to put

on different events for people of all ages.”  
The community calendar can be found online at: [www.avemaria.com/news-and-events/events](http://www.avemaria.com/news-and-events/events) or the Ave Maria Master Association App. 🌟

## Q&A with the Master Association’s Events Director Jackie Ventura

**Where are you from?**  
My backstory is that I am originally from Massachusetts. We moved from Boston to Naples about a year and a half ago. I lived there my entire life up until a year and a half ago. I’m definitely a northeast girl who is now in Florida.

**What event should everyone be most excited for this year?**  
I am 100% most excited for Hometown Christmas. It’s our biggest event, but personally, I am a huge lover of Christmas. I keep a Christmas tree up in my house year-round, and decorate it for each season. I am just so excited to have the whole Town Center transformed into a Hallmark movie. When they told me this is one of the events I would be planning, I told them, ‘You’ve got your girl. I love Christmas.’ I used to host an ugly Christmas sweater party with my friends every year, and my house looks like the North

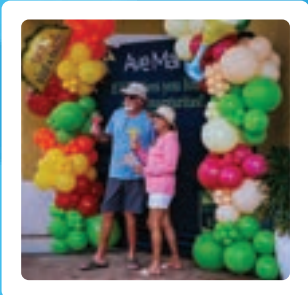
Pole when it’s decorated. I’m excited to bring my personal passion for Christmas into Hometown Christmas. There will be surprises that I can’t talk about yet!

**What is your favorite thing about Ave Maria?**  
My favorite thing about Ave Maria, honestly, is just how friendly people are. Coming from the northeast, I think we’re used to people being a little bit more direct... So it’s interesting when you walk into the businesses around here, or when you’re walking down Ave Maria Boulevard, people will make eye contact with you and say hello. There’s no ulterior motive there; they’re just friendly people. It’s refreshing to see.

**What is your favorite movie?**  
One movie that never gets old is “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off.” I’ve watched it a bajillion times, and I think it’s a classic. 🌟



COURTESY PHOTOS



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**Taste of Ave**  
**Saturday, January 31**  
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**Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival**  
**Saturday, February 14**  
**12:00 - 5:00 PM**

**Shamrock Festival**  
**Saturday, March 14**  
**12:00 - 5:00 PM**

**Margarita & Taco Festival**  
**Saturday, March 28**  
**12:00 - 5:00 PM**



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# CANCER

From page 1

Network (CAN), a nonprofit charity that supports qualified families in Lee, Collier and Hendry counties. More than a fundraiser, it is a celebration of life and the relentless, collective fight against cancer.

## Friendship, faith and fortitude

After relocating from Michigan to East Naples in 2002, MaryAnn Pierson and her husband, Roy, of 49 years, experienced the wrath of hurricanes Wilma and Irma, prompting their 2017 move inland to Ave Maria, drawn by its charm and affordability. “We loved it here,” she recalls. “I got my gourmet kitchen, and my husband got his three-car garage.”

MaryAnn faced the devastating loss of her husband in February, a profound heartbreak that was softened by the support of a large group of Ave Maria friends who shared her journey of grief and resilience. MaryAnn’s friendships became lifelines, as she discovered healing through companionship, golf and shared adventures.

Diagnosed with breast cancer at 48, MaryAnn faced her own battle head-on, opting for a mastectomy, chemotherapy and reconstructive surgery. Her network of family and friends was her anchor then, too. “You can’t navigate this alone,” she reflects.

Now 27 years cancer-free, she credits her vigilance with self-exams and yearly mammograms, faith and an active life-



COURTESY PHOTOS

Participants rep their pink attire, shining on the golf course, in support of the Cancer Alliance Network.

style for her enduring health. “You have to keep an eye on things. There’s a lot you can do to improve your chances. Don’t smoke, watch what you eat, exercise, pray, keep up your spirits and rely on your friends and loved ones.”

## A pastor’s path of hope and connection

Valerie Thompson, a Pentecostal pastor since 1982, found her retirement haven in Ave Maria in 2019. Just a year later, she confronted stage 1 breast cancer. Through surgery, radiation and

chemotherapy, Valerie’s faith and the unwavering support of her community carried her through. Friends provided meals, pajamas for recovery and frequent check-ins, ensuring that she never felt alone. Her involvement in community activities, including golf, pickleball and art, further fortified her spirit.



The Kiss Cancer Goodbye Golf Tournament will take place on Oct. 22 at the Panther Run Golf Club in Del Webb.



This 18-hole scramble unites Ave Maria residents, participants and friends in support of raising vital funds for the Cancer Alliance Network.



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“There’s such an amazing camaraderie here,” she shares. “I’ve made more friends in Ave Maria than I ever had in my life. And now that I’m better, I try to help others, because you sow and reap. You pay it forward, and then it comes back 100-fold.”

Valerie’s commitment to giving back is evident in her participation in the Kiss Cancer Goodbye Tournament, where survivors are honored and hope flourishes. “Last year was especially rewarding and heartwarming because they took a photo with all the cancer survivors, so we got to see fellow friends and people who had survived cancer. It felt nice to be acknowledged and have people understand what you’ve been through.”

Valerie’s advice to others is clear: “Stay positive, stay connected and never hesitate to ask for help. This community rallies around you.”

**Advocacy and a new chapter**

In 2020, amid the isolation and uncertainty of the COVID pandemic, Cathy Mahoney’s world shifted with a HER2-positive stage 2 breast cancer diagnosis. Her journey taught her the power of self-advocacy. Despite inconclusive initial tests, her intuition pushed her to seek further evaluations until the cancer was confirmed.

Treatment involved chemotherapy to shrink the tumor, followed by a mastectomy. Reflecting on her experience, Cathy emphasizes the significance of a positive attitude and faith. “I felt lucky, despite the circumstances. I trusted my doctors and focused on gratitude for early detection and excellent medical care.”

Cathy’s experience led to a profound life reassessment. After completing treatment,

she and her husband decided to fast-track their retirement and move to Ave Maria in 2024, prioritizing a life filled with joy and purpose. “We both said, ‘Life’s too short. Let’s get to paradise. Let’s do what we want to do.’ Our best friends already lived in Ave Maria, and when we visited them we fell in love with the town. Having lived in big cities all my life, I love that it’s a little world and elegantly simple, but you can still drive to Naples or Miami. We love being close to the beach, and we’ve met some fabulous people here.”

Active in golf, yoga and community events, Cathy’s spirit is infectious. “Cancer touches everyone. Here in Ave Maria, the spirit of giving and togetherness is real. People do really care, and whether it’s a golf tournament or a fashion show fundraiser, we’re building bonds and creating joy.”

**Driving change, one swing at a time**

The Kiss Cancer Goodbye Golf Tournament, open to all, kicks off at 9 a.m. with spirited competition, heartfelt survivor tributes and lively fundraising activities. “It’s emotional and uplifting,” says organizer Barb Mariano. “We honor every life touched by cancer, fostering hope and solidarity.”

Proceeds benefit the nonprofit Cancer Alliance Network, providing non-medical support—from covering rent and groceries to offering free wigs and support groups. “No one should battle cancer alone,” asserts CAN’s Program Director Kristie Sammons.

To sign up for the golf tournament, call the Panther Run Golf Club at 239-304-2835. To support CAN, visit [CancerAllianceNetwork.org](http://CancerAllianceNetwork.org). 🌻



Two friends, adorned in pink, sharing a laugh during the golf tournament.



The golf tournament unites the community bringing excitement and camaraderie to all.

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# A beloved tradition returns this October

The annual Fall Festival returns with food, games, live music and community spirit

BY ERICA FISH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

As the summer heat gives way to cooler breezes and golden sunsets, Ave Maria is gearing up for one of its most anticipated community traditions—the annual Fall Festival, hosted by the Ave Maria Master Association (AMMA). Scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 18, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., this family-friendly event promises a day brimming with food, fun, music and togetherness, drawing residents to North Park.

Since its inception, the Fall Festival has reflected the founding values of Ave Maria, celebrating community and family.

“This is my first involvement with organizing this year’s Fall Festival, and what I’ve learned through planning is it’s about bringing everyone together,” said Jackie Ventura, AMMA event director. “Whether you’ve lived here for years or just moved in, we invite community members to meet more neighbors, enjoy great food and celebrate the new season as a community.”

Past festivals have featured everything from pumpkin patches and hayrides to bounce houses, carnival games and live entertainment. This year, organizers promise even more excitement:

### A taste of what’s to come

The Fall Festival will showcase a variety of activities designed to delight all ages. Families can look forward to:

- **Pumpkin patch and decorating station:** Families will have the chance to select their own pumpkin for purchase and decorate it on-site, a tradition that always draws enthusiastic participation.

- **Live music and entertainment:** Band No Way Back, comprised of all Ave Maria residents, will play a variety of hits from the ‘70s, ‘80s, ‘90s and now.

- **Hayrides, zipline and horseback:** New this year, talented animals will be performing a variety of entertaining tricks and crowd-pleasing routines, plus a kid-friendly zipline.

- **Food trucks and seasonal treats:** This North Park event will be a feast for every palate as Mean Street Tacos and Sweeter Society, voted best ice cream in SWFL, will be in attendance.

- **Carnival games:** Classic games like ring toss and inflatables will keep the kids entertained for hours.

- **Vendors:** Local artisans and small businesses featuring youth entrepreneurs with Biz Kidz will set up booths, offering handcrafted goods and unique gifts.



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTOS

**ABOVE: Father and daughter paint their hand-selected pumpkin together. RIGHT: Support young entrepreneurs as they sell their goodies during the autumn festivities!**

### Why it matters

For a town as close-knit as Ave Maria, the Fall Festival is more than just a day of fun—it’s a celebration of the community spirit that defines life here. In a world that often feels fast-paced and disconnected, events like this offer a refreshing reminder of the joy that comes from slowing down.

Residents who attended last year’s event recall the energy and joy it brought.

“My family looks forward to it every year,” said Ariel Hernandez, an Avalon Park resident. “It’s the one event where we know we’ll see everyone—friends, neighbors, classmates—all together in one place. We’re originally from Broward County, where life was constantly go, go, go, and chances to slow down and connect were not often. Now, with my parents and in-laws here in Ave Maria, my kids are racing bikes down the street with their friends and heading to North Park for all the fun. It’s a completely different pace, and we love it.”

### Looking ahead

Admission is \$10 per person, with children under the age of 4 being free. Activities will run throughout the event from

10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. AMMA recommends pre-purchasing tickets at the master association office or website, AveMariaMasterAssociation.com. Parking will be available on-site, with additional overflow parking options provided nearby. Organizers recommend arriving early to take advantage of the full activities schedule and secure a good spot for the live band. Families are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets to relax and enjoy the entertainment.

### How to get involved

Volunteers play a role in the success of the Fall Festival. From helping at activity stations to assisting with the hayrides, community members are encouraged to lend a hand.

Last year, Del Webb Naples resident Jim Anderson volunteered to help facilitate the hayrides.

“You get to see the kids’ faces light up with excitement,” Anderson said. “It’s

something simple, but it brings everyone together, and that’s what makes Ave Maria so special.”

Those interested in getting involved can contact AMMA Event Director, Jack-



Giddy-up, horsie!



New friends were made at the petting zoo.





AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTOS  
ABOVE: Jim Anderson helps a family off the hayride. RIGHT: Ariel Hernandez with her kids, Kalel and Elle, at last year’s festival.

ie Ventura directly at [jackie.ventura@fsresidential.com](mailto:jackie.ventura@fsresidential.com).

A celebration to remember

“Every year, the Fall Festival grows, not just in size, but in meaning,” said Carol DiFlorio, AMMA Lifestyle Director. “It’s more than pumpkins and games. It’s about celebrating who we are as a community.”  
So mark your calendars, pick out your favorite sweater and get ready to celebrate a tradition that captures the very essence of small-town charm, and one that continues to remind residents why Ave Maria is, indeed, A Big Kind of Small Town. 🌻



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# HEROES

From page 1

a minor celebrity,” he jokes, acknowledging the townspeople’s warmth and familiarity.

## A legacy of service

Rosenbalm, a fourth-generation firefighter, carries the legacy of service with pride. “Growing up, I heard stories about the brotherhood and the bonds formed among firefighters. I knew from the start that this was my calling,” he reflects. “This is the best job in the world. I wouldn’t want to do anything else. When people call with an emergency, we’re that light at the end of the tunnel. I hope we can bring people hope.”

Rosenbalm rotates between the Ave Maria and Immokalee fire stations, continuously advancing his skills as he pursues paramedic certification. He recently moved from Fort Myers to stay with his grandmother in Del Webb. Living close to work has improved his quality of life, reducing commute stress and allowing him to play at Panther Run Golf Club and The National Golf & Country Club.

“Ave Maria is a tight-knit community. Everyone knows each other and is welcoming,” he says. Rosenbalm values the support of the residents, often encountering good-natured faces at local events and establishments. “Being part of the community you serve is incredibly rewarding. You’re not just a responder; you’re a neighbor and a friend.”

## Balancing duty and family

Van Tine’s journey into firefighting started later in life. “After working for a moving company for 10 years, I wanted something more rewarding and challenging, with a sense of purpose,” he explains. Since joining the Immokalee Fire District in 2017, Van Tine has risen to the



COURTESY PHOTO

Mitchell Van Tine, a lieutenant in the Immokalee Fire District, poses with his family.

rank of lieutenant, overseeing critical decisions during emergency responses.

In 2023, he and his wife Anna and three young daughters moved from an East Naples condominium to a single-family home in Silverwood. “We wanted a community for the kids instead

of the condo life—something with a yard and kids playing outside,” Van Tine explains. “Our neighbors have been incredibly welcoming, and the kids have found friends right next door. Everybody helps each other. It feels like home.”

The shorter commute has significantly

improved Van Tine’s work-life balance, allowing more quality time with his family. “When I’m stationed at the Ave Maria station, I can ride my bike to work, which takes me about 10 minutes. And then, coming home to Ave Maria after a long shift feels really comforting,” he remarks. “It’s a place where I can truly relax and be present with my loved ones.”

In addition to putting out fires, rescuing people from car accidents or falls in the home, Van Tine enjoys visiting public schools and interacting with the children. “We’re constantly going to the schools and educating kids about safety. We also do spray-downs, where we spray water on the kids so they can splash around. And the county also puts on events where a truck from every department comes to the fairgrounds or to a mall parking lot, and we show off the equipment so kids get to ask us questions and see the different apparatus.”

## A family rooted in community

Uhrick has been a first responder for more than a decade, serving Collier County Emergency Medical Services at the Logan/Vanderbilt and Logan/Immokalee stations. Initially aspiring to a career in commercial aviation, Austin’s life took a pivotal turn after spending time with firefighters at the airport and participating in ride-alongs. “I fell in love with helping people,” he recalls. “I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.”

Austin’s commitment extends beyond his paramedic duties. As a member of the tactical team supporting the Collier County Sheriff’s SWAT team, he responds to high-stakes situations, as well as VIP details, motorcades and critical incidents. Despite long, grueling shifts that sometimes stretch to 72 hours, he remains passionate: “It’s a great job. I love helping people, even through the challenges of sleepless nights and time away from family.”

For several years, Austin lived in Broward County and commuted up to two hours to his job in Collier, leaving his wife Ashley, an elementary school teacher, and their twin sons much too far away. “The boys missed daddy, of course, and we couldn’t go and visit and see him, and he’d be gone for 24 to 48 hours at a time, so I think that was the hardest part,” Ashley explains.

In 2023, the family moved to Avalon Park. “When I was first hired, I worked at the Ave Maria station, when it was just a trailer out by the football fields,” Austin recalls. “I really loved the area. Lunch at The Bean, the Saturday festivals, the church in the middle of town—I thought this was a really cool community that Ashley would love, and she did.”

Transitioning from Broward County to Ave Maria was a monumental decision for Ashley, leaving behind friends, family and a well-established, 15-year career. But the promise of a close-knit community and better quality of life for their boys, Atreyu and Ashton, made the change worthwhile. Ashley was able to get a job as a second-grade teacher at Estates Elementary, and when Ave Maria Elementary School opens next year, she hopes to be one of its inaugural teachers.

Since relocating, the Uhricks have embraced Ave Maria’s charm. Austin’s commute has significantly decreased, giving him precious time with his family. The community’s vibrant spirit resonates with them—whether attending church, participating in local events or running into Ashley’s students at the store.

“In Broward it felt like a place where people live. Ave Maria feels like a community,” says Austin. “We know our neighbors, and there’s a sense of belonging.” 🌻



COURTESY PHOTO

Lieutenant Paramedic Austin Uhrick, who serves Collier County Emergency Medical Services, pictured with his family.



# LAKESIDE

From page 2

lery in Maple Ridge where they can tour nine designer-furnished model homes. Although walk-ins are welcome from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. seven days a week, appointments are recommended for personalized attention. On most weekends, a home lender is on site to review mortgage options.

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# Service with impact

The Rotary Club of Ave Maria celebrates its first anniversary with new leadership and a growing commitment to community

BY JAMES BOJACIUK

Ave Maria Correspondent

The Rotary Club of Ave Maria recently celebrated its first anniversary. In this time, the organization has taught water safety, shown children the basics of working in small business, and conducted drives to support local non-profits like One More Child. The newly appointed president, Jason Kurek, intends to expand these efforts.

Founded in 1905, Rotary International is a non-political and non-religious service organization, which is a kind of voluntary non-profit charity.

“Rotary is an incredible opportunity for a community to get together and make an impact on the surrounding area and beyond,” Kurek said. “Rotary Clubs are international. They will work with non-profits that are in their region, but then also work on initiatives like clean water in places around the world. Rotary is the reason that polio is virtually eradicated. In the twentieth century, they took a strong stance on getting vaccines distributed, even to some of the remote places on the planet. Because of Rotarians, they were able to make sure people were treated and protected from the spread of polio.”

The Rotary Club of Ave Maria began small, largely founded by people who had served in other Rotary Clubs across the country.

“We had a nice start for the organization,” former president JD Ribali said, “even with a lot of people not really knowing what Rotary is all about. We have about 50 people in our group. Our focus has been on finding projects that will make an impact on our community.”

One continuing program, designed to teach children basic water safety techniques designed to reduce injury or death from water accidents, started with the idea that they should roll on their backs like an otter if they fall into the water.

“Our big project was Josh the Otter,” Ribali said. “It’s a water safety program to give awareness to kids and families about what to do around a swimming pool or an open waterway. It’s about teaching kids what to do if they fall in the water: roll on your back so you can breathe. ... There was a local drowning last year, so that has been a real focus of ours. That’s something we’re not going to let just pass by.”

New projects are wide-ranging, including both outreach for other non-profits and donation drives.

“For this year, I want to shed a light on the non-profits that serve the families, animals, and community right in our own back yard,” Kurek said. “Whether that be in Ave Maria, the county, or southwest Florida as a whole. By doing this, it would allow members to come in and hear speakers from these non-profits. But additionally, we started a podcast which is called Rotary Reach, which is supplemental to what occurred at the meeting. The non-profit that presented will have the opportunity to be interviewed, and these interviews are shared on all of our social media. Their message, and what they’re doing for the community, is spread beyond the walls of our meetings.”

The Rotary Club of Ave Maria seeks to find and remedy the needs of local non-profit organizations. For example, the Rotary Club recently concluded a donation drive for One More Child and is currently seeking donations for



ROTARY CLUB OF AVE MARIA / COURTESY PHOTO

**Cheryl McDonough, Jason Kurek, Mary Harp-Jirschele, Meagan Wilson, JD Ribali, Kristina Ribali, Kathy Collingsworth and Blake Collingsworth.**

Mind Over Tumors. Both charities had a specific need, which the Rotary Club works to satisfy.

“One More Child said that their need was diapers and wipes,” Kurek said. “As the Rotary Club, we took on that challenge and collected hundreds of diapers and wipes. The secret sauce was the drop-off location. It allowed people in the community to see this non-profit that they had never heard of, to not only learn about it but also go out and help.”

“We’re doing the same thing for another non-profit called Mind Over Tumors,” Kurek continued. “It is a non-profit that

was started by an incredible 17-year-old young man. His sister had cancer. He saw the challenges that his family had. They were able to overcome them. But he knew that many families don’t, and knew they could use a little extra help to cross those barriers. We’ve partnered with them to collect stuffed animals for children who have cancer. We have united a coalition of businesses right in Ave Maria, from The Secret Ingredient, Sunshine Ace Hardware, Ledo Pizza, OASIS, Stella Rose Way and Way Out Toys & Games. They will

have drop-off points.”

In addition, the Rotary Club works to educate local businesses and the community on development updates and what is expected in the near future as the town continues to grow. At least once per year, Barron Collier Companies Vice President of Commercial Real Estate, Cee Cee Marinelli, addresses the club to speak about development and business trends. Ribali considers this one of the key events at the club, and is deeply thankful for her insights. “It is so impactful to our residents and business owners when they have the opportunity to hear directly from the developer. They always leave so much more knowledgeable and thankful for the hard work the developer puts in behind the scenes,” said Ribali.

The business insights also extend to children from 7 to 18, who are mentored by Rotary Club members. This outreach is run by Ribali.

“We also are involved with Biz Kidz,” Ribali said. “We teach kids about business. We host Biz Kidz Markets in the community where the kids get an opportunity to sell their products or services and experience what it’s like to work in business.”

Kurek requests that residents in the community join the Rotary Club.

“A very important part of what we’re doing takes people,” Kurek said. “In addition to helping out our community, our key initiative is membership. We need many more hands to go and help with these projects, to further engage non-profit organizations that desperately need the help of the Ave Maria community. That’s one of the greatest things about Ave Maria. It’s friendly, it’s caring, and its people that want to do good. Those people may not know about Rotary, but we’d like to connect with them, have them come to one of our meetings, and engage in our work for the community.”

The Rotary Club of Ave Maria can be found online at [www.avemariabiz.com/rotary](http://www.avemariabiz.com/rotary). This includes a calendar of their upcoming meetings. 🌟

“Rotary is an incredible opportunity for a community to get together and make an impact on the surrounding area and beyond.”

— **Jason Kurek**, Rotary Club of Ave Maria President

**RIGHT: Jason Kurek, Cee Cee Marinelli and JD Ribali. BELOW: Cheryl McDonough, Jim Anderson, Denée Williams, Jason Kurek, Alica Farnen, Gallagher Crook, Kristina Ribali, Mary Harp-Jirschele, Sharon Levesque, Nestor Levesque and JD Ribali.**





# Ave Maria Communities



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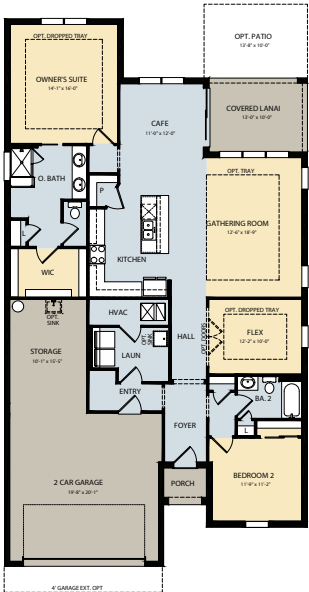
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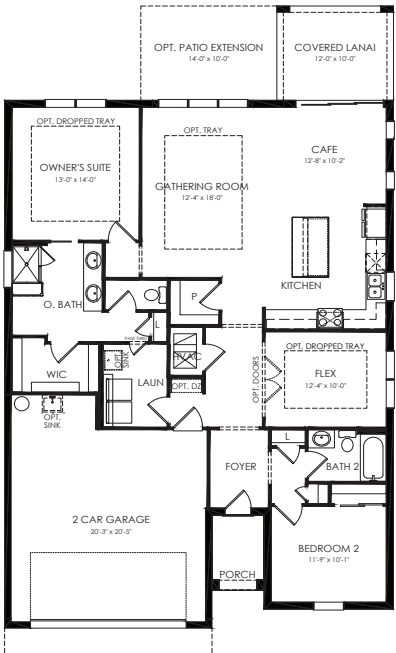
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Floor plan spotlight: The Huntington is a new construction, one-story home with three bedrooms, two baths, great room, eat-in kitchen, storage, master suite with walk-in closet and attached garage. Premium features included that are standard include designer brand faucets and fixtures, and tile flooring. Gourmet kitchens have stainless steel appliances, European-style wood cabinetry and quartz countertops. A spa-like primary bedroom features double sinks with quartz vanity tops and a spacious shower.



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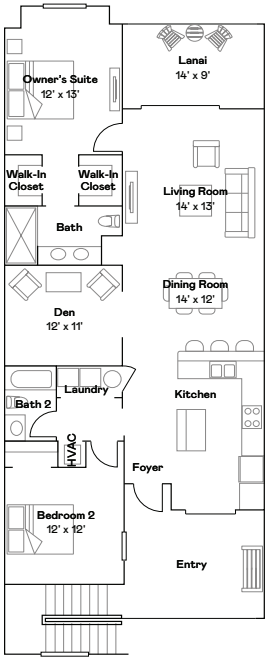


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# Shining on the diamond

Ave Maria All-Star softball team made history, finishing seventh in the state and inspiring the next wave of players

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The summer of 2025 was a magical one for the girls on the Ave Maria Little League 8-10 All-Star softball team. For the first time in their young lives, they ventured far from home to play in district and sectional, where they dominated, winning games by a combined score of 71-23. The Ave Maria softball team finished seventh in the state.

The journey began on June 16 with a 12-2 victory over the Estates All-Stars in Bonita Springs. The Ave Maria girls were just getting warmed up. Then came a 24-12 drubbing of the Immokalee All-Stars and then a 13-3 victory over the Estates All-Stars.

That earned them the District 18 title and a guaranteed spot in a sectional tournament. On July 12, nearly a month since the run began, they beat the Clewiston All-Stars 6-1. The following day, they won again, this time 16-5.

That earned them a spot in the state tournament in Palm Coast, which, according to Google Maps, is 288 miles from Ave Maria, quite far from home.

Catharine Pezzotti's daughter, Angelina, was part of the magic.

"I didn't expect so much excitement around it," Catharine said. "It was definitely challenging and helped the girls develop skills in a short amount of time."

At the state tournament, the Ave Maria softball team faced elite-level travel teams and players – then the season ended, but what a season of memories it was.

This All-Star team was a new venture and adventure for the Ave Maria Little League.

"Like an uncharted path and territory," said Manager Justin Chervets, whose daughter, Ava, was on the team. "Sounded like a good challenge to me."

They built a team of 12 girls from a league that is smaller and younger than most in the state. Yet they rolled through district games in Bonita Springs and sectional games in LaBelle to qualify for states far away on Florida's east coast.

"I couldn't even believe it," Chervets said of the team's accomplishments. "Such a great experience for all these girls and parents."

It was a learning experience for a group with limited experience compared to some of their opponents. Chervets pointed out that his team was basically a recreational-level team that encountered travel ball teams at the state level.

"Some of these girls never even stole a base before," Chervets said.

Then they stole 116 bases in the All-Star Play. They also hit. Boy, could they hit. The All-Stars had a team batting average of .341 with four players hitting .400 or better.

The leading hitters:

- Luciana Ryle: .765.
- Keira Maloney: .538.
- Bella Carrion: .471.
- Micaela Figueroa: .400.

Back in May, before the summer magic happened, expectations were modest.

"My expectation was really just to give Ave Maria an opportunity to grow as a community," Chervets said.

Many of the girls were new to the sport.

"I was part of fall ball last year and my daughter didn't even know that kids played softball," Chervets said.

Ava, Chervets' daughter, discovered softball by attending her father's recreational adult games, so her dad signed her up for softball. "See if she likes it," Chervets said.

Ava not only liked it but did well, drawing nine walks in the all-star competition.

From the first practice, Chervets had clear messages for the team.

"We are obviously here to have fun and



COURTESY PHOTOS

**Top left to right: Assistant Coach Daniel Ryle, Head Coach Justin Chervets and Assistant Coach Paul Gaudio. Second row left to right: Mia Sanchez, Isabelle Stumpf, Keira Maloney, Ava Chervets and Tinley Wilkening. Third row left to right: Angelina Pezzotti, Gabel-la Gaudio, Bella Carrion, Micaela Figueroa, Luciana Ryle, Viviana Balentine and Calynn De Jesus.**

make memories and whatnot," Chervets said he told the team. "But really we're here to win."

They did all that – had fun, made memories and won.

From the initial All-Star practice, Chervets could see something special about the team.

"Everybody was just on it," Chervets said. "The energy was so great. The parents, you could tell, were excited. We had a full stand, a full bleacher of parents just out at practice. I mean, everyone showed up to this practice. That never happens."

Chervets also noticed the versatility of his players.

"We can literally put these girls at any

position and not be concerned if someone's going to miss a play," Chervets said.

In addition to defensive versatility, the team had offensive depth.

"Our bottom of the order was just as strong as our top of the order," Chervets said.

As the state tournament in Palm Coast came around, Chervets said the Ave Maria All-Stars were recreational players, but their state tournament competition featured travel ball players.

"We had not one girl on our team that was from travel ball," Chervets said. "No travel experience whatsoever."

Chervets was realistic at that point.

"We already knew the writing was going to be on the wall," Chervets said.

So Chervets and coaches Daniel Ryle and Paul Gaudio planned to make the state tournament a celebration of what they had achieved, winning districts and sectionals and qualifying for the state tournament.

"Win or lose, we're going to have a great time," Chervets said.

They lost the first game at state by the run-rule.

"That was the toughest for all of us," Chervets said. "It was very tough on the parents, coaches and girls. They hadn't experienced a loss in almost three months. And the world came crashing down very quickly for them. There were a lot of tears post-game when we were on the field. I told the girls there's nothing to be upset about."

He continued on and told the team, "Look how far we made it."

Chervets admitted that the first loss was "just brutal."

"After that, it was just nothing but cheering for the rest of the games, cheering everybody," he said. "Every play was something to celebrate, even if they struck out but they struck out swinging. At least they were swinging."

The losses at the start of the tournament were tough on parents as well. "I think it was harder on the parents to see it unfold like that," Catharine Pezzotti said. The girls handled the losses with grace and "Held their heads high and fought to the very end. It was really inspiring to see that."

It was a new adventure as they played away from Ave Maria and were up against more experienced players.

"They pushed through even with the heat and through the rain," said parent Danielle Turrubiarz, whose daughter Calynn DeJesus is an All-Star. "They played through all kinds of weather except for cold."

It was a summer of intangible rewards such as memories and gaining confidence,



**The team beaming with pride after they won the District Championship.**



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Pickleball Grand Opening at North Park



In early August, pickleball enthusiasts gathered at North Park to celebrate the grand opening of the pickleball courts. At the event, Joe Lampkin and Kim Twiss cut the ribbon, officially opening the courts. Players of all skill levels enjoyed an evening out dancing to music by DJ D-Flo, enjoying delicious frozen drinks by Will Vargas of Watts & Coffee and getting to know other pickleball fanatics in the community. 🌞



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN



**ABOVE:** Joe Lampkin and Kim Twiss cut the grand opening ribbon. **TOP LEFT:** Carol DiFlorio. **LEFT:** Pickleball enthusiast tried out the new courts.

SEE **MORE PICKLE BALL GRAND OPENING PHOTOS, A24 ▶**



**Ave Maria All-Star Softball team pictured with their medals after winning the Sectional Championships.**

### Ave Maria 8-10 All-Star Softball roster

- Viviana Balentine
- Luciana Ryle
- Keira Maloney
- Bella Carrion
- Micaela Figueroa
- Angelina Pezzotti
- Ava Chervets
- Isabelle Stumpf
- Calynn DeJesus
- Mia Sanchez
- Giabella Gaudio
- Tinley Wilkening



COURTESY PHOTOS

**Some of the girls are posing with their “Game Balls” after their last game at States.**

but it was also a summer of tangible awards such as trophies, pins and end-of-game balls. “Parents keep saying, man, I don’t know what I’m going to do with all these game balls,” Chervets said. “Or, man,

we’re going to have to build a trophy room. These girls went from never getting anything to racking up countless game balls, countless pins and medals. I took it upon myself, along with my assis-

tant coaches, to order them trophies for each championship that we won.” Each player received a trophy with her name on it. The All-Star success has sparked inter-

est, with more children signing up to play softball. Chervets said fall ball registration has doubled over last year. By Aug. 20, 41 kids had registered, compared to 11 last year. 🌞



# Cardinals take flight

## The rise of Ave Maria Elementary School



The Ave Maria Elementary School is set to open August 2026 and will serve approximately 900 pre-K through fifth-grade students.

BY SANDRA YEYATI  
Ave Maria Correspondent

Ave Maria is thriving, and with it grows an unwavering commitment to educational excellence. The eagerly anticipated Ave Maria Elementary School, set to open in August 2026, is a bold declaration of growth, unity and the promise of a brighter future for local families. With more than 5,500 homes sold, the demand for this school is undeniable.

### A vision realized

Occupying 46 acres off Anthem Parkway near the water park, the school will serve approximately 900 pre-K through fifth-grade students. Originally reserved by Barron Collier Companies and provided to Collier County Public Schools in 2008, this land now fulfills its destiny as a cornerstone of the community.

Designed by R.G. Architects, P.A., and constructed by Charles Perry Partners, Inc., the school's architecture celebrates form and function. From sound-absorbing panels that maintain a serene learning environment to flexible spaces capable of hosting both grand presentations and intimate study groups, every design element caters to the diverse needs of today's students.

### Cardinals soar

Community engagement is at the heart of Ave Maria Elementary's development. A survey in May received more than 700 responses as residents selected the school's red, gray and white colors, as well as the dynamic "Cardinals" mascot. But the story doesn't end there—once the school opens, students and families will name the mascot, deepening their connection to their school.

Inside the two-story building that houses the classrooms, there will be red accents to energize the walls and tile flooring, complemented by cedar-col-

ored furniture. The cafeteria doubles as a versatile event space, equipped with two serving lines, advanced stage technology and ample room for school and community gatherings.

### Building progress

The groundbreaking ceremony on June 3 marked a significant milestone, attracting an impressive assembly of local and state officials, school board members, architects, engineers, enthusiastic residents, Barron Collier Companies' executives and all four home-builders. Among them was the Pereira family, whose personal story encapsulates the profound impact this school will have.

"I wasn't expecting it to be such a big event like it was," said Carolina Pereira. "I've never been to a groundbreaking ceremony for a brand-new school, so it was a little unexpected. It was very nice. So many officials and townspeople were there."

Since then, construction has surged ahead. Within just seven days in August, 115 concrete tilt panels rose to form the school's structural walls. The excitement is electric as Ave Maria watches its future unfold, one panel at a time.

"Every day, the site is developing forward and we are excited to see the progress," said Laura Mendocino, executive director of Collier County Public Schools, who recently provided an update to the Collier County School Board. "From what we have heard, the community is very excited to have a public elementary school opening up. The families seem very excited about this, eliminating the bus ride for many of the students who are currently going to Estates Elementary School, so I think it will be a win-win."

### A story of hope and opportunity

The Pereira family's journey mirrors

that of many Ave Maria residents. Drawn by the town's charm, affordability and strong sense of community, they moved here from Broward County in 2022. Carolina is an elementary school teacher with 15 years of experience, currently instructing second-graders at Village Oaks Elementary School in Immokalee.

"Having a new elementary school in Ave Maria provides us with an incredible sense of security and safety, knowing that my children are close to home. The fact that it's a brand-new school is also really wonderful," she shared. Her daughters, Celine, 4, and Christine, 3, will be among the first to experience the school's innovative curriculum and state-of-the-art facilities.

Reflecting on the groundbreaking event, Pereira expressed admiration for the community's support and the collaborative effort involved in bringing the school to life. "I was amazed at how much is involved in a new school—all these people that are involved that we don't even think about, like the architects, the builders and the school board. It's impressive and exciting," she remarked.

Pereira also noted the broader implications of the new school for Ave Maria, saying, "The new school makes Ave Maria itself a lot more marketable for other people who want to move to this community because there are a lot of families with young children. It's good for property values and attracting other young families to the area."

### A foundation for the future

Ave Maria Elementary is more than bricks and mortar; it is a promise to future generations. Designed for growth, the flexible layout accommodates further expansion, ensuring that it will evolve along with the community. Built on land acquired at no cost to taxpayers, the school stands as a model of smart devel-

opment and community investment.

Safety is paramount, with a storm-ready design that doubles as a shelter, offering reassurance to families. The upcoming selection of a principal in October and the opening of teaching positions in early 2026 add to the community's anticipation. Local home builders are eager to support the incoming class. Special incentives are being created for potential new teachers looking to move into a new home in Ave Maria. More announcements will be coming out soon for specific home savings.

### A community dream realized

As Ave Maria Elementary rises, it embodies the hopes, dreams and determination of an entire town. The Pereira family's story is just one among many, illustrating the transformative power of education. With each passing day, as walls are built and classrooms take shape, Ave Maria's new elementary school stands as a symbol of what is possible when a community comes together to invest in its future.

Stay updated on Ave Maria Elementary's progress at CollierSchools.com/aves for timelines, visual updates and exciting drone footage. 🌟





# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

All events are subject to change. Please visit the Ave Maria events calendar for more information.

## ■ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

### 10th annual Trunk or Treat

On Saturday, October 25 from 3 – 6 p.m. join us for the 10th annual Trunk or Treat in the Ave Maria Town Center! Come in costumes, bring a bag or bucket, and enjoy treats from our local businesses. \*Candy will be handed out from 4 to 5 p.m. The event will include DJ music, face painting, costume contests and special offers from shops and restaurants throughout the Town Center. Thank you to our event sponsor, Oil Well Craft Beer. \*This is a family-friendly event — please keep costumes appropriate for all ages.

### Ave Maria Farmer's Market

Stroll through 70+ local vendors offering everything from fresh produce and flowers to raw honey, artisanal foods, baked treats, handcrafted accessories, ceramics, and so much more. Every Saturday from November 1 to April 25, 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Presented by SW Florida Markets, LLC. Interested in becoming a vendor? Call (239) 293-6266.

### Christmas Crawl Around the World

On Saturday, Nov. 22, from 4 to 8 p.m., enjoy a magical evening of holiday joy during the Christmas Crawl Around the World. Stroll through the Ave Maria Town Center and discover exclusive holiday shopping and dining specials from local businesses. Delight in activities for all ages, including a raffle basket giveaway, live performances and photo opportunities with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

## MERCHANT EVENTS

### The Secret Ingredient shoptheseingredient.com

- Every Monday is 55+ and Fabulous Day: Anyone 55 and older will get 10% off of one regularly priced item.
- Every Tuesday is Twosday Shopping: Shop with a friend on Tuesdays and you each will receive one regularly priced item 20% off.
- Every Thursday is Retail Therapy Day: Spend \$50 and get a free pair of sunglasses.
- Every Friday is First-Time Shopper Friday: If you are a first-time shopper, receive a regular-priced item 20% off.
- Sign-Up Sundays: Not on our newsletter list yet? Sign up in-store on Sundays and receive 25% off one regular-priced item.
- Oct. 6 is National Plus Size Appreciation Day: All plus sizes will be 25% off.
- Oct. 10 is National Handbag Day: All handbags will be 25% off.
- Shop for a cause on Oct. 11: 10% of proceeds for the day will go directly back to Cancer Alliance Network (CAN) out of Naples.
- Nov. 1 is National Scented Candle Day: All scented candles will be 20% off.
- On Nov. 11 all veterans will receive 35% off one regularly priced item.
- Pick up a Christmas Angel to help a local child in need on Nov. 15.
- Nov. 28: Black Friday shopping opens at 6 a.m. Receive 40% off one regularly priced item from 6 to 10 a.m. and enjoy a free coffee bar, while supplies last.
- Nov. 29: is Small Business Saturday. Show us a local Ave Maria business



COURTESY PHOTO

Join us for the 10th annual Trunk or Treat on Saturday, October 25.

- receipt and receive 25% off a regularly priced item. Purchase must be made on November 11 to 29!. Discounts available on Nov. 29 – 30 only.
- Dec. 1 – 12: celebrate our 12 days of Christmas and receive a free holiday gift with no purchase necessary! Check us out on Facebook or Instagram daily to see which gifts will be available daily.
  - Dec. 5: Hometown Christmas Celebration in the Ave Maria Town Center. Open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. for holiday shopping needs. Closed from about 6 to 6:45 p.m., so that our staff can join us for our walk in the parade.
  - Dec. 14 is National Free Shipping Day: Anything purchased will receive free shipping. Items will go out on Dec. 17 via USPS.
  - Dec. 15 is National Wear Your Pearls Day. Wear a set of pearls to The Secret Ingredient and get 30% off a regularly priced item.
  - Dec. 18: After hours shopping event to find that perfect gift for the special woman in your life. Open from 5 to 8 p.m. with personalized shopping and free gift wrapping. Beer from Oil Well Craft Beer, wine and cookies available for late-night shoppers.
  - Jan. 3: Fifth Anniversary Celebration of owning The Secret Ingredient will take place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., enjoy music, giveaways and more.
- ### Oil Well Craft Beer oilwellcraftbeer.com
- Oct. 4: BINGO for Cancer Alliance Network (CAN) from 6 to 8 p.m., with all donations for Bingo Cards going back to The Cancer Alliance Network. BINGO prizes available. Realtor Sara Callahan to MC.
  - Oct. 6: SpeedQuizzing Trivia, hosted by Tom and Carol DiFlorio starts at 7 p.m.
  - Oct. 14: Glorified Vision Art will host the Brew and Paint Party. Cost is \$35 to secure your seat. Seats fill up quickly, so RSVP to glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com
  - Oct. 19: In honor of National Chili Month, the Oil Well Chili Competition starts at 3 p.m. If you are interested in entering your chili, please prepare at least

- one large batch to serve to the judges and the culinarily curious residents of Ave Maria.
- Oct. 20: Music BINGO with Tom and Carol DiFlorio starts at 7 p.m.
  - Oct. 25: Oil Well Craft Beer Trunk or Treat will take place from 3 to 6 p.m. in the Ave Maria Town Center. From 5 to 6 p.m., DJ DiFlo will announce the Kids' Costume Contest Winners near the Pub. There will be prizes for multiple winners in all age groups. Enjoy a photo booth, safe trick or treating practices, food, games and more.
  - Nov. 1 – 11: Stop by Oil Well Craft Beer to "Beer It Forward" for a veteran. Simply purchase a beer for a veteran and we will distribute accordingly on Veterans Day.
  - Nov. 1: Free BINGO with Realtor Sara Callahan from 6 to 8 p.m.
  - Nov. 3: SpeedQuizzing Trivia, hosted by Tom and Carol DiFlorio starts at 7 p.m.
  - Nov. 6: International Stout Day, receive \$1 off any stouts on draft.
  - Nov. 11: All veterans will receive a free beer donated by someone in our wonderful community.
  - Nov. 11: Glorified Vision Art will host the Brew and Paint Party. Cost is \$35 to secure your seat. Seats fill up quickly. RSVP to glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com
  - Nov. 15: Sing with us at our free Karaoke Party with DJ DiFlo. The party starts at 8 p.m.
  - Nov. 15: Stop in to pick up a Christmas Angel to help a local child in need this holiday season. Angels will be available on Nov. 15.
  - Nov. 17: Music BINGO with Tom and Carol DiFlorio starts at 7 p.m.
  - Nov. 18: National Apple Cider Day, \$1 off all draft ciders.
  - Dec. 1: SpeedQuizzing Trivia, hosted by Tom and Carol DiFlorio starts at 7 p.m.
  - Dec. 5: Hometown Christmas from 3 to 9 p.m. Look for us in the Town Center Christmas Parade. Open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.
  - Dec. 6: Free Family BINGO from 6 to 8 p.m.
  - Dec. 9: Glorified Vision Art will host the Brew and Paint Party. Cost is \$35 to

- secure your seat. Seats fill up quickly. RSVP to glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com
- Dec. 10: National Lager Day- \$4 Lagers all day.
  - Dec. 12: Cookie Exchange Meet and Mingle at 7 p.m. Bring a dozen of your best cookies to share. Anyone who brings a dozen cookies will get a free drink!
  - Dec. 13: Ave Maria Veterans Annual Tailgate Party and Toy Drive from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Enjoy delicious burgers, brats, hot dogs and more available for donation. Feel free to donate an unwrapped toy or toys. We will be showing the Army-Navy Game and will have discounts for patrons wearing attire showcasing their Army or Navy team spirit.
  - Dec. 15: Music BINGO with Tom and Carol DiFlorio starts at 7 p.m.
  - Dec. 20: National Sangria Day - Enjoy \$5 Christmas sangria.
  - Dec. 20: Oil Well Craft Beer's Seventh Annual Ugly Christmas Sweater and Karaoke party. DJ DiFlo will be rocking the house with all of your favorite tunes. Wear your ugliest Christmas sweater, t-shirt or tank top. The Winner of the Ugliest Christmas Sweater will be announced at 9 p.m.
  - Dec. 31: New Year's Eve Celebration from 9 p.m. to after midnight.

### Stella Rose Way stellaroseway.com

- Oct. 1: Celebrating our three-year anniversary with a day of promotions, raffles and new products from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Oct. 23: Artist Robin Raymond will showcase her beautiful paintings and unique acrylic trays. Promotions are also available.

### Vicky Bakery vickybakeryavemaria.com

- Offering pumpkin-flavored pasteltitos, flan and iced coffee for the fall season. Christmas pastries are also going to be a big surprise this year. New, bigger and better Vicky Bowls are a signature lunch and dinner food.



# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

From page 21

**Tropical Smoothie Café**  
locations.tropicalsmoothiecafe.com/fl/ave-maria/5072-annunciation-circle  
■ Limited time only: Apple Pie Paradise Smoothie - Sweet apples, cinnamon, banana, yogurt, coconut, with Biscoff cookie crumble. New lines of bowls, including peanut butter and Nutella drizzle.

**OASIS The Kitchen Lounge**  
oasisavemaria.com  
■ Sizzle Menu: Enjoy a three-course dinner for only \$29.95. The featured entree is Chorrasco with mashed potatoes and mushroom demi glaze sauce.  
■ Oct. 31: Halloween Party at Oasis

**AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS**  
For the latest updates and more information on away games, visit avemaria-gyrenes.com/calendar.

**Wednesday, Oct. 1**  
W. Soccer at Southeastern University, 7 p.m.  
M. Soccer vs Southeastern University, 7 p.m.  
Volleyball at No. 9 St. Thomas University, 7 p.m.

**Saturday, Oct. 4**  
Football at No. 8 St. Thomas University, noon  
Volleyball at Webber International University, 2 p.m.  
W. Soccer vs St. Thomas University, 5 p.m.  
M. Soccer at R.V. St. Thomas University, 7 p.m.

**Tuesday, Oct. 7**  
Volleyball vs Florida College, 7 p.m.

**Wednesday, Oct. 8**  
W. Soccer at No. 1 Keiser University, 11 a.m.  
M. Soccer vs No. 18 Keiser University, 7 p.m.

**Saturday, Oct. 11**  
Cross Country vs Ave Maria Invitational  
W. Soccer vs Warner University, 11 a.m.  
Volleyball vs New College, 2 p.m.  
M. Soccer at Warner University, 5 p.m.  
Football vs Webber International University, 7 p.m.

**Monday, Oct. 13**  
W. Golf vs Jupiter Collegiate Invitational  
M. Golf Jupiter Collegiate Invitational

**Tuesday, Oct. 14**  
W. Golf vs Jupiter Collegiate Invitational  
M. Golf Jupiter Collegiate Invitational

**Wednesday, Oct. 15**  
Volleyball vs Florida Memorial, 7 p.m.  
M. Soccer at SCAD, 7 p.m.

**Thursday, Oct. 16**  
W. Soccer vs No. 8 SCAD, 7 p.m.

**Saturday, Oct. 18**  
Volleyball vs Southeastern University, 2 p.m.  
Football at Thomas, 7 p.m.  
W. Soccer at Florida Memorial, 7 p.m.  
M. Soccer vs Florida Memorial, 7 p.m.

**Tuesday, Oct. 21**  
Volleyball at Florida National, 7 p.m.

**Wednesday, Oct. 22**  
M. Soccer at Webber International University, 3 p.m.  
W. Soccer vs Webber International University, 7 p.m.

**Friday, Oct. 24**  
W. Basketball at Faulkner, Jimmy



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

**Ave Maria residents gathered at North Park for an afternoon of wet and wild fun at the Back to School Water Wars event.**

Faulkner Classic  
M. Basketball at Columbia International, 3 p.m.

**Saturday, Oct. 25**  
W. Basketball vs William Carey, Jimmy Faulkner Classic  
Cross Country at NAIA Great Lakes Challenge  
Volleyball at Warner University, 2 p.m.  
Football at Warner University, 3 p.m.  
M. Basketball at Morris, 7 p.m.

**Monday, Oct. 27**  
M. Golf Nancy Nichols Match Play  
W. Golf vs Nancy Nichols Match Play

**Tuesday, Oct. 28**  
M. Golf Nancy Nichols Match Play  
W. Golf vs Nancy Nichols Match Play

**Wednesday, Oct. 29**  
W. Soccer at New College, 3:30 p.m.  
M. Soccer vs New College, 7 p.m.  
Volleyball at Keiser University, 7 p.m.  
W. Basketball at Florida National, 7 p.m.

**Thursday, Oct. 30**  
M. Basketball vs Thomas, 7:30 p.m.

**Saturday, Nov. 1**  
M. Basketball at Reinhardt, 6 p.m.  
Football vs No. 2 Keiser University, 7 p.m.

**Sunday, Nov. 2**  
M. Basketball vs Johnson, 2 p.m.

**Wednesday, Nov. 5**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament  
Volleyball vs No. 13 St. Thomas University, 7 p.m.

**Thursday, Nov. 6**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament

**Friday, Nov. 7**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament

**Saturday, Nov. 8**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament  
Cross Country vs The Sun Conference Championship  
Volleyball vs Webber University, 2 p.m.  
Football vs Florida Memorial, 7 p.m.

**Sunday, Nov. 9**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament

**Monday, Nov. 10**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament

**Tuesday, Nov. 11**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament  
M. Basketball at Florida College, 7 p.m.

**Wednesday, Nov. 12**  
W. Soccer vs TBD, The Sun Conference Tournament

**Thursday, Nov. 13**  
W. Basketball at FGCU, 7 p.m.

**Saturday, Nov. 15**  
W. Basketball vs Webber University, 2 p.m.  
M. Basketball vs Webber University, 4 p.m.  
Football at No. 17 Southeastern, 4 p.m.

**Monday, Nov. 17**  
W. Basketball vs Puerto Rico-Mayaguez, 6 p.m.  
Wednesday, Nov. 19  
W. Basketball at New College, 5 p.m.  
M. Basketball at New College, 7 p.m.

**Saturday, Nov. 22**  
Cross Country vs NAIA National Championship  
W. Basketball at Coastal Georgia, 2 p.m.  
M. Basketball at Coastal Georgia, 4 p.m.

**Monday, Nov. 24**  
W. Basketball at Thomas, 2 p.m.

**Friday, Nov. 28**  
M. Basketball vs Tennessee Southern, NAIA “The Show” Classic, 3:30 p.m.

**Saturday, Nov. 29**  
M. Basketball vs Northwestern, NAIA “The Show” Classic, 10:30 a.m.

**Wednesday, Dec. 3**  
W. Basketball vs Florida National, 5:30 p.m.  
M. Basketball vs Florida National, 7 p.m.

■ **AVE MARIA RESIDENTS ONLY**  
Organizers request preregistration for these resident-only events via the Ave Maria Master Association App (AMMA) or the events calendar at www.avemariamasterassociation.com. If you need assistance, please call (239) 867-4322.

**Coffee with a Twiss**  
This casual gathering with AMMA Executive Director Kim Twiss is held every second Thursday of the month. It allows homeowners to ask questions and get updates on the Master Association and community news. The next dates are Oct. 9, Nov. 13 and Dec. 11 at 10 a.m.

**Ave Maria Stewardship Community District (AMSCD) Meetings**  
The monthly AMSCD will be held on Oct. 14 and Nov. 5 at 4 p.m. Visit avemariastewardshipcd.org for the meeting locations, more information, monthly meeting books and schedule updates.

**New Homeowners Social and Orientation**  
New Ave Maria homeowners are invited to a welcome meet and greet, followed by an informational presentation by the master association in the AMMA meeting room. Residents will learn about living in this community and the various organizations operating in Ave Maria. The next orientation is scheduled for Oct. 23 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

**Onspot Dermatology**  
OnSpot provides various dermatological services in its state-of-the-art mobile office. Services will be available from 7:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Walk-ins may be available; however, it is recommended that you schedule ahead of time. Please visit onspotdermatology.com/locations/ave-maria/ to book an appointment for Oct. 3, 11, 15, 20 and 31.

**Aesol Classes for Adults**  
Looking to improve your English skills? Join our ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classes, designed for adults. Classes meet every Tuesday from 6 to 7 p.m. in the AMMA conference room. Spaces are limited. Contact Eva Hibbert at (518) 334-0328 for more information.

**Adult Games Groups**  
Adults looking for a friendly group to socialize with and games such as Skip-Bo, Sequence, Mexican Train, dominoes and more are welcome to join the group from 1 to 3 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays in the AMMA Game Room. A new Mahjong Group meeting will be held at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays.

**First Fridays**  
Join us on Oct. 3 from 5 to 7 p.m. on the lawn in the Town Center in front of the Pub for music, community, connection and family-friendly fun. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, residents are encouraged to show up for the All about Pink contest dressed in their best pink attire, enjoy the Party in Pink Zumbathon and great DJ Music! Join us on Nov. 7 at the Oilwell Craft Beer location in the Park of Commerce. Enjoy live music, brick-oven pizza, wine, sangria, brews and more.

**Adult Art Classes**  
Adult classes with artist Betsy Barnes return with the 10-session adult art class on Wednesday evenings starting Oct. 15 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Ave Maria Master Association Community Room. For more class information and to register, contact Betsy Barnes at godsend2011@live.com.

**Ave Maria Fall Festival**  
Join us on Oct. 18 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at North Park for games, activities, hayrides, DJ music, a live band, pony rides, inflatable fun, pumpkin painting, a photo booth area, face painting, vendors, food trucks and more. New additions this year feature an inflatable zip line, a dancing dogs performance show and the No Way Back band featuring musicians from the former Steinbeck Way band and The Melos! The cost is \$10 per person. Children 4 and under have free entry. Register via the Master Association App or visit the website calendar at www.avemariamasterassociation.com.



# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

### Community Yard Sale

Stroll and find treasures while you enjoy the atmosphere with music from a live DJ at the Community Yard Sale on Nov. 8 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at North Park. Food, beverage and treat options will be available for purchase. If you are interested in having a spot as a seller, the Yard Sale Community Registration Form is due by Oct. 30 at 3 p.m.

### Veterans Day Luncheon

Ave Maria Veterans can register for this gathering honoring our resident veterans, hosted at the Oil Well Craft Beer location on Nov. 11, after the Veterans' Day Ceremony. You can view more details and register via the Master Association App or visit the website calendar at [www.avemariamasterassociation.com](http://www.avemariamasterassociation.com).

### Sip and Paint Party

Empty Bowls Naples hosts the fundraising Sip and Paint event for Ave Maria residents on Nov. 13, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the AMMA office. For a donation of \$10 per person, you contribute to the mission of eliminating hunger in our community at large. At least 20 participants are needed for the event.

### Your First Mud Run

Sign up for this mud run event happening on Nov. 15 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Ave Maria North Park. Your First Mud Run is the only mud run in the country designed so parents and kids can run together. The courses are 1.5 to 2 miles and include 10 to 16 obstacles that are designed for adults and kids. Visit the app or website for more details and to register directly at [runsignup.com/Race/FL/Naples/YourFirstMudRunatNaplesFL](http://runsignup.com/Race/FL/Naples/YourFirstMudRunatNaplesFL)

### Ave Maria Hometown Christmas

The Ave Maria Master Association invites all residents and families to the annual Hometown Christmas Event on Dec. 5 in the Town Center. Enjoy activities, food trucks and more. Starting at 4 p.m., enjoy local vendors, craftsmen and activities until the parade starts at 6 p.m. Join Fr. Vidal for the annual Tree Blessing Ceremony at the front of the Church, just before the Parade. Photos with Santa are available until 7:30 p.m., or visit the Parish Hall and visit with St. Nicholas! For more information and registration, visit the Master Association App or the website calendar at [www.avemariamasterassociation.com](http://www.avemariamasterassociation.com).

### SPORTS & FITNESS (Residents Only)

Indoor at the Ave Maria Master Association Community Room.

### Quest Martial Arts Academy Classes

Led by Kenny Quintero, these martial arts classes for kids to adults start from 5 p.m. on Mondays and 9:30 a.m. on Saturdays in the AMMA event room. Students are taught discipline and self-defense techniques while honing their focus, having fun and getting fit. For more information, and to inquire about adult classes, call Crystal at (239) 371-6073 or visit [questmartialartssacademy.com](http://questmartialartssacademy.com)

### Tai Chi Classes

Classes are on Tuesdays at 9 p.m. in the AMMA Community Room. Tai Chi is a practice that involves a series of slow, gentle movements and physical postures, a meditative state of mind and controlled breathing. For more information, contact instructor Mylyn Vedel at [myvedel@](mailto:myvedel@)



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

Residents and friends enjoyed an afternoon at the Ave Maria Water Park

[gmail.com](mailto:) or (239)-220-4181.

### Sound Bath Therapy

Take a break from the stress and hustle of daily life and join Sound Bath Wellness instructor Andrea, for a calming session that will help to reduce stress, improve focus and restore energy. Participants are bathed in soothing sounds and vibrations created by instruments like singing bowls and chimes. Classes are on select Tuesdays in the AMMA Community Room at 6 p.m.. The cost is \$10 per class. To sign up and learn more, contact Andrea at (845) 742-1525.

### Seniors Yoga Class

Join our Yoga Classes, specially designed to support the well-being of older adults. These gentle sessions utilize a chair and wall for support and modifications, making yoga accessible and safe for everyone. Classes are Oct. 3, 17 and 31 at 10 a.m. with Certified Yoga Instructor and yoga Therapist Alexandra Salazar. Registration is required. The cost is \$10 per person. For more information and to register, contact instructor Alexandra at [salex2009@gmail.com](mailto:salex2009@gmail.com).

### Outdoor at the Ave Maria Master Association Parks

The following are the current fitness classes and sports activities approved by the Master Association in the amenities, as of the date this is written.

### Ave Bootcamp Morning Class

Interested in losing weight, getting in shape, boosting your energy and endurance? Join the Ave Bootcamp and Workout with Alyssa, featuring bodyweight and strength training. All levels are welcome. Classes are Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 9 a.m. at South Park. Choose from drop-in or monthly rates. Contact Alyssa at (516) 984-9501.

### Outdoor Zumba Fitness Classes

These classes are on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in South Park at the Amphitheater. Classes are \$5 each and instructors are

subject to change each week. Contact Yesi at 305-586-1254 for more information.

### Walk, Jog, Run Club

Individuals, regardless of fitness level or experience, are invited to join this free club hosted by Jedikaki Fitness Lab. Join Certified Personal Trainer Dia Cross on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, 7:30 a.m. at South Park. For more information, email [Diacross2010@gmail.com](mailto:Diacross2010@gmail.com)

### Strong Nation HIIT

Strong Nation combines body weight, muscle conditioning, cardio and plyometric training moves synced to original music. Check out this workout with certified instructor Yesi. Classes are every Friday from 9 to 10 a.m. at the South Park Amphitheater. For more information, contact Yesi at (305) 586-1254.

### Adult Water Exercise Classes @ the water park

The Ave Maria Water Park invites you to energize your mornings with refreshing, low-impact workouts at our Water Aerobics classes. Classes are held at 9 a.m. Monday through Friday. For more details, please contact the park office at (239) 658-5880.

### Sports Leagues & Organizations

Various seasonal independent sports leagues and organizations operate in Ave Maria. For more information on current availability, visit the Ave Maria Master Association Website Calendar at [www.avemariamasterassociation.com](http://www.avemariamasterassociation.com) for any approved fitness and sports conducted by independent contractors and Ave Maria Leagues.

### Pickleball Training & Clinics at North Park

The owners of Pickleball Duo, Mauricio Satt and Luis Fiol-Machicote, will offer pickleball lessons for all ages at our new North Park courts. These experienced pickleball players are certified coaches of the Professional Pickleball Registry, which is a partner of USA Pickleball. For more information, contact Satt at 786-674-6420

or Fiol-Machicote at (239) 391-2995. Email: [pickledoullc@gmail.com](mailto:pickledoullc@gmail.com)

### Tennis Lessons at South Park

Coach Stefano of the Racquet Sports Professionals Association will offer tennis lessons for all ages in South Park. Coach Stefano is a certified tennis instructor with years of experience teaching the game of tennis to all ages and skill levels. For more information, contact Coach Stefano at (917) 225-1779. Email: [239tennisofficial@gmail.com](mailto:239tennisofficial@gmail.com)

### Street Hockey League

Join the new Ave Maria Street Hockey League on the North Park Basketball Court. The league is for boys and girls, ages 4 to 14. The league cost is \$95 per player. This league started in September; however, contact them at [www.avemariayouthsports.org](http://www.avemariayouthsports.org) or call (239) 510-4299 for more information.

### Rugby Boot Camp

Olfos Sports Academy is hosting a Rugby Boot Camp for boys and girls, which started on Sept. 16 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. For more details, contact (305) 244-2426 or visit [olfosportsacademy.com](http://olfosportsacademy.com)

### Ave Maria Soccer Academy

The 2025-2026 is open! Boys and girls teams available, led by US Soccer-certified coaches. Space is limited to 15 players per group. Visit [olfosportsacademy.com](http://olfosportsacademy.com) to explore all programs and register. For more information call (305) 244-2426. Practices are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday through Nov. 27.

### Flag Football, Cheer & Dance

Ave Maria Youth Sports is well into the summer season through August and will be gearing up for another exciting Fall season. Players of all skill levels are welcome to attend. Coaches will be on hand to assess each player's abilities and help form balanced teams for the league. To enroll and learn more about schedules, please visit [avemariayouthsports.org/](http://avemariayouthsports.org/) 🏈



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Pickleball Grand Opening at North Park continued from page 19



ABOVE: Ann Hashagen. | LEFT: Players couldn't wait to test out the new courts.



Ron and Maria Gobeil with Beatrice and David Sanford.



Joe Lampkin, Christy Schuette and Jackie Ventura.



Phillis Olex, Mauricio Satt and Gladys Argirakis.



Tom DiFlorio provided music for the event.



Ready for some action on the new pickleball courts.



Naomi Vargas, Krystal Vargas and Jackie Ventura enjoyed the delicious frozen drinks by Will Vargas of Watts & Coffee.



Theo and Luis Trejos, ages 4 and 6.



Dan, Stella and Alex Perreault, John Spavento, Normy Martinez, Jim Carletta and Bill Olex.



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Labor Day Pool Party



Residents and friends enjoyed an afternoon at the Ave Maria Water Park, packed with activities and entertainment for all ages, to celebrate Labor Day. The event featured a giant water slide, a foam pit, airbrush tattoos, a toddler playground and fun poolside games for all ages. Kona Ice, KOC Hot Dogs and Sweeter Society Treats supplied refreshments and food during the event. 🌞

SEE **MORE LABOR DAY POOL PARTY PHOTOS, A26** ▶

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# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

Labor Day Pool Party continued from page 25



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Back to School Water Wars



Ave Maria residents gathered at North Park for an afternoon of wet and wild fun at the Back to School Water Wars event to wrap up summer break. Participants of all ages enjoyed a day full of interactive games and water-filled challenges such as Hydro Battle Field & Maze, Slip 'n' Slide, a toddler splash zone and a bubble foam cannon. 🌞





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– Dr. William B.

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– Dan W.

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– Lindsey M.



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