

# Ave Maria Sun

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www.AveMariaSun.com

Vol. V, No. 7

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## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

Ave Maria's first public elementary school promises brighter future for Collier County



## Behind the sizzles

Grilling for charity at the Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off

BY ANDREA STETSON

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The largest steak cook-off east of the Mississippi is about to get sizzling. This year, 2,000 juicy, 16-ounce and one-inch-thick boneless ribeye steaks will be grilled during the event in Ave Maria Town Center. The grillers vie for a title and bragging rights, the Knights of Columbus work long hours to bring this big event to Southwest Florida and local charities benefit from all the money raised.

Last year, that was \$40,000 for feeding 1,300 people steaks. This year, with more beef and more people, they expect to raise even more.

It all began 15 years ago when the Donahue Academy started the event. When that organization decided to stop running it, the Knights of Columbus stepped in. Tom DiFlorio now is overseeing the Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off.

"It just takes a lot of manpower and commitment and people that just want to raise money," DiFlorio said. "Last year, the \$40,000 was the biggest intake of all the years, and that was \$40,000 in profit."

The Guadalupe Center, Donahue Academy, the Ave Maria Church and the Knights of Columbus were some of the nonprofits that benefited. This year if they sell out all 2,000 steaks at \$30 per ticket, they will raise \$60,000. They might raise even more if some participants buy the \$125 VIP tickets.

SEE SIZZLE, A22 ▶

BY ANDREA STETSON

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

**W**HEN THE SCHOOL DOORS open in August 2026 to Ave Maria's first public elementary school, it will be in a building like no other in the county.

"The school is going to be very unique compared to any other school," said Collier County School Board Vice Chair Stephanie Lucarelli. "It will be built with the opportunity to grow and to add on. No other school has been built like that."

It is designed for 900 students, but the infrastructure will be in place to add more classrooms in the future.

Ave Maria Development (AMD) gave the school district 46 acres in exchange for the school impact fee credits. This type of deal has

SEE EDUCATION, A12 ▶



CHRIS BUCCHERI / COURTESY PHOTO  
Chris Buccheri proudly accepted his trophy for winning the Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off in 2024.



RG ARCHITECTS / COURTESY RENDERINGS

**FROM TOP:** The collaboration rooms in the new facility will promote cooperation and innovation, offering adaptable spaces ideal for group activities and dynamic learning experiences. • The lobby of the new elementary school is planned to be inviting and friendly for students and visitors. • The media center will act as a vibrant hub for creativity and education, equipped with the latest technology and a wide range of resources for students to explore and learn.



# Ave Maria Sun

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## Expanding services

Ave Maria Utility Company unveils new website and branding to better serve the community

**BY GLENN MILLER**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

As Ave Maria continues to grow, the demand for essential services increases as well. To ensure that the community has access to clean water, the Ave Maria Utility Company (AMUC) needs to expand its utilities. Also, by modernizing its website and branding, AMUC will be better equipped to communicate important information about these services to the residents.

AMUC oversees utility services in the area. “As the community of Ave Maria continues to grow, we are committed to ensuring that our utility services expand alongside it,” said Tammy Smith, AMUC customer service & utility finance manager. “The expansion of the campus is essential to accommodate new commercial sites and residential areas. We are constantly evolving to meet the needs of our residents and businesses, providing them with the services and support they require.”

To keep residents, visitors and potential residents informed about utility services, a new AMUC website has recently been launched.

Erica Fish, marketing communications specialist for Ave Maria and town



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / AVE MARIA UTILITY COMPANY

This aerial view showcases AMUC's expansion project, which aims to support the growing community and commerce in Ave Maria, including new water treatment tanks.



developer for Barron Collier Companies, recently provided insights into the new and efficient website.

“Our previous platform had been in use for over 15 years and had certainly served its purpose,” she said. “We recog-

nized the need for a modern, user-friendly online presence that would serve our growing community.”

The new website features various tools and resources aimed at enhancing the experience for both residents and site visitors. For example, it offers valuable information on topics such as water conservation and irrigation, along with customer service features like rate information, backflow prevention and an easily navigable payment portal.

SEE AMUC, A4 ►

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# AMUC

From page 2

To better convey messages, the rebranding efforts included the introduction of a new AMUC logo.

“As our organization grows, it’s important for our brand to evolve as well,” Fish explained. “When Ave Maria Utility Company was first established, we adopted a logo that represented the company’s beginnings. However, with the continued expansion of both the company and the community, we felt it was time for a fresh new look.”

As part of its rebranding efforts, the company developed a new logo that captures its evolution and future aspirations. The company maintained the essential symbolism of the wave and water droplet to signify the vital flow of water while updating the design to give it a more modern look. Furthermore, a thoughtfully selected color palette was chosen to reflect a natural, water-inspired aesthetic.

Residents are welcome to visit the AMUC office, which is located in the Town Center in the First Foundation Bank building on Pope John Paul II Boulevard.

“When entering the main lobby of the bank, customers should take the elevator to the second floor and turn right down the hallway. AMUC reception will greet visitors at the end of the hall,” Smith added.

Please visit [amuc.com](http://amuc.com) for more information. 🌟



The AMUC water treatment plant is equipped with cutting-edge filtration systems, direct aquifer pipelines and ultrafiltration technologies.

AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / AVE MARIA UTILITY COMPANY

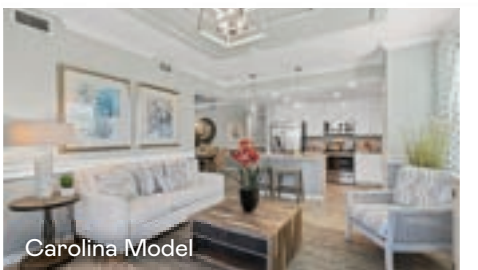
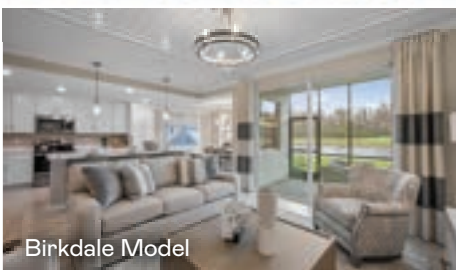
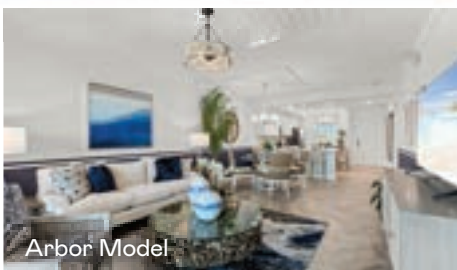
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AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTOS

The Perez-Hernandez clan gathers for dinner on Sundays.

## A family's new chapter

East Coast Floridians fall in love with Ave Maria's small-town charm

BY ERICA FISH

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Donna and Luis Perez had always lived in Cooper City, enjoying the vibrancy of city life. However, when their daughter Ariel, son-in-law Juan and their two grandchildren, Elle and Kalel, moved to the growing community of Ave Maria, a familial change was on the horizon.

At first, Donna and Luis Perez were hesitant. They couldn't imagine leaving the bustling atmosphere of Broward County behind. There were doubts initially that as soon as Ariel and Juan's family were moved in, they'd be homesick for the East Coast. But after a few months happily living in Ave Maria, the Perezes visited to see the community their daughter was raving about.

When Donna and Luis Perez arrived, they were captivated by the charm of the town and its family-friendly atmosphere. "We thought we'd just visit and see how things were going for Ariel and Juan," Donna Perez shared. "But we fell in love with it ourselves."

Noting neighborhood kids riding their bikes down the streets, the pair understood what their son-in-law meant that this was the ideal place to raise his children.

Not long after, Donna and Luis Perez made the decision to move to Ave Maria. They built a new home - the Mystique - with Pulte Homes in Avalon Park, just a few blocks away from Ariel and Juan's house. The move allowed them to be closer to their daughter and grandchildren, and it didn't take long for them to realize just how perfect the town was for family life.

The sense of togetherness has only deepened since their move. Now, Ariel's sister and the rest of Juan's family are following suit. The Hernandez-Perez clan is



Donna and Luis Perez in their new home in Avalon Park.

expanding their roots in Ave Maria, with new homes being built and waiting for the final touches before they move in. The entire family looks forward to spending more time together in their new hometown.

Every Sunday, the family gathers for dinner at the Perez household, and the grandchildren enjoy sleepovers at grandma and grandpa's.

"It's a tradition now," Luis Perez said, beaming. "The kids love it, and it's wonderful to have the whole family close by."

Donna Perez has also found a new sense of purpose in Ave Maria. She works at Salon d' Maria in the Town Center, and Ariel has embraced her role as a coach for her son's team with the Ave Maria Little League, further solidifying her family's bond with the town.

What started as a leap of faith for Donna and Luis Perez turned into a life full of love and community. As they reflect on their journey, they acknowledge how quickly their doubts about Ave Maria faded away.

"At first, we weren't sure if any of us could adjust to small-town life," Donna Perez said. "But after experiencing it, we've come to realize how wonderful it is for families. It's the perfect place to grow together." 🌟



Ariel Hernandez and her Little League team at North Park's ball field for an evening game.

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# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Magical moments



One of the most popular attractions was the face painting booth.



Santa and Mrs. Claus waving in the parade.

Hometown Christmas at the Ave Maria Town Center was a wonderful celebration of the holiday season. Annunciation Circle was transformed into a winter wonderland filled with cheerful holiday music, festive treats and exciting activities. Families enjoyed rides, delicious offerings from local food trucks and the highlight of the evening—a grand parade. It was a memorable night that truly brought the community together in festive spirit. 🌟



Ave Eats had a 360-degree photo booth.



Dancers performed energetically during the parade.



People buy plants from the Flower Truck.



Rock climbing wall.



Classic car from a bygone era.



Saxophone players in the parade.



Children race down the inflatable slide.



Carolers.



The Grinch.



Friends hanging out.



The cheerleaders did an energetic routine during the parade.



Crowd in the streets.



Celtic dancers performing on stage.



Santa and Mrs. Claus meet and greet.



Children's laughter echoed through the air as they soared up and down on the roller coaster, their faces a mix of thrill and pure joy.



Entertainer juggling glowing pins.



The streets buzzed with a vibrant crowd.



# Dunkin' jingles

Peyton Williams' songs see a sweet taste of success

BY JULIANNA PEREZ

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

The story of a small-town girl with dreams of making it big in the music industry is a tale as old as time. For local musician Peyton Williams, that tale came with a tasty twist.

Her unexpected entry into the music business began in June with a trip to visit her family in Atlanta, Ga.

It was then that one family member approached Williams with the opportunity of a lifetime: a chance to have her work featured in a Dunkin' commercial starring Ben Affleck.

"My uncle had said, 'Oh, I'm working on this Dunkin' thing. I made the music for it, but I need lyrics... I'm just going to send you the audio. If you can think of anything, let me know,'" shared Williams.

At the time, her uncle, Jason Nitti, was in the midst of producing the Dunkin' "Iced EP," a collection of five songs advertising the chain's iced beverage options.

When Williams began contributing to the project, she quickly found that her songwriting abilities extended into the world of commercial music. Feeling inspired, the 23-year-old singer was able to write and record three different jingles in the span of one night.



Peyton Williams, also known as Peyton Mackenzie, showcases her songwriting in Dunkin' commercials while collaborating with legends and staying humble.

Just a few weeks later, the same vocals that Williams put down in her uncle's recording booth appeared alongside those of 90s boy band legends AJ McLean from Backstreet Boys and Joey Fatone from \*NSYNC.

"I just felt accomplished," said Williams. "To have them actually use my stuff, and Ben Affleck possibly even hearing it, it's a really cool feeling."

Out of the five songs that debuted on the EP, four feature Williams lyrical work and vocals: "Intro," "Refresher Season," "SPARK'D UP" and "All I Need is An Iced



COURTESY PHOTOS

Coffee."

Though her name is now attached to a star-studded national advertising campaign, Williams has remained grounded in her passions.

A self-described introvert, Williams said her love of music doesn't equate to a desire for the spotlight.

"Immediately after I did the jingles, I was thinking, 'OK, yeah, I could do that. I could just write songs for other people and not have anything to do with it,'" Williams said. "It would be really hard for me to adjust to being the face and

singing in front of people... I am a very behind-the-scenes person."

Looking back on the musician's childhood years, Peyton's mother, Daneé Williams, recounted that young Peyton was hesitant to share her gift with anyone, even her closest family members.

"We'd have to catch her in her room singing and try to record it, and then she'd get mad at us," said Daneé Williams.

After seeing Peyton's contribution to the Dunkin' campaign, Daneé was overcome with pride by how far her daughter had come.

"It's really interesting to me because she's not had any music lessons or help trying to write them. It just comes naturally to her, and she doesn't understand how amazing that is," said Daneé

Williams.

While the young artist's work served her a taste of the spotlight, Peyton Williams has stayed focused on what truly drives her: the music itself.

In addition to the multiple tracks featured on the "Iced EP," the singer-songwriter has been working on her own discography under the name Peyton Mackenzie.

Her most recent releases, which draw inspiration from artists like Taylor Swift and Halsey, can be found on the music streaming platform SoundCloud. 🌟

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# A magical visit

Santa and Mrs. Claus created lasting memories for children

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Over the span of three days this December, Santa and Mrs. Claus visited the littlest children in Immokalee to bring them Christmas joy and a little magic, too. Also known as Kevin and Cindy Schang, from Ave Maria's Avalon Park, the duo appeared at all five of the Guadalupe Center's Early Childhood Learning locations dressed in their red-and-white regalia.

The jolly couple interacted with about 550 students, as well as about 100 teachers and administrators. Kids from 6 weeks to 5 years old sat on Santa's lap and told him what they wanted for Christmas. He asked them if they had been good this year as they gazed innocently into his eyes with awe.

Some little ones preferred sitting with Mrs. Claus, and she was happy to oblige, speaking softly and gently touching the tops of their hands to calm them. Admittedly, a few of the children cried—too intimidated to approach Santa at all—but most relished in the opportunity to meet St. Nick.

"The boys wanted trucks. Most of the girls wanted Barbies, and one little boy said, 'I don't want a Barbie, I want Captain America,'" Kevin Schang reported with a chuckle. "It's just a warm, satisfying feeling to see the kids and to see the joy on their faces. This is our first year at Guadalupe, and we'll gladly come again because we enjoy doing it so much."

Teachers and administrators had just as much fun, helping students enjoy the special moment, taking photographs on their smartphones to share with parents and giving the kids a sugar cookie afterward. Many of the children were dressed in their finest holiday attire.

"Having Santa and Mrs. Claus visit the kids allows our children to believe, to see something that they normally wouldn't see at home," said Amy Adame, director of the Van Otterloo Family Campus for Learning. "Most of our children may not have a Christmas tree at home, so you'll see their faces light up when they take pictures in front of our tree. It's a beautiful thing to see and then to have Santa come to life! They hear about him in the



SANDRA YEYATI / AVE MARIA SUN

**The students were excited to welcome Santa and Mrs. Claus to their class, cherishing the special visit that brought holiday cheer and magic to their day.**

stories, and then to actually see Santa, the emotion and excitement, and those memories that you build, I think is amazing."

Cindy Schang, Mrs. Claus, was impressed by the children, their teachers and the facilities themselves.

"We have been blown away by the Guadalupe Centers," she remarked. "They're clean, expansive and fantastic. The kids are very well behaved; they listen, get along and interact so nicely with the staff—it's like it's their own kids. I wanted to take all the children and squeeze them."

The centers are both daycare and early learning facilities for Immokalee children with two working parents or single parents. The children are there from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., receiving three healthy meals and snacks.

"The whole idea of early learning is to engage them through play and give them the essential tools they need to be able to be successful when they get into kindergarten," Adame explained. "We start to develop the brain as early as 6 weeks old, introducing language, rhythm, song and

nurturing. We see the growth until they graduate our school; you get a baby who is just born and then you see the transition into the babbles and crawling and then walking, and then they start to say words, and then they're speaking and reading by the time they leave here, so it's a process that we get to be a part of. It's a beautiful journey for us."

Emily Sumpmann, the Guadalupe Center's senior director of philanthropy, said, "Whatever is going on at home, whatever life they go home to, we have control over what happens when they're in this building, so whatever magic we can bring and having partners like Santa and Mrs. Claus come in and bring that extra joy, we're all about the added value. They're not just here for childcare; they're here for academics; they're here for the social and emotional development; and they're also here for the love and the care and the nurturing, so it's very important to sprinkle in that magic whenever we can."

Guadalupe Center's stated mission is to break the cycle of poverty through



**Children sat quietly as they waited to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus.**

education.

"We have a curriculum we have to follow to make sure they hit all their milestones, and recently, we put a larger emphasis on behavioral health and social/emotional development to make sure that when kids have big feelings, they have a safe bubble to express those feelings and learn how to process them," Sumpmann explained. "We joked with Miss Bertha and Miss Betty, our behavioral specialists, that they were going to have a really busy week because there's a lot of big feelings when exciting or scary things happen, and depending on how you feel about Santa, it's one of those two things."

The Schangs are not new to this Yuletide gig. For the last five years, they have been Ave Maria's official Clauses for Hometown Christmas in the Town Center. Before that, Kevin played Santa Claus for 10 years in Michigan, where the couple lived before retiring to Florida in 2019. They also sang Christmas carols at this year's Breakfast with Santa event held at the Ave Maria Water Park, and chatted with about 100 college students at an Ave Maria University holiday party.

Their volunteerism extends throughout the year. Kevin Schang is president of the Ave Maria Civic Association, as well as treasurer and community director for the Knights of Columbus Council, while Cindy Schang volunteers for the Ave Maria Master Association social committee, as well as the Avalon Park homeowner's association. The days are packed for the busy twosome that has been married for 45 years.

One time in Michigan, when Kevin Schang was playing Santa, a 12-year-old asked him if Santa was real. After clearing it with the boy's parents, Kevin Schang replied, "Santa is real, but Santa is real as a concept and an idea, the idea of giving. Little kids can't understand that adult truth, that's why we dress up as Santa. The idea of Santa, the idea of giving, is helping somebody across the street, helping somebody change a flat tire; that's being Santa Claus. It's the idea of giving without receiving."

"It's so sweet of Kevin and Mrs. Claus to donate their time and bring joy to our center and our children," said Adame. "Words can't express how grateful we are to them and the impact that they give our families. The parents were told in advance that Santa and Mrs. Claus were coming, so then you see the Christmas outfits that came with that. The parents were really excited to have their kids see Mr. and Mrs. Claus, so it's very impactful what they do. We're very grateful and appreciative that this year, they graciously visited all five of our sites and sat with more than 500 children at our centers. They brought joy and happiness, and that's what Christmas is all about." 🌟



**The class with Santa and Mrs. Claus.**



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## A masquerade to remember

Oil Well Craft Beer hosted the Rockingest New Year's Eve Party, ringing in the New Year with style. Attendees arrived donned in their best masquerade masks, ready to enjoy a night filled with lively entertainment by DJ DiFlo. The festive atmosphere kept everyone celebrating until the clock struck midnight, marking a memorable start to the new year. 🌟



The excitement built as the clock approached midnight.



People showcased their creativity with stunning masquerade masks.



Guests raised their glasses in celebration, toasting to new beginnings and the adventures that await in the year ahead.



Friends and new faces shared unforgettable memories.

DANEÉ WILLIAMS / COURTESY PHOTOS



**Ave Maria**  
A BIG KIND OF SMALL TOWN



More Information:  
• Scan QR Code  
• Visit AveMaria.com Events Calendar  
• Follow Socials



Free Parking & Admission  
AveMaria.com | 239.352.3903 | Events are subject to change.\*

### WEEKLY EVENTS & SIGNATURE FESTIVALS

**Farmers Market**  
Every Saturday, Now - Apr. 26  
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**Trolley Tours**  
Every Tuesday, Jan. 14 - Apr. 22  
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**Live Music in Town Center**  
Tuesdays & Saturdays, Jan. 14 - Apr. 26  
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**Town Center Art Shows**  
Saturday & Sunday, March 22 + 23  
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

**Taste of Ave**  
Saturday, February 1 • 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

**Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival**  
Saturday, February 15 • 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

**Shamrock Festival**  
Saturday, March 15 • 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

**Margarita & Taco Festival**  
Saturday, April 5 • 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM





RG ARCHITECTS / COURTESY RENDERINGS

The new school's design will feature contemporary architecture with bright colors and eco-friendly materials.

## EDUCATION

From page 1

been done in the past, including for the new Bear Creek Elementary School that will open in August 2025. It was also done in 2001 when the land for Aubrey Rogers High School, which opened in August 2023, was given in lieu of impact fees. The way it works is a developer gives the county land, and then as they build in the community, they don't have to pay the required impact fees. AMD is also building the road to the Ave Maria school and installing water and sewer lines.

"The original donation was part of the original approval for the development of regional impact," explained BCC President of Development David Genson. "As part of that you have to do an analysis of what is your development's burden on the school system."

The approval also included an additional 60 acres for a future high school, though it has not been determined if that high school would be in Ave Maria or when it might be built.

The 46 acres in Ave Maria include room for a future middle school. Genson said the growth is booming in the town and the school is needed.

"Initially, when they started planning for the elementary, we were looking at it for a population of 460 students. Now they upsized their plan for up to 900 students. With Ave Maria being so affordable, a lot of families are moving in there."

These families are excited about finally having a public elementary school in Ave Maria. Sabrina Dieuvelhomme's children are 8 and 6. They take a bus 30 minutes each way now to Estates Elementary. The children will be in third and fifth grade when the new school opens.

"Right now, they are taking the bus, and it is overcrowded," Dieuvelhomme said. "I think it will be great having them within walking distance or even car riding distance so I can drop them off before work. They will have their friends in the community to do things and share experiences with."

Genson said having that community feeling has always been the plan for Ave Maria.

"The community was always meant to be self-sustaining," Genson explained. "We have the residential aspect and the commercial aspect. It is really becoming a fully functioning town. Other typical developments don't necessarily focus on all aspects of a town lifestyle. The values



A rendering of a collaboration room.

that town developer, BCC focuses on education, family and community which unites the goods and services for its residents and visitors."

Lucarelli said the time is right now for a school in Ave Maria.

"The community of Ave Maria has been trying to figure out how to get a school out there for quite a long time, so I am just so happy that with the growth

they have seen, there is the justification to build one out there," Lucarelli said. "At least children won't be sitting on a bus going to Estates Elementary. For a community that is pretty close-knit, it is fabulous to have a school right there in the community designated for their community."

Yolanda Remy is excited to see a school coming to town. Her children are 1, 3 and 13. Her oldest has spent years riding a school bus. Now, she is looking forward to having an elementary school closer to home for her two younger children.

"It is closer to home, so the kids don't have to take a bus all the way to school," she said. "The new school will be close, and we will ride our bikes there."

Lucarelli said the school will be large enough for some parents who work in Ave Maria but don't live there to out-of-zone their children to that school. She said that might be popular with employees of large companies such as Arthrex.

School Board Member Erick Carter said everyone wins with this new school.

"It is a win-win for the district, so that means it is a win-win for the community," Carter began. "We get the land ahead of time and it is a win for Barron Collier

Companies because they can boast that they have a school within the community. Parents are going to love to walk their kids to the school. It will save us the bus-sing for all the children in the two-mile radius."

Carter sees the need for schools in that area increasing over the years.

"We are seeing the growth out there," Carter continued. "We are very, very fortunate to have the support of the community. I am excited about (the new school) because of all these hurricanes; people are going to want to move inland a little more."

Mark Frehe, senior director of student and staff projections allocations and reporting for Collier County Public Schools, said these land deals are very helpful when planning for future schools. Every year, the school district makes a growth plan. Even if they don't need the land immediately, these deals give them the security of having that property when needed. For example, the district got the land for Aubrey Rogers High School in 2001, but the population didn't support the need for another high school in that area until 2023. The deal for the land for the elementary school in Ave Maria was made in 2008.

Estates Elementary, where Ave Maria children currently go, has gone from 660 students in 2020 to 1,043 currently enrolled students. The new school in Ave Maria will alleviate those crowds.

"We have seen tremendous growth and we are anticipating more growth," Frehe explained. "That is why we have these strategic land holdings, so when

the projections support that we can support an additional school that is when we go forward with an additional school. The county is forecasting a population growth of around 5% with over 70% of that in the rural estates, corkscrew and urban estates. Through 2028 the projection is we are going to have pretty steady or dramatic growth."

Frehe said their five-year plan does not include a middle or high school in Ave Maria, but that could change.

"That plan is updated every year in the spring," Frehe explained. "We would anticipate the population in that area would support more schools in that area."

Chief Communication Officer for CCPS Chad Oliver agrees.

"Mark and his team specialize in looking into the future," Oliver stressed. "Projecting out is vitally important for us to stay ahead of the curve. We go where the needs are. If populations change then district staff makes recommendations to the board." 🌟

"It is a win-win for the district, so that means it is a win-win for the community."

— Erick Carter, School Board member

### School Facts

- Currently called Elementary Q.
- Located on Anthem Parkway 5 miles north of Oil Well Road.
- The 46 acres was acquired by the school district in August 2008.
- The school will be built for 900 students with room to add more space.

### Timeline

- April 2025, school name survey.
- May 2025, board votes on school name and does a mascot survey.
- June 2025, selection of school colors. groundbreaking ceremony.
- Sept. 2025, selection of principal.
- August 2026, school opens.



# AVE MARIA COMMUNITIES



## AVALON PARK

More Quality Built-In.

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

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

one- and two-story single-family homes that combine Pulte Homes' signature quality construction and personalized design opportunities. With home designs including up to seven bedrooms and 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
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- Two to Four Bathrooms
- 2-car Garage
- Loft Option Available

**Avalon Park at Ave Maria**  
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**239-842-1657**





# Del Webb<sup>®</sup> NAPLES

## We Believe You Will Love It Here From the high \$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,

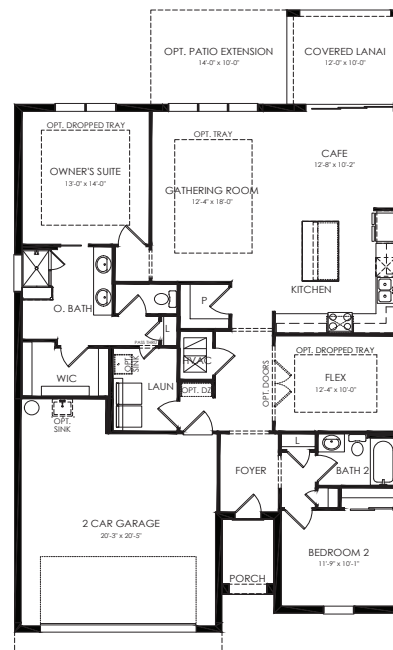
conveniently located right where you live. No matter how full or fulfilling you want your days to be, you’ll find a way to energize your mind, body, and spirit the way you’ve always wanted to. Enjoy golf, bocce ball, bicycling, dance instruction, art, endless ways to socialize, and opportunities to give 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.



# Del Webb<sup>®</sup>

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

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





**MAPLE RIDGE**  
AT AVE MARIA

## About the community

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

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

**Build New or Move-In Soon!**



**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**





**SILVER WOOD**  
AT MAPLE RIDGE

About the community

As part of the highly sought after new home community, Maple Ridge at Ave Maria-Silverwood offers exciting residential choices to buyers. Silverwood provides homeowners the perfect home at a great value. All of these single-family homes are beautifully designed with Mediterranean, 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!

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## ASK ABOUT OUR SOCIAL MEMBERSHIPS!



### About the community

Lennar is excited to bring its popular Everything's Included® homes and resort lifestyle amenities to the charm, convenience, and values of Ave Maria. The National Golf & Country Club will offer a fresh coastal aesthetic throughout the home designs and on-site amenities including an 18-hole Gordon Lewis-designed golf course, complimented by world-class amenities for the entire family to enjoy. A variety of floorplans will be offered in Terrace and Veranda condominiums, coach homes, and executive and estate single-family homes. The National Golf & Country Club will

feature its own clubhouse with a pro shop, formal and casual dining, a resort-style pool and spa, fitness center with yoga/aerobics room, spa treatment rooms and beauty salon. Active residents can take advantage of Har-Tru tennis courts, pickle and bocce ball, a putting green, chipping area, and a driving range. This all-encompassing amenity campus is designed to bring the community together, with spaces for friends new and old to gather. Whether you are a seasonal resident or looking to lay down roots, The National Golf & Country Club has the ideal home for you.

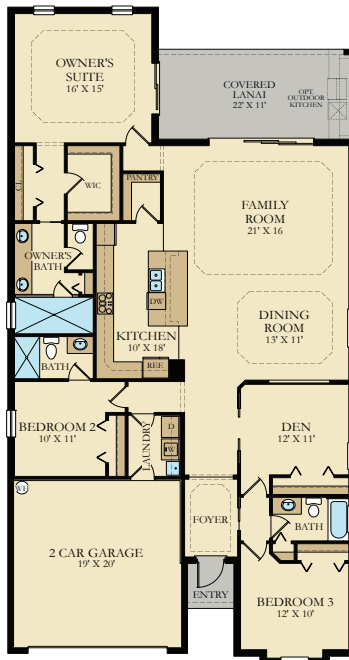


### From the upper \$200,000s - \$800,000s+

Lennar is one of America's leading builders of quality homes since 1954, and is one of the biggest homebuilders in Southwest Florida. Experience unprecedented value through Lennar's Everything's Included®, simply including quality features and finishes that homeowners want and need, at no extra charge.

Simplify your home buying experience by including everything you need in a new home and community. And once you find your perfect home, our family of companies are there to assist you every step of the way with your mortgage, title and insurance needs for an enjoyable and hassle-free closing.

**Learn the possibilities of Everything's Included®**



### Maria

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

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



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Ave Maria Veterans Association Golf Scramble



The Ave Maria Veterans Association Golf Scramble was a resounding success at Panther Run Golf Club. Participants enjoyed a beautiful day on the greens with a delicious meal at the Rusty Putter, where awards were presented to the winners. Golfers had the chance to win exciting hole-in-one prizes and participate in raffles, all while supporting a great cause. Proceeds from the event will benefit scholarships for local students, showcasing the community's commitment to education and support for future generations. 🌟



1. Bryant Morin, Mike Gieger, Ryan Donovan and Jeff McManus.
2. Jeff Woody, Jorge Peña, Jim Parkhill and Allan Yedlinsky.
3. Kevin Brown, Jason Silvester, Craig Barnes and David Altomare.
4. John Bestul driving.
5. Marshall and Kathy Short, Barb Mariano and Sandy Downes.
6. Back, Dennis Ramey and Joe Demea; Front, Tammy Smith and Dallas Townsend.
7. Tonia Fulkroad, Tanner and Mike Johannsen, and Bill Palmatier.
8. Peter Saari, Steve Atkinson, Vince Mariano and Mike Gucwa.
9. Robert Farrell, Dane Waldron and John Zenker.
10. Tom Sherwood and Rich Bachofner.
11. Larry Cornwall with John, Eric and Ethan Bestul.
12. Scott Boyer, Nelson Hutchison, Jonnie Hilyard and Jim Heidegger.





# FC Naples

Professional soccer is coming to Ave Maria

**BY GLENN MILLER**

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

FC Naples, a new team in the United Soccer League, is gearing up for its inaugural season with a focus on the Ave Maria community. In an effort to strengthen its ties to the area, the team has recently finalized an agreement with Ave Maria.

On Saturday, April 26, the team will celebrate “Ave Maria Night” during their game against Charleston Battery for the Jägermeister Cup at the Paradise Coast Sports Complex (PCSC). The game will start between 6:30 and 7 p.m.

In addition to the game, FC Naples plans to hold appearances in Ave Maria, with details expected to be announced soon. The season opener will take place on Saturday, March 8, against the Chattanooga Red Wolves. FC Naples competes in a USL division alongside teams like Union Omaha, Richmond Kickers and Texoma.

The PCSC is conveniently located, just a short drive away. According to Google Maps, it’s 28.4 miles and approximately 43 minutes from Ave Maria via Oil Well Road and Collier Boulevard, or 41.9 miles and about 59 minutes using the I-75 route.

Kim McDonnell, FC Naples’ director of corporate partnerships, expressed that forging a connection with Ave Maria is natural due to its proximity and family-friendly atmosphere. She and other members of the team’s front office recently visited Ave Maria, and they began signing players in December.

To enhance this partnership, the team



**Matt “Gaffa” Poland is the head coach and sporting director of FC Naples, the first professional soccer team in Naples.**



COURTESY PHOTOS

**Coach Poland and the team discussing a game plan for the upcoming match.**

plans to bus the entire team to Ave Maria for a practice session. Residents of Ave Maria will be invited to come out, watch the practice, meet the players and take pictures.

The team announced the signing of six players during the two weeks leading up to Christmas. The first signee was midfielder Jayden Onen, announced on Dec. 9. This was followed by midfielder Kevin O’Connor on Dec. 13, and within the next 10 days, they signed defender Jake Dangler, goalkeeper Edward “Lalo” Delgado, midfielder Ian Cerro and defender Max Glasser. On Dec. 27, they finalized the signing of forward Tyler Pasnik.

McDonnell noted that there is already significant interest in the team from the Ave Maria community.

“We’re hoping to attract thousands of people from Ave Maria specifically for game night,” McDonnell explained.

“On that night, the focus will be on Ave Maria, with plans to publicly recognize notable figures from the community to make them feel welcome and special. Additionally, children from Ave Maria will join the players on the pitch for the pre-game coin toss, a prestigious moment in soccer,” said McDonnell.

Though FC Naples is a new professional club in Southwest Florida’s sports scene, Michelle Mambuca, the marketing and public relations manager for Ave Maria, is optimistic.

“We believe in their potential and success,” Mambuca stated. She also appreciates that the professional soccer team will help connect Ave Maria to the wider community.

“We want to bridge the gap between Ave Maria and Naples and show that we’re part of Collier County; we’re part of the community,” Mambuca added. 🌟



## ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY

### AVE MARIA SUN

NEXT PUBLICATION DATE: **MARCH 26, 2025**



**SPACE/CREATIVE:**  
Wednesday, March 12th • 12pm

**CAMERA READY ADS:**  
Tuesday, March 18th • 2pm

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# ENTERTAINMENT AND DINING AT SEMINOLE CASINO HOTEL

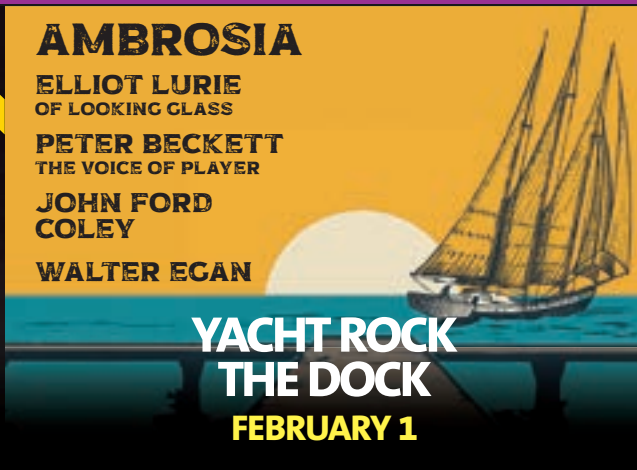


**LEE GREENWOOD**  
JANUARY 22



**KANSAS**  
JANUARY 25

*OUTDOOR*



**AMBROSIA**  
ELLIOT LURIE  
OF LOOKING GLASS  
PETER BECKETT  
THE VOICE OF PLAYER  
JOHN FORD  
COLEY  
WALTER EGAN

**YACHT ROCK  
THE DOCK**  
FEBRUARY 1




**THE MAN IN BLACK:  
A JOHNNY CASH TRIBUTE**  
FEBRUARY 8



**WILLIE NELSON & FAMILY**  
FEBRUARY 13

*OUTDOOR*



**AARON LEWIS  
& THE STATELINERS**  
FEBRUARY 15

*OUTDOOR*



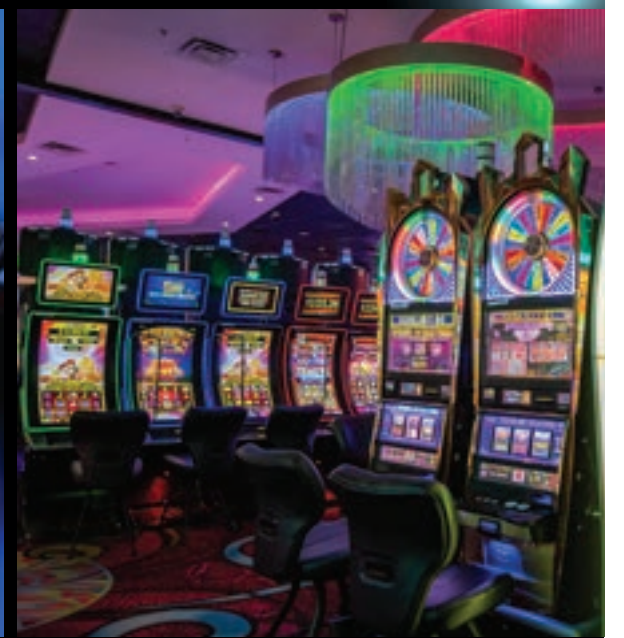
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EATING HERE**

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ENTERTAINMENT NIGHTLY WITH NO LAST CALL



MOREINPARADISE.COM

MINUTES AWAY FROM MORE



IMMOKALEE



# SIZZLE

From page 1

“Last year, we sold out,” DiFlorio said. About 20 grill teams are expected to participate. Each team will cook one steak for the judges, then dozens more for the public. The teams are a mixture of local businesses, non-profits, residents and people who come from out of town to compete. They pay a \$165 entry fee for steaks, charcoal, aprons and some dinner tickets. The winners get trophies, money and bragging rights. The grand champion walks away with \$1,500, while second place takes \$1,000 and third place \$500. The steaks are evaluated by two certified judges, two chefs and one celebrity.

DiFlorio said the best part is how the community benefits.

“It is just great for the community,” he began. “It is great to see people out. There is a great band. People love the music. There are bounce houses for the kids.”

All this takes a lot of time and planning. John Lanham, the Grand Knight with the Knights of Columbus, expects to have 70 volunteers helping during the event.

“They had it so organized they moved 1,300 people through the line last year in just an hour,” Lanham described. “I was there at eight in the morning last year and finished at nine at night.”

Chris Buccheri has been participating since the cook-off began 15 years ago. He won first place last year, came in second in 2023 and first place in 2021.

“The secret to success is having a game plan and being able to execute it the day of the event,” Buccheri said. “A lot of people can cook good steaks, but you have to be able to do it the day of the event.”

His team, High Steaks, plans to grill about 100 steaks during this year’s competition.

“I like that money is for charity, and I like the camaraderie and the competition,” he explained. “If you win, you get bragging rights for the entire year. It is a very small town, so it is nice to have bragging rights. A lot of the other teams are friends, so we like to be competitive.”

This year, he will have some extra competition against his daughter, who now has her own team entered.

“She plans on being in the top five. I have tasted her practice steak, and she could win,” Buccheri said.

His biggest competition might be David Altomare, the 2023 winner. This year, he was recruited by Oil Well Craft Beer to grill for their team.



TOM DIFLORIO / COURTESY PHOTO

Each grill team makes one steak for the judges to try and about 75-100 more for the public.



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTO

Altomare admits there is a lot of tough competition.

“The secret to success is game day execution,” he stressed. “Both Chris and I have incredible recipes for incredible steaks and either of us could win. I have

a few tricks up my sleeve.”

Altomare has been in the cook-off for the past eight years.

“It is one of my creative outlets,” he explained. “As an engineer, I am creative. I like to design things, and cooking

is a way to design a good steak.”

He plans on grilling about 75 steaks this year, which he said will take about an hour and a half.

“I don’t like cooking that many at once, so I will probably cook five at a time so I can watch it more closely,” he explained. “I smoke them first up to a certain temperature. Then it only takes about three minutes to cook.”

The event takes place on Saturday, Jan. 25, in the Ave Maria Town Center. There will be food vendors, games, fun houses, a craft show and farmers market, a silent auction and a steak dinner. The steak dinner includes a 16-ounce ribeye steak, potato salad, roll and bottled water. The festival begins at 2 p.m. Dinner is served from 5 to 6 p.m. The cost is \$30 for general admission or \$125 for a VIP ticket that also includes beer, wine, coffee, dessert and the ability to skip the line.

Lanham expects the steak cook-off to keep getting bigger and better.

“It is one of those things where we have to continue this because the community comes together, and there are a lot of steak lovers,” he concluded. “Who doesn’t love 16 ounces of prime beef?” 🍷



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTO

Outkast BBQ made all food enthusiasts flock to their grilling spot.



TOM DIFLORIO / COURTESY PHOTO

Oil Well Craft Beer team.



# Full circle journey

## Faculty reflects on the evolution and expansion of Donahue Academy

BY GLENN MILLER

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Marc Snyder, the principal of Donahue Academy, along with the husband-and-wife faculty team of Peter and Olivia Scheck, has a unique perspective on the rapid growth of Rhodora J. Donahue Academy in Ave Maria.



SNYDER

Snyder was part of the faculty when the school first opened in 2007, starting with approximately 130 students. Peter and Olivia Scheck, who are alumni of the school, have since returned to join the staff.

Currently, the school is at full capacity with 435 students enrolled from pre-K through grade 12. To accommodate further growth, 10 modular classrooms will be added for the upcoming fall. The long-term goal is to expand the student body to 750, although that target will not be reached this year.

"We're looking to target about 615 students for the fall," Snyder said. Snyder's teaching career took him to Spain for a couple of years and to Miami, where he started a charter school. He returned to Ave Maria in 2022.

Peter Scheck teaches Latin and theology, while Olivia Scheck is a fourth-grade teacher's assistant. Snyder attributes part of the growth in enrollment to the population booming in not only Ave Maria but also in that part of Collier County.

"It's a new springtime here at Donahue," Snyder said. "The growth that we're experiencing from this year to next is historical. It's unprecedented. We've never brought in this many students at one time." The fall enrollment will be nearly five times the enrollment in 2007. "Next year, we're going to be bringing in alone 200 kids," Snyder said. "So, it's almost like opening up another school. It's a significant growth. People are excited. There's a buzz around town, a buzz in the school."

The buzz exists for reasons other than



COURTESY PHOTOS

**The graduating class of 2024 is the largest so far, with a total of 32 students.**

the school's Florida location. Snyder believes one important factor is the classical education provided by Donahue. The classical model of education introduces students to fundamental concepts that embody "Truth, Beauty and Goodness."

While some secular classical schools may touch upon these ideas, a complete understanding and appreciation of humanity and the world requires acknowledging a higher source of these ideals. Excluding this perspective can lead to significant gaps in one's education and personal development.

Peter and Olivia Scheck, who were educated through this approach, are now passing on the same values to the next generation.

"It's a little surreal," Peter Scheck said. "So now a couple of my former teachers are now my colleagues." He recalled Snyder teaching him science from eighth grade through junior year. "Now I teach sophomore humanities," he said. "So that came full circle, which is crazy, right?"

Peter Scheck's duties extend beyond the classroom. "I'm taking over as the head football coach," he said. Donahue offers

eight-person football at the high school level and may, at some point, offer 11-person football.

The primary focus, of course, is education. Peter Scheck estimates that when he was a senior, the school had about 240 students from pre-K through high school.

"We had 13 kids in my graduating senior class," Peter Scheck said. The values have remained the same, but other things are different. "The hallways are obviously much more crowded."

Peter Scheck has witnessed and experienced the transformation.

"We're still very similar to who we were, and then in other ways, it definitely feels like a little bit of a different dynamic, as far as just from what I was used to as a student," said Peter Scheck.

Olivia Scheck is now working with Jen Klucinec, who was once one of her teachers.

"It's fun working with some of the teachers I had in the grammar school," Olivia Scheck said. But there are differences between then and now, even for somebody as young as 23. "It's certainly more crowded.

I think my fourth-grade class had 12 students in it, and right now, we're at 30."

One way the Donahue Academy raises funds is through golf cart raffles, and this year, an Evolution golf cart with a retail price of \$8,500 will be raffled off as part of their fundraising drive.

The cart is generously donated by Caleb Polhill, the general manager of AAction Power Equipment of LaBelle. "We're going to need some major gifts," Snyder said, highlighting the importance of community support for these events.

This initiative reflects the school's commitment to ensuring the growing student body continues to receive a high-quality education and the necessary resources. Last year's similar raffle raised about \$16,000, demonstrating the significant impact of community involvement. The funds raised play a crucial role in helping the academy expand its facilities and programs to meet the needs of its students.

In addition to Ave Maria's population growth, Peter Scheck believes a hunger for old-fashioned education has helped spur the school's boom.

"People across the state and across the country have just done a lot of soul searching as far as what they actually want their kids to grow up learning and who they want them to be by the time they graduate," Peter Scheck said.

The growth is not all based on faith, either, he believes. "It's not just Catholic families that are moving here," Peter Scheck said. "People that were in Miami came over just for a quieter lifestyle. But even among the non-Catholics, I think Donahue still offers a very attractive package as far as the education goes."

For the Donahue School principal, the growth can be attributed to more than geography and a hunger for classical education. It can be linked to dedicated educators.

"It's taken the efforts of a lot of people who really see their work here at Donahue as a calling," Snyder said. 🌟

# Residents voice safety concerns over electric scooters and bikes

BY KEVIN SCHANG

Ave Maria Civic Association president

The Ave Maria Civic Association (AMCA), in partnership with the Master Association, is addressing growing safety concerns related to the use of electric scooters and bicycles in the community.

The issue was raised by residents at the July community meeting, with many expressing concerns about near-miss accidents involving both pedestrians and riders.

In response to the concerns, the AMCA invited a Collier County Sheriff's Office representative to present to the community in November on ways to improve safety.

The representative emphasized how law enforcement officials focus on education rather than issuing tickets, particularly when it comes to children. As part of their safety campaign in Ave Maria, the sheriff's department will distribute 400 safety pamphlets and organize a safety presentation for students at the Donahue Academy. The goal of the safety presentation will be to promote and raise awareness about safe riding practices for all types of electric vehicles, including bikes, scooters and golf carts.

In addition to law enforcement efforts to bring awareness to the safe use of electric scooters and bikes, the importance of parental involvement was highlighted.



AVE MARIA DEVELOPMENT / COURTESY PHOTO

**Residents are raising safety concerns about electric scooters and bikes, leading the AMCA to work with law enforcement on safe riding initiatives.**

Parents play a crucial role in educating their children about safety, including simple lessons such as how to signal to pedestrians when passing on the right or left. Families are encouraged to discuss safe riding practices regularly and ensure children are aware of their surroundings. Reinforcing these safe riding practices helps

remind everyone - children and adults alike - about the safe use of electric ride-on vehicles in a residential area.

The sheriff's department also reminded residents that pedestrians need to stay alert and aware of their surroundings. This includes minimizing distractions like cell phones or earbuds, which can contrib-

ute to accidents and near misses. Many instances of near misses are the result of people not paying attention to oncoming vehicles or other pedestrians.

The AMCA and Ave Maria Master Association will continue to address this issue at upcoming meetings and in publications. Ave Maria is a safe, inclusive community, and the town is designed to encourage responsible walking, biking and golf cart use. If you see someone riding recklessly, kindly speak to them or their parents if they are minors—most likely, they'd appreciate the feedback and want to address the issue. The goal is not to point fingers but to work together to create a safer community.

The following safety guidelines, provided by the Sheriff's Office, include the following and are good reminders for all community members:

- Announce when passing someone on the right or left
- Slow down when approaching or rounding a corner
- "Right of Way" is not automatic, always stop and yield
- Use earbuds or headphones at safe, low volumes
- Stop and pull over if you need to check your phone

Let's all work together to keep Ave Maria's sidewalks and paths safe for everyone. 🌟



# Beyond the books

## How Miss Janice fosters confidence in young readers

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

Local tutor Janice Muenz changes lives in Ave Maria by introducing preschoolers to the magic of reading, igniting children with a love of learning and the confidence to ace tests and helping immigrant adults assimilate English to thrive in their businesses.

Every student learns differently, and Muenz is a master of figuring out how to engage minds, maintain their focus and incentivize success as they learn penmanship, expand their vocabulary and improve reading comprehension. To her students, she is affectionately known as “Miss Janice.”

“I try to make the classes interesting and fun,” Muenz said, who uses hand puppets to teach early readers about phonics and turns spelling lessons into a fun game with the help of Scrabble tiles. “If they’re bored, they’re not going to learn,” she explained. “Some of them lose focus easily.”

Muenz rewards all children with coins. “You’d be surprised how hard the kids work for their pennies, even the 7-year-olds. I tell them to save their pennies so they can buy themselves something, and if they’re naughty, I might take one or two pennies away so they know they have to pay attention and not talk back. It’s called tough love,” Muenz said.

“Miss Janice has this way of making her students work for an hour-and-a-half without thinking that they’re working because they’re having fun,” said Elizabeth Lavandera, mother to 6-year-old Antonio, who began working with Muenz a year and a half ago. “Even though she’s strong and assertive, he looks forward to tutoring, and it has led to a huge improvement in his confidence at school. After the first week of focusing on math with her,



COURTESY PHOTO

**Miss Janice Muenz is a dedicated tutor in Ave Maria who inspires young readers through engaging methods.**

he aced his test 100%. Before, in kindergarten, they would say the word ‘test,’ and he would freeze up. Now, when he has a test coming up, he doesn’t panic. He’s ready. I believe Miss Janice has given him that extra support that he needed to know that he can do it.”

As the children progress, Muenz introduces other captivating aids. “I have whiteboards that the kids love to write on and erase,” she remarked. “And then there are the books. I have so many books, including board books with two or three words for the little kids, ‘Magic Tree House’ books and Disney stories. If it’s a story that they can’t read themselves, we’ll read it together. I’ll pronounce the big words, and they have to read all the small ones, mostly Sight Words.”

Considered the national benchmark for reading, Sight Words are lists of basic words for each grade level that kids need



to recognize without having to sound out the letters.

“When they pass their pre-K list, we go to kindergarten, and then to first grade and so on,” Muenz said. “I have a 4-year-old girl who is reading some kindergarten and a few first-grade words, and I have a 6-year-old who is reading fourth-grade words. I can’t boast enough about my students because I think they do an outstanding job. I’m very proud of them, and I’m proud of myself that I am able to teach them. I enjoy it. That’s why I’ve continued to do it for 11 years and five years in Ave Maria, even though I’m retired.”

Muenz has tutored Matthew Charpentier twice a week since he was 4 years old. He is now 8 and in second grade.

“We love Miss Janice. She’s amazing,” said Matthew’s mother, Edith. “When my son was in pre-K, I had her meet with him just to get the ball rolling with reading because I didn’t want him to struggle. It ended up being a match made in heaven. He loves being with her. She’s very firm with him—does tough love—but kids respect that. It’s more like a grandma and grandson relationship. I trust her. She goes above and beyond, shaping him for the future for whatever he wants to be. Now, he’s in the top 95 percentile nationally in reading. He loves to read, and it’s

all thanks to Miss Janice.”

“When parents tell me how well their children are doing in school, my heart grows like the Grinch,” Muenz said. “I love it when my students learn and excel. No matter how challenged they are, I never give up on them. I will do anything I have to do to help them learn. I’ll teach them for two or three hours if that’s what it takes. When those kids hug and kiss me, and when they call me ‘Miss Janice,’ I just melt.”

Using the Maple Ridge clubhouse as her base of operation, Muenz dedicates six days a week to tutoring, adjusting her schedule to accommodate her students’ schedules. Preschool and homeschool kids get the mornings, while the grade-schoolers meet with her after 3 p.m. She usually meets each student twice a week for an hour or an hour and a half.

Her husband of 56 years, David, drives her to and from tutoring, sometimes waiting in the car for her to finish. Before retiring in 2012, the couple worked at McDonnell Douglas Corporation for 43 years, a major aerospace manufacturer and defense contractor that was later bought by Boeing. There, she taught executive classes and conducted new employee orientations for hundreds of newcomers to the company. They have two sons and three grandchildren in Chicago and St. Louis.

The couple moved to Ave Maria’s Del Webb Naples in 2017. “It was affordable, less congested than Naples and I love the nature here,” Muenz said. “I’ve got turkeys in my backyard, and we really liked the serenity of it all.” When she is not tutoring, Muenz likes to cook and tend to a collection of orchids and bonsai plants. 🌸

For more information, call 239-658-5779 or email [Janice.M.Muenz@gmail.com](mailto:Janice.M.Muenz@gmail.com).

# New security cameras in Ave Maria Town Center

BY SANDRA YEYATI

Ave Maria Sun Correspondent

On Dec. 3, the Ave Maria Stewardship Community District voted unanimously to approve the installation of security cameras throughout the district. The vote came after significant discussion and reflected a proactive step to implement measures to ensure the safety and assets of property owners, residents, businesses and visitors of Ave Maria. District staff consulted with the Collier County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) about the decision, and a CCSO representative was in attendance to answer questions.

Security cameras are widely used throughout the world to deter crime, aid investigations and provide a sense of security. Locally, the city of Naples, as well as a variety of private communities, business parks and commercial centers, have all implemented similar systems. When they spot a camera, intruders tend to think twice, significantly reducing the risk of break-ins, thefts and acts of vandalism. In the event of a crime, cameras can provide crucial evidence to help law enforcement identify perpetrators and solve cases.

The district has contracted with Motorola Solutions to install and manage the security system, including repairs, maintenance and replacement of faulty units.

“The Motorola Solutions cameras are used by numerous local agencies, including the Collier County Sheriff’s Office and Collier County Public Schools,” said



District Manager Allyson Holland.

Ave Maria Development and Ave Maria Utility Company will participate in the camera installation process on their respective properties.

The district also approved an agreement with the CCSO allowing only authorized CCSO personnel to access the footage as needed for investigative purposes. In the event of an incident, this footage can provide valuable evidence,

helping them to identify and apprehend suspects. Footage will be recorded and stored for 30 days before deletion in accordance with Florida statute. CCSO will not actively monitor the cameras, and the district will not have access to the footage, nor will it be available to the public.

“The utilization of the cameras, as needed for investigative purposes, will provide greater cohesiveness among the agencies and improve investigative ca-

pabilities. As our community grows, we want to improve public safety, deter crime and make the district feel more secure for residents and visitors,” explained Holland.

Ave Maria Stewardship Community District staff is available to answer questions or concerns from property owners, homeowners’ associations or businesses. For more information, call 239-867-4322 or visit [AveMariaStewardshipCD.org](http://AveMariaStewardshipCD.org). 🌸



# BIG KINDS OF SMALL TOWN FUN

## Del Webb Naples Grand Hall & Oasis Club remodel



1

PULTE HOMES / COURTESY PHOTO



2

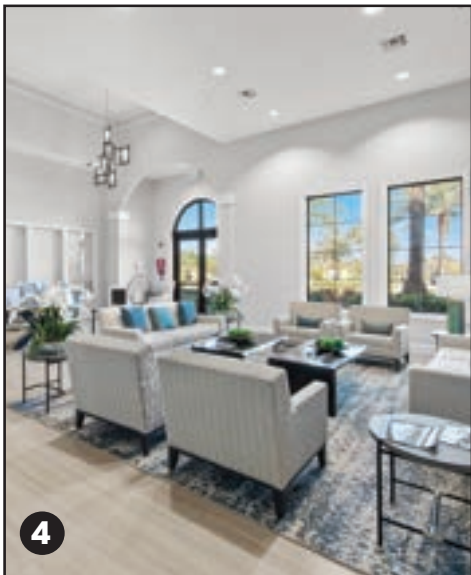
COURTESY PHOTO / AVE MARIA SUN

Del Webb Naples has renovated the Oasis Club, enhancing it as the center of the community's active lifestyle. The updated 12,000-square-foot facility features fresh interiors, stylish furniture, upgraded fitness equipment, new poker tables, barbecue grills and improved flooring. This renovation underscores the community's commitment to providing a vibrant environment for residents aged 55 and over, complemented by amenities like a resort-style pool and extensive sports facilities. 🌟



3

COURTESY PHOTO / AVE MARIA SUN



4

PULTE HOMES / COURTESY PHOTO



5

COURTESY PHOTO / AVE MARIA SUN

1. The newly refreshed library offers a serene environment for reading and relaxation, complete with ample seating and a diverse selection of books.
2. Upgraded cardio equipment has been added to the fitness center, ensuring residents have access to the latest in exercise technology.
3. The grand foyer and lifestyle desk have been revitalized to provide a welcoming first impression and efficient service to residents.
4. Stylish and comfortable new furniture has been introduced throughout the interior spaces, creating an inviting atmosphere for residents.
5. The Oasis Club features a fresh, modern exterior color scheme that enhances its vibrant facade and complements the surrounding landscape.

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# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

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

## ■ OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

### Trolley Tours & Live Music

Experience the charm of Collier County's 'Community of the Year' for 10 consecutive years with a 1-hour narrated trolley tour. Discover new developments, explore the town, learn its history and enjoy live music. After the tour, enjoy lunch, shopping and view 25+ model homes by top builders. Guests receive a complimentary trolley bag with swag items and community info. Tours are first-come, first-serve, departing at 11 a.m., noon, 1 and 2 p.m. Meet at the Welcome Center, 5076 Annunciation Circle, #104.

### Sunshine State Steak Cook-Off

Join the Knights of Columbus for the 15th annual charity steak competition at Ave Maria Town Center on Saturday, Jan. 25, from 2 to 6 p.m. Enjoy live entertainment, beer vendors, kids' activities, a craft show and a farmers market. Savor delicious steak dinners from grill teams for \$30 in advance or \$35 on the day of the event.

### A Big Kind of Small Town Art Show

The Big Kind of Small Town Art Show is at the Ave Maria Town Center on Jan. 25-26, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Local artists will showcase boutique art and handcrafted goods, including jewelry, pottery, textiles and home décor.

### Taste of Ave

The award-winning festival will take place on Saturday, Feb. 1, from noon to 5 p.m., featuring local food, unique boutique offerings, and a farmers market. Enjoy live performances by local bands TreeHouse and the Back Country Boys, along with free-entry raffles organized by the many town's businesses, family-friendly activities, Biz Kidz Expo and inflatables, plus local artisans and small business booths.

### Blues, Brews & BBQ Festival

The event on Saturday, Feb. 15, from noon to 5 p.m. features live blues performances by Deb & The Dynamics and Old School, along with vintage car displays from the Cool Cruisers and Bonita Corvette Club. Enjoy food trucks, craft beers, retail vendors, kids' activities, cornhole games and a horse show, all with free admission and parking.

### Shamrock Festival

Immerse yourself in the lively spirit of Ireland at Ave Maria's inaugural Shamrock Festival! On Saturday, March 15 from noon - 5:00 p.m., the festivities kick off with performances by The Crows, a local Irish band known for their traditional tunes. Anticipate a themed golf cart parade at 12 p.m., a range of kids' activities including a petting zoo, plus an Irish Soda Bread Contest. And don't miss seeing Celtic dance performances by Kellyn Celtic Dance, who will dazzle with their traditional steps. With something for everyone, this festival promises a day full of music, dance and golden fun!

### Ave Maria Festival of the Arts

The Festival of the Arts will take place at Ave Maria Town Center on Saturday and Sunday, March 22-23, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., showcasing diverse local artists and their unique crafts. Browse booths filled with everything from intricately designed jewelry and pottery to exquisite textiles and home décor.

## MERCHANT EVENTS

### Backwoods Feed & Grooming

**facebook.com/doggonecleaners**  
Founded in 2016, Backwoods Feed & Grooming specializes in grooming services, pet wash stations, and holistic food and treats for all domestic pets, from household pets to farm animals.

### The Bean at Ave Maria

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

■ Discover the latest weekly special drink announcements, on their Facebook page.

■ **Join the Coffee Club.** After buying 10 hot or iced drip coffees, get the 11th one free.

■ **Taco Tuesday** happens weekly from 4 to 7 p.m. 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 healthcare 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 every Tuesday at 2 p.m. The talks focus on various health topics and offer insights for those looking to enhance their physical well-being.

### 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.

### Mercato at Ave

**mercatoatave.net**  
A lively marketplace featuring vendor casitas with handcrafted candles, soaps, clothing, accessories and sweets. Enjoy free Wi-Fi, artisan coffee, live music and a striking mural. Key vendors include Felicia's Hair Studio, Kivora Boutique, Eva's Jewels and Sonia Tello Alterations. Pure Beauty offers beauty products and services, Pop Love Gelato serves artisanal treats and Berry Juicy provides healthy smoothies. There's also a Stay & Play area for kids.

### 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. Its happy hour is from 3 to 6 p.m. during the week. 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 daily from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

■ Every Monday to Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m., at least one food truck 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 for ladies.

■ Cruise Planners Jackie and Dan Rategan are hosting an Adult Bingo with free prizes on Wednesday, Jan. 22, Feb. 12 and March 12, at 7 p.m.

■ On Friday, Jan. 24, celebrating National Beer Can Appreciation Day, all crawlers will be \$2 off all day.

■ Join Southwest Florida Realtor Sara Callahan for Family-friendly Bingo with free prizes from 6 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 1 and March 1.

■ Network at the Ave Maria Rotary meet-up for small business owners on Monday, Feb. 10 and 24, and March 10, from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

■ Free to play, Bunco is back on Wednesday, Feb. 19 and March 19 at 6:30 p.m., hosted by community enthusiasts Kelli, Teri and Jen, promising a night full of laughter, connections and good times.

■ Music Bingo with DJ DiFlo is on Monday, Feb. 17 and March 17, from 7 to 9 p.m.

■ Glorified Vision Art's Brew and Paint Party is on Tuesday, Feb. 11 and March 11. Tickets are \$35 a seat. RSVP to glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com.

■ Paint your pet with Glorified Vision Art on Tuesday, Feb. 25 at 7 p.m. for \$55. The fee covers a 2- to 3-hour session, a detailed pet sketch on a 16x20 canvas and all supplies. RSVP to glorifiedvisionart@gmail.com.

■ Join DJ DiFlo for a 21-and-up-only 70s Dance Party on Friday, Feb. 28 from 8 to 11 p.m., featuring a costume contest at 9 p.m.

■ On Friday, March 14 from 5 to 9 p.m., celebrate St. Patrick's Day with the return of the Droim Leathan Irish Red and a chance to find the Golden Coin.

### The Pub & Grill at Ave Maria

**thepubofave.com**  
The Pub's new happy hour, running Monday through Friday from 2 to 5 p.m., features \$5 well drinks, \$4 house wines, \$3 domestic drafts, \$2 pretzel bites and \$1 chips and salsa. Make sure to keep an eye out for live music events.

### The Secret Ingredient

**shoptheseingredient.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 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.

■ National Polka Dot Day on Wednesday, Jan. 22, offers 20% off all polka dot apparel.

■ On Wednesday, Jan. 29, National Puzzle Day will offer a 10% discount on all puzzles.

■ All sweaters will be 30% off on Tuesday, Feb. 4, in celebration of National Sweater Day.

■ On National Wear Red Day, Friday, Feb. 7, wear red to receive a 20% discount on your favorite regular-priced item.

■ Mark your calendars for the annual Ave Maria University Style Show Luncheon on Monday, Feb. 10. For any questions or ticket reservations, please call 239-213-0990.

■ Celebrate National Galentine's Day on Thursday, Feb. 13, by shopping with a friend to receive 20% off one regularly priced item each.

■ All dresses are 20% off for National Dress Day on Thursday, March 6.

■ On Friday, March 7, celebrate Dress in Blue Day by wearing blue to receive 20% off your favorite item.

■ Transform your unused fur jackets into beautiful vests, jackets or keepsake teddy bears at the Restyle Your Old Fur event on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 25 and 26 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

■ Celebrate National Wear a Hat Day on Wednesday, March 26 by wearing a hat and enjoying 20% off your favorite regular-priced item.

### Stella Rose Way

**stellaroseway.com**  
A locally owned boutique featuring a curated mix of gifts, artisanal items, children's products and home decor. They host monthly events to explore Ave Maria souvenirs and aim to be a delightful source for unique finds and home beautification.

■ From now until Jan. 26, customers who spend \$125 in Brighton will receive a free Endless Love Umbrella.

### Tropical Smoothie Café

**tropicalssmoothiecafe.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. Starting in January, they will feature two new bowls: the Nutella Acai Bowl and the Dragon Fruit Bowl. To pair the bowls, they also offer a limited-time chocolate-covered strawberry smoothie.

### 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 3 packs provided will be used.

On Thursday nights, there is an open play event for Lorcana at Disney Lorcana from 6 to 8 p.m. It's an opportunity to learn and play the game, and it is open to all ages.



# ALL AROUND AVE MARIA

Even if you don't have cards, starter decks are available for purchase in-store.

## AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

For the latest updates and more information on away games, visit [avemariagynes.com/calendar](http://avemariagynes.com/calendar).

### Friday, Jan. 24

Baseball vs. Point (Ga.), 3 p.m.  
Baseball vs. Point (Ga.), 6 p.m.

### Saturday, Jan. 25

Baseball vs. Point (Ga.), noon.  
W. Basketball vs. Webber, 2 p.m.  
Baseball vs. Point (Ga.), 3 p.m.  
M. Basketball vs. Webber, 4 p.m.

### Saturday, Feb. 1

Rugby vs. Florida International, noon.  
W. Basketball vs. Florida Memorial, 2 p.m.  
M. Basketball vs. #24 Florida Memorial, 4 p.m.

### Thursday, Feb. 6

Baseball vs. RV Oklahoma Wesleyan, 6:30 p.m.

### Friday, Feb. 7

Baseball vs. RV Oklahoma Wesleyan, 6:30 p.m.

### Saturday, Feb. 8

Baseball vs. RV Oklahoma Wesleyan, noon.  
Rugby vs. Miami, noon.  
W. Basketball vs. Warner, 2 p.m.  
M. Basketball vs. Warner, 4 p.m.

### Saturday, Feb. 22

W. Basketball vs. RV Southeastern, 2 p.m.  
M. Basketball vs. Southeastern, 4 p.m.

### Tuesday, March 4

Baseball vs. Fisher (Mass.), noon.

### Wednesday, March 5

Baseball vs. Fisher (Mass.), 3 p.m.  
Baseball vs. Fisher (Mass.), 6 p.m.

### Tuesday, March 11

Beach Volleyball vs. Barry, 11 a.m.  
Beach Volleyball vs. Eckerd, 3 p.m.

### Friday, March 14

Beach Volleyball vs. St. Andrews, TBD  
Beach Volleyball vs. Truett McConnell, TBD

### Saturday, March 15

Beach Volleyball vs. Brenau (Ga.), TBD  
Beach Volleyball vs. Spartanburg Methodist, TBD  
Rugby vs. Millenia Atlantic, noon.

### Friday, March 21

Baseball vs. RV St. Thomas, 3 p.m.  
Baseball vs. RV St. Thomas, 6 p.m.

### Saturday, March 22

Beach Volleyball vs. New College, 11 a.m.  
Baseball vs. RV St. Thomas, noon.  
Baseball vs. RV St. Thomas, 3 p.m.  
Beach Volleyball vs. Webber, 3 p.m.

## ■ AVE MARIA RESIDENT-ONLY

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

### Ave Maria Stewardship Community District (AMSCD) meetings

Monthly AMSCD meetings are open to the public and held in the AMMA meeting room on Tuesday, Jan. 7 at 4 p.m., Tuesday,

Feb. 4 at 4 p.m., and Friday, March 7 at 6 p.m. Visit [avemariastewardshipcd.org](http://avemariastewardshipcd.org) for more information and schedule updates.

### Crime Avoidance & Awareness lecture

Residents are invited to a Crime Avoidance & Awareness lecture on Thursday, Jan. 9, at 6 p.m. in the Ave Maria Master Association Community Room. Led by self-defense writer and firearms trainer Kevin Creighton, the session will cover strategies for personal safety and threat management.

### Embrace Life presentation

Join Ave Maria resident and photographer Patrick O'Flaherty for his inspiring wildlife photography presentations set to music and quotes. These free events take place at 7:30 p.m. in the AMMA meeting room on Jan. 21, Feb. 11, March 18 and April 15.

### New Homeowners Social and Orientation

New Ave Maria homeowners are invited to an informational event in the AMMA meeting room. The master association will discuss community living and local organizations. Dates: Jan. 23 and March 27, 5:30 p.m. gathering, 6 p.m. orientation.

### Thrifting Bus Tour Party

On Wednesday, Jan. 29, Thrifting Tours will host a thrift shopping trip to Punta Gorda, Sarasota and Bradenton for \$75 per person. Enjoy breakfast snacks, catered lunch, treats and drinks during a fun bus ride to the best thrift stores, complete with games and contests. Guests may bring their own beverages. For details and registration, visit [avemariamasterassociation.com](http://avemariamasterassociation.com).

### Family Fun First Fridays

Every first Friday of the month, free family-friendly events occur. On Feb. 7, the Oil Well Craft Beer location in the Park of Commerce will host live music by Viviana from 5 to 7 p.m., celebrating women's health and Valentine's Day. On March 7, a St. Patrick's celebration in the Town Center will feature DJ music at 4 p.m. and Irish Step Dancers at 6 p.m.

### Community Yard Sale

Join Ave Maria residents on Saturday, Feb. 22, from 8:30 a.m. to noon in North Park for a community event featuring gently used items for sale, services, DJ music, family-friendly activities, and food trucks. For booth reservations and more info, visit [avemariamasterassociation.com](http://avemariamasterassociation.com).

### Gold & Silver Roadshow

A special event with trusted gold and silver buyer David Kaz from DMK Metal will be held on Friday, March 7 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. He will evaluate and purchase items on-site at two locations: the Del Webb community and the Master Association, open to all residents.

### Spring Festival

Celebrate at Ave Maria Water Park on Saturday, April 12, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. during the Annual Easter Egg Dash and Bunny Hop. Enjoy bunny parades and egg hunts for all ages, including a special area for kids 3 and under. Free for members; entry fee for non-members.

### Coffee with a Twiss

This casual gathering with AMMA Executive Director Kim Twiss allows homeowners to ask questions and get updates on the master association and community news. Check the AMMA website calendar for dates and times and occasional guest speakers.

### Adult Games Group

Adults looking for a friendly game of cards (Skip-Bo, Sequence and others) or Mexican Train (dominoes) are welcome to join the group from 1 to 3 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays in the AMMA game room.

## OTHER RESIDENTS-ONLY EVENTS

### Ave Maria Veterans Association High School Senior Scholarship

The Ave Maria Veterans Association is accepting scholarship applications now for seniors enrolled in JROTC at Immokalee and Palmetto Ridge High School. Any senior who is a child or grandchild of an honorable discharged veteran who both resides in Ave Maria can apply. Scholarships will be awarded in May. Seniors should contact their school counselors and/or the JROTC Leadership. Scholarship applications are due no later than Tuesday, April 1. For detailed instructions and to apply, go to [avemariavets.org/scholarshipapplication](http://avemariavets.org/scholarshipapplication).

## SPORTS AND FITNESS (RESIDENTS ONLY)

### INDOOR AT THE AMMA COMMUNITY ROOM

#### Olfos Soccer Academy

The Soccer Academy offers skills training every Tuesday and Thursday from 3 to 8 p.m. Tournament-style games will take place on select Saturdays. For more details, contact [olfosportsacademy@gmail.com](mailto:olfosportsacademy@gmail.com) or call 305-244-2426.

#### NFL Flag & Under Armor Rise Flag Football

Ave Maria offers two exhilarating flag football leagues for youth athletes: NFL Flag Football, running on Saturday mornings until Feb. 22, and Under Armor Rise Flag Football, played on Friday nights until Feb. 28. For more information, visit [avemariayouthsports.org](http://avemariayouthsports.org) or call 305-409-8838. For Under Armor Rise, email [naples-northeast@uariseflag.com](mailto:naples-northeast@uariseflag.com).

#### Zumba Classes

Join instructor Genesis North for this upbeat and fun type of cardio exercise on Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. at the South Park Amphitheater. For more information, cost and updates, please contact Genesis North via her website at [genesiszumba.as.me](http://genesiszumba.as.me).

#### Ave Maria Home School Music Program

Attend the Ave Maria Homeschool Choirs & General Music program every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at South Park Pavilion No. 2. Open to grades K-12, the program is led by experienced music educators. For more info, visit [avemaria-homeschoolchoirs.com](http://avemaria-homeschoolchoirs.com) or email [HomeSchoolChoirs.Music@gmail.com](mailto:HomeSchoolChoirs.Music@gmail.com).

#### Men's pick-up soccer

Players ages 16 and older looking for a good workout and team camaraderie are welcome to join these resident-organized games at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays and Sundays on soccer field No. 2 in North Park.

#### Co-ed softball 55+

Join friends and neighbors for Sunday afternoon softball at South Park. The 2023 season dates are Feb. 5 and 19 and March 5 and 19. Games continue through April 2, 16 and 30 and end on May 7.

#### Bootcamp classes at South Park

These bi-weekly fitness classes at South

Park start at 9:15 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and 9 a.m. on Saturdays. For more information, call instructor Nick Leon at 786-436-3323.

#### Ave Maria Little League

The 2025 Spring Baseball Season is upon us. Registration is open, so get your kids registered. For more information, email [avemariabaseball@gmail.com](mailto:avemariabaseball@gmail.com) or visit the Ave Maria Little League website to process your registration at [avemarialittleleague.com](http://avemarialittleleague.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 our amenities as of the date this is written.

### Sound Bathing

Resident Andrea leads a soothing Sound Bathing class with crystal bowls at the Ave Maria Master Association on Jan. 28, Feb. 11 and 25, and March 11 and 25. Relax your body and calm your mind during this unique experience. For more information and to sign up, contact Andrea at 845-742-1525.

### Tai Chi

Experience a workout at 8 a.m. on Mondays in the AMMA events room. Winter classes may be in the South Park Amphitheater, weather permitting. For registration and updates, contact Myelin Vedel at [myvedel@gmail.com](mailto:myvedel@gmail.com) or 239-220-4181.

### Quest Martial Arts Academy classes

Led by Kenny Quintero, a 20-year veteran instructor, these martial arts classes are at 5 p.m. Mondays and 9:30 a.m. Saturdays will 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](http://questmartialartsacademy.com).

### Water exercise classes

The Ave Maria Water Park offers one-hour fitness classes for residents aged 13+ focused on cardio and strength training. Classes are on Monday to Thursday and Saturday from 8 to 9 a.m. in January and February, costing \$5 each or \$65 for 20 sessions. Equipment provided includes resistance gloves, noodles, pool buoys and barbells. For more information, call 239-658-5880 or email Kellie Powell at [kpowell@livunltd.com](mailto:kpowell@livunltd.com).

### Indoor Zumba fitness Tuesdays

Staying fit is pure joy at Zumba class, except every first Tuesday. The fun begins at 5 p.m. in the AMMA Events Room. Contact [vanezumba@gmail.com](mailto:vanezumba@gmail.com) for more information and to register.

### Krav Maga Self-Defense class

Krav Maga Self-Defense Lessons with Instructor Tomasz are held on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in the Master Association Community Room. Please call 415-910-2548 for more information and to register for this class.

### Swimming lessons

The Ave Maria Water Park offers an American Red Cross-approved swim program for kids, with eight 45-minute lessons for \$65. Classes are available for water babies (6 months to 3 years), preschoolers (3 to 5 years), and youth (6 to 12 years). Starting in March; call for February dates. Registration is in-person only. For details, call 239-658-5880 or email Kellie at [kpowell@livunltd.com](mailto:kpowell@livunltd.com). 🌟





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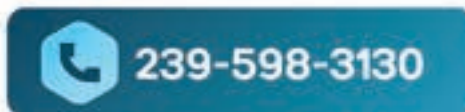


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