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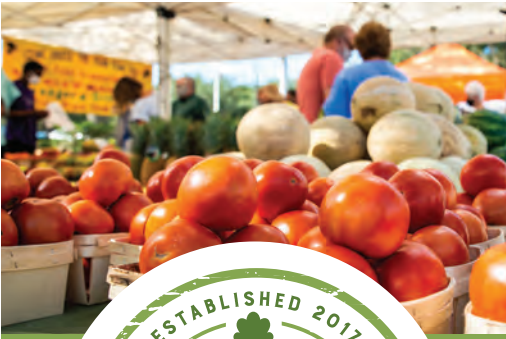
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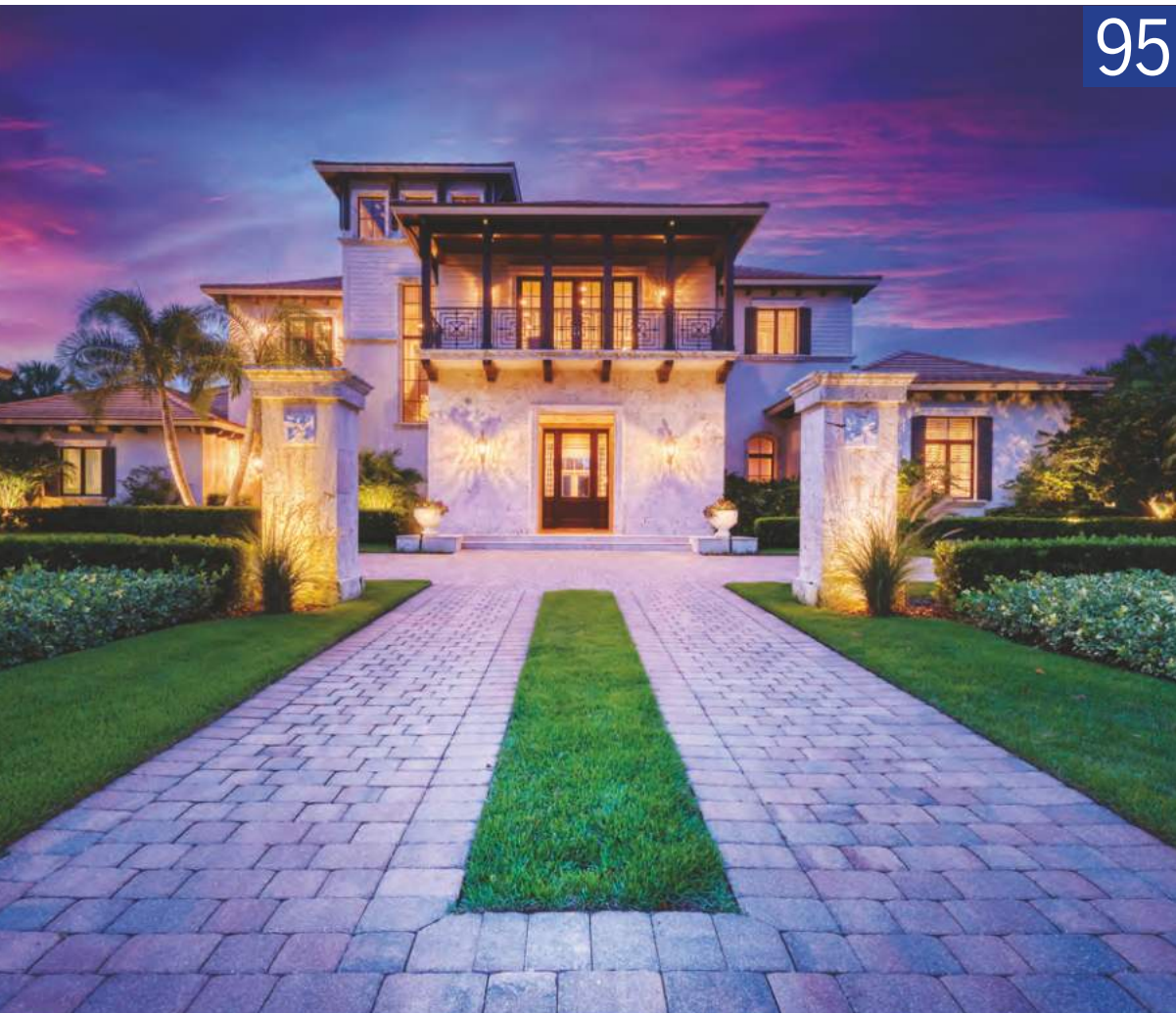
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SOME GIFTS ARE MEANT  
TO BE PLAYED WITH



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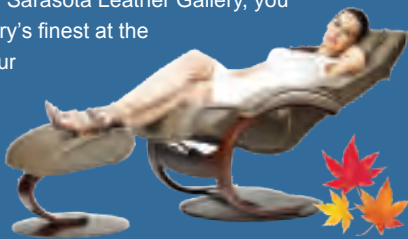


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# LWR LIFE

LAKEWOOD RANCH AREA'S COMMUNITY, NATURE, STYLE

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# *Time to pop a cork or two*



Courtesy photo



**I**t's hard to believe, but it's that time again. Thanksgiving comes up like a blur, and then it's on the swift Holiday Express — get-togethers and shopping and travel and hosting and family. Whew!

The holidays have a way of sneaking up on us. This year — between supply chain snarls, pent-up party demand and folks who haven't traveled much or at all in two years — has all the makings of a perfect holiday season storm.

If only there were some magic elixir that has the power to calm nerves, inspire smiles and bring general delight and jubilation wherever it goes. Is that a cork popping? Of course! Champagne! Or anything bubbly, for those well acquainted with the rules of that name.

Lest we forget, aside from the stress associated with it, the holiday season

is about celebration. And that is very much the spirit with which Managing Editor Su Byron approached this issue's feature on Champagne (Page 74).

Whether you're a neophile or an oenophile, we take you on a tour of bubbles led by some locals who know a thing or two about the subject. So get some knowledge, some tips and some recommendations on how best to add some fizz to your celebration.

If, however, the hustle and bustle of the season is too much, we get that, too. Since that fateful time in March 2020, many have turned to the outdoors to reconnect with nature and gain perspective. Margi Haas welcomes them, but as a longtime avid birder, she discovered the serenity of this activity long ago.

Contributor Heidi Kurpiela masterfully tells Haas' transition of going from handling big shots on Wall Street to handling binoculars far from any

street (Page 64).

So if you're in need of a moment of reprieve, keep in mind that all it might take is a moment in your backyard.

Last but certainly not least, contributor Gabriel Jiva tackles the great light debate. Look around any neighborhood, and it's clear that we are a community divided — on the question of whether holiday light displays should be all white or multicolored, that is.

Jiva admits that he's no Clark Griswold, but that doesn't stop him from coming out with a strong opinion. See whether you agree on Page 112.

And if you're not sure you're ready for any of this just yet, maybe just take it easy. Chill the Champagne for later, hop in the car, and admire your neighbors' decorations instead.

I'll cheers to that.

*Kat Hughes*  
Executive Editor

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# BUZZ

NEWS, HAPPENINGS AND PEOPLE

Creating a winter wonderland —  
right here in Florida. **PAGE 30**





# FOR STARTERS

BY LWR LIFE STAFF

## 1 MOVIN' ON UP

The long-anticipated move of The Market at Lakewood Ranch to its new home at Waterside Place was met with much excitement on Nov. 7.

Thousands of shoppers turned out for the inaugural event, many of them crowding the street from the moment it opened.

Nearly 80 vendors lined Lakefront

Drive offering everything from jams and jellies to freshly made Bavarian pretzels.

But, it's just the start for Waterside, which will be a new hub of activity for Lakewood Ranch. Ranch Night Wednesdays began that very same week, and the beach volleyball courts are also open for visitors. To quote a great movie, "If you build it, they will come," and they certainly did.



## 2 LIBRARY LOVERS REJOICE

After years of planning, design and budgeting, on Oct. 26, the Manatee County Commission gave the thumbs up for a new library to be developed in Lakewood Ranch.

The two-story, 50,000-square-foot library will be part of the development at the future Premier Park, on county-owned land north of Premier Sports Campus. The project, estimated to cost \$17.1 million, could break ground as soon as the end of January and is expected to be open in early 2024.

In addition to providing reading materials and programs, commissioners recognized the library's importance as a community center open to all. Plans call for an open meeting space as well as a rooftop terrace for events.

## 3 SPEAKING OF NEW ...

Living in Lakewood Ranch, you can't be a stranger to change. With growth comes lots of new things, and one of the latest in the works is a new charter school slated for the CORE development in the vicinity of State Road 70 and Lakewood Ranch Boulevard.

The 265-acre development has always been earmarked for health care, life sciences and education opportunities, and that continues to take shape

with the announcement of its latest tenant: a K-12 charter school being developed by Fort Lauderdale-based Charter Schools USA.

The school is slated to open in time for the 2022 school year with kindergarten through sixth grade. It then plans to phase in new grades over time, with the campus being fully built out by fall 2025.

Charter schools receive public funding and are part of the Manatee County School District, which means they're

open to all children and are free to attend. They are usually approved to provide different learning opportunities, and in this case, the school will bring its WISH concept to education: a focus on Wellness, Science, Innovation and Health.

To help fulfill this mission and integrate with existing CORE tenants, the school will partner with the Brain Health Initiative, a nonprofit that is pioneering cutting edge research in brain wellness.

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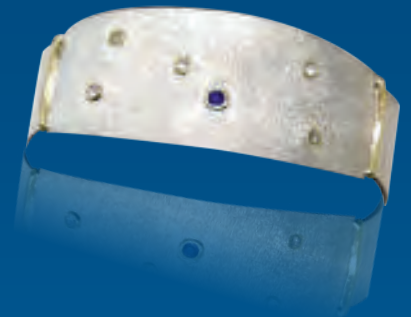


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Courtesy photos

Lighted displays of crew boats sit on the water at Nathan Benderson Park as part of the holiday light festivities.

# Dazzling Displays

The 10th anniversary of Holiday Festival of Lights illuminates UTC and beyond with lighted Christmas trees, fireworks, Santa parades and events for the whole family to enjoy.

BY ABBY WEINGARTEN

Millions of lights stretching over 100 miles, 500 acres and 44 nights. This dazzling Holiday Festival of Lights illuminates the University Town Center area each year. And this season, the 10th anniversary of the event, the display does not intend to disappoint.

"While it may not be feasible to light every acre of the UTC area, if you visit,

you won't be able to go anywhere without seeing holiday lights," says Cliff McHenry, the director of property management for Benderson Development, which helped pioneer the event in 2011.

A decade ago, at its inception, the lighting program only included some rental displays and three crew teams, McHenry says. Since then, it has burgeoned into a yearlong undertaking.

"Planning for this event is virtually year-round. We're not working on this 365 days a year, but it's probably at least 350," says McHenry, who has been with Benderson, one of the largest privately owned real estate development companies in the country, for 14 years. "It is a really great effort by a lot of folks on the Benderson team."

In total, about 60 people from Benderson — in marketing, property management, maintenance, design, construction and beyond — produce the display annually, along with help from outside vendors.

"We try to start around the first or second week of September, working on the light installations in areas where the lights wouldn't be visible to visitors," McHenry says. "Then, almost immediately after Halloween, we really focus on all the visual elements that are such a big part of the show."

Those elements include lighted Christmas trees, presents, Santas and crew boats by the water (to represent Nathan Benderson Park, which is a premier facility for rowing teams and worldwide championships).

"It's a lot of work, and a lot of people are dedicated to making this a success," McHenry says. "We just want to make the holidays a little brighter."

Handling the setup alone requires huge amounts of labor; the lighting displays currently take up about 20,000 square feet of storage space. And as the need for storage space grows, so

*Continued on Page 32*

# LUMA MD



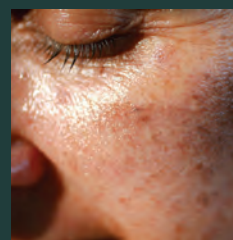
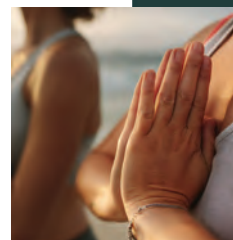
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does the menu of lighting displays. The events have consistently been adapted to fit the times.

"It was certainly a challenge last year," McHenry says. "One of the things we pivoted to because of COVID concerns was we created a choreographed, animated light show that gave people the opportunity to enjoy the holiday lights" while allowing them the flexibility to stay in their cars or be outside and socially distanced.

The event lifted spectators' spirits in the middle of the pandemic.

"We got a lot of overwhelmingly positive feedback last year given the pandemic and people not being able to visit with their families around the holidays," McHenry says. "People were happy that we didn't cancel the festivities. We saw people FaceTiming their families and showing them the lights, and it was pretty special."

Some of the other attractions McHenry and his team have included in the displays over the years have been holiday outdoor movies, fireworks and even sand sculptures (such as a 22-ton sand snowman that sat near the traffic light by Target on University Parkway and stayed up — with a sealed coating — for the entire season).

There was an ugly sweater Christmas crawl on "Ugly Sweater Alley," where spectators could don the sweaters and take pictures with their friends. There was a Nik Wallenda-themed lighted tightrope walker. There was also a Mote-inspired display with hanging blue lights and floating sea turtles.

So what's new to see this year? It was still a bit of a secret at press time, but McHenry did share some details.

The Holiday Festival of Lights is just one part of the overall Holidays at UTC event, for which nightly light shows kick off Nov. 20 with Santa's Grand Arrival Parade and Fireworks Spectacular and runs through Jan. 2.

Starting Thanksgiving weekend, there will be a free outdoor holiday movie series every Friday and Saturday night at 7 p.m., and fireworks on Saturdays at 9 p.m. There will also be horse-drawn carriage rides from 6-10 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.

The last scheduled day for the holiday light show is Jan. 3, and the displays will be removed a week af-



**Above:** Holiday light displays cover trees, buildings and more throughout the UTC shopping district.

**Below:** Horse-drawn carriage rides are available Thursdays through Sundays.

“

*People have told me that it was like being at Disney, and I take that as a high compliment. Those types of things make the long hours and days worthwhile. I think the personal fulfillment is building on a tradition and seeing the joy it brings to so many people.”*

— CLIFF MCHENRY, DIRECTOR OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT, BENDERSON DEVELOPMENT



ter that, so visitors should be sure to ogle as much as possible before then. McHenry looks forward to seeing the visitors' responses to this year's surprises — his favorite part, he says.

"People have told me that it was like being at Disney, and I take that as a high compliment," McHenry says. "Those types of things make the long hours and days worthwhile. I think the personal fulfillment is building on a tradition and seeing the joy it brings to so many people."

For more information on the Holiday Festival of Lights, visit [UTCSarasota.com](http://UTCSarasota.com).

# Make Room For Life



## Micah Makes Room for Her Students

At age 26, Micah knew she was too young to give up on the life she wanted. And with help from the Sarasota Memorial Bariatric and Metabolic Health Center, she didn't have to. Now Micah has more enthusiasm for the hobbies she loves and looks forward to walking and playing with her dog, Luna, each day. All the newfound energy also gives this Booker High Teacher of the Year the boost she needs to be the best teacher she can be for her students.



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Nat Kaemmerer

Dawn Morrison's restaurant Power Meals outgrew its Palmetto space within months of opening. The Lakewood Ranch location will be the main kitchen for her comfort-inspired paleo dishes.

# What's Cooking on Main?

Two new restaurants are opening on Lakewood Ranch Main Street and one, Main Street Trattoria, is refreshing its menu with an Argentinian twist.

BY NAT KAEMMERER

Two new restaurants are opening on Lakewood Ranch Main Street — and an old favorite, Main Street Trattoria, has changed management — and added new flavors. Here's what's on the menu.

## POWER MEALS

Dawn Morrison opened her paleo-inspired Power Meals in Palmetto in 2018 but soon outgrew the space.

"We've been looking for the right home for our second location for a couple of years and, around this time last year, started looking to expand," she says. Morrison adds that the Main Street location will become Power Meals' main kitchen while the Palmetto location will serve as the bakery for concocting popular desserts, including paleo chocolate chip cookies, paleo double-chocolate muffins and vegan snickerdoodles. Morrison's menus are based on the paleo diet but don't sacrifice flavor for the health factor. Some of her most popular dishes include almond-crusted chicken tenders served with made-in-house ranch dressing, paleo pot pie, and paleo chicken and

waffles. She focuses on home-cooked comfort food made healthier.

"You do not have to give up that comfort food," Morrison says. "It's not a bland chicken, broccoli and rice diet. We make it fun."

Morrison plans to host a grand opening; details are still to come but can be found on the Power Meals Facebook page. *8141 Lakewood Main St., N24; MyPowerMeals.com; 941-721-3082.*

## REMY'S ON MAIN

Remy's on Main is family friendly and offers breakfast, lunch and dinner. The owners, Larry and Barb Remington, come from Michigan, where they franchised their restaurant, Ram's Horn. They've been in the restaurant industry for 42 years and are taking their talents — and their family — to Lakewood Ranch.

"Our children came down, and we're all involved," Larry says.

What's on the menu? The focus is traditional, all-American "stick-to-your-ribs" fare — with a Korean twist. Barb has enhanced the menu with Korean

*Continued on Page 36*





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Continued from Page 34

flavors and specials, including bibimbap, a classic Korean dish of rice with mixed vegetables and meats. Look for Korean touches at breakfast too, including fluffy Korean pancakes with kimchi and even a Korean-inspired eggs Benedict. (Fear not: The breakfast menu also includes all the potato hash, bacon, sausages and eggs you can eat.) Dig into hearty burgers and sandwiches for lunch and dinner — this is a menu that will please kids and adults alike.

The Remingtons say they look forward to hanging out in the front of house to greet and meet customers.

“We love being out here with everyone in the public,” Larry says. “We find our comfort zone at the front of the restaurant.” He adds that they faced construction delays that pushed back their original opening date but hope to open in early December. *8138 Lakewood Main St.; 941-355-9391.*

## MAIN STREET TRATTORIA

Main Street Trattoria isn't new to Lakewood Ranch, but Sergio Di Sarro is new to Main Street Trattoria. He purchased the restaurant from Gary Fennessy and officially opened at the end of September. Di Sarro is keeping the restaurant's beloved Italian menu and ambiance but adding a few Argentinian classics.

There are more steak and seafood dishes on the menu than before, including an Argentinian rib-eye steak topped with homemade chimichurri. Other popular dishes include the provoleta, which is melted provolone cheese with fresh basil and tomato; the spicy rigatoni calabrese; and the vegetarian ravioli giardino. Di Sarro will change the menu up every now and then — with feedback from customers.

“We'll still be changing the menu once in a while, but why change something if they like it?” he says.

When he bought the restaurant, Di Sarro renovated the bathrooms and added a new bar. He soon welcomed regulars, including the “first corner crew” who come in early to grab the first corner of the bar. There's live music and a pet patio to attract people strolling by. With former customers coming back and new patrons stopping in, Di Sarro says he's felt supported and welcomed. *8131 Lakewood Main St.; MSTrattoria.com; 941-210-4101.*



Photos by Nat Kaemmerer

Barb and Larry Remington are making Remy's on Main fun for the whole family with a menu of comfort food and Korean dishes.



Sergio Di Sarro reopened Trattoria on Main as an Italian-Argentinian fusion restaurant and soon had diners coming in to try the food and wish him well. Food is one of Di Sarro's passions, and he is a third-generation restaurateur.

## MUSIC ON MAIN IS BACK!

After 18 months on ice, Music on Main is back. Every first Friday of the month, Lakewood Main Street turns into a block party with food trucks, drinks vendors and booths from local sponsors. A kids zone from Grace Community Church will be there, and dogs on short leashes are welcome. Live music brings Main Street alive from 6-9 p.m. every first Friday. Call 941-907-9243 for information.

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Courtesy photo

More townhome and single-family home rentals are coming to Lakewood Ranch, giving residents more housing flexibility.

# Build-to-Rent Model Offers New Lifestyle Options

This hot new trend puts the American dream in the reach of renters.

BY LOUIS LLOVIO

After flying under the radar for years, there's a segment of the homebuilding industry that's exploding nationwide and across the state. And nowhere is that more evident than in Lakewood Ranch.

It's a concept called build-to-rent. These are housing developments built exclusively for renters that give them what builders say are the benefits of apartment complexes, along with the

advantages — and comforts — of having a house.

There are four of these communities in Lakewood Ranch right now; two are open, and two are under construction. Another three are in the pipeline.

"This is one of the hottest real estate products out right now," says Laura Cole, the senior vice president of LWR Communities. "It's extremely well capitalized, and there are a lot of people out there trying to find deals not only in our region but within master-planned communities like ours."

"We get — and I'm not exaggerating — two to three calls or emails a week (from developers) seeing if there's

space down here."

The build-to-rent concept has been around for years, starting mostly out west in Arizona. The idea behind it, proponents say, is to capture that portion of the market of people who either can't purchase a home right now or don't want to.

In many cases, these are younger families who can't come up with large down payments to buy a home. Build-to-rent communities allow them to move to suburban areas that offer amenities better suited for working families raising kids. Another demo-

*Continued on Page 40*

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graphic is older adults who have sold their longtime residences and don't want to deal with the hassles and costs that can be associated with homeownership. Finally, there are people who have sold their home and want to rent for a year or two as they decide where they want to live — without sacrificing the benefits associated with suburban living. Lakewood Ranch fits all those bills, which is what makes it an attractive option for developers.

"We're a city, essentially, and we look at ways to diversify our housing choices to meet the market," Cole says. "For some people, that means they want to buy new homes. For some people, that means they want to buy resale homes. In the past, if you were a renter by choice, your only alternative was an apartment."

According to a market analysis from Walker & Dunlop, a commercial real estate finance firm that has a strong build-to-rent division, growth in the segment is expected to outpace construction in apartments, office, retail, storage and hospitality by 2022. And the firm believes that moving forward, 5%-10% of new homes built will be for rent.

At Lakewood Ranch, 17% of the community's residential mix is made up of rental units. Of that, 20% are build-to-rent. Between existing units and those currently under construction, 659 homes in Lakewood Ranch are built-to-own. Another 802 are in the pipeline.

"It's a magnet for money right now," says Brad Hunter, of Hunter Economics, who has studied and written about housing for 35 years. "There's so much emphasis right now on build-to-rent single-family and build-to-rent townhomes. It's a safe bet."

Driving the demand, in large part, is the rising price of homes. Hunter says that with more and more people driven out of the home buying market, the demand for rentals, especially for young families, is overpacing supply. Many of these families have good incomes and are looking to get a piece of the suburban life but aren't willing to go through the process of buying.

"They'd rather just go ahead and get into the living situation and the lifestyle this way," Hunter says. "They want a space for a home office. They want to have a place in the suburbs

“

*We look at ways to diversify our housing choices to meet the market. For some people, that means they want to buy new homes. For some people, that means they want to buy resale homes. In the past, if you were a renter by choice, your only alternative was an apartment.*

— LAURA COLE, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF LWR COMMUNITIES

### **BUILD-TO-RENTS IN LAKEWOOD RANCH**

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- One and two bedrooms

#### **Botanic Urban Townhomes at Waterside Place**

- 22 units
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#### **Artesia**

- 215 units
- Planned opening in December 2021

#### **Antigua**

- 192 units
- Opening in March 2022

where kids can play and go to a good school. All of that is driving this industry to the stratosphere."

The mix of build-to-rent communities in Lakewood Ranch represents the type of developments builders are putting up across the country.

And, not surprisingly, they mirror what traditional developers build in style and availability of amenities. There's the 22-unit Botanic Townhomes at Waterside Place Town Center. Then there's the 230-unit Estia at Lakewood Ranch, the first Lakewood Ranch entrants into the market, which offer "horizontal apartments." These



Courtesy photo

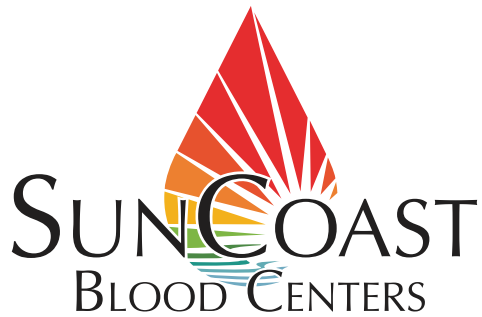
The Estia rental community opened in fall 2020.

are one- and two-bedroom units with a small patio and backyard.

And coming early next year is Antigua, a development of 192 two-, three- and four-bedroom single-family homes with extensive amenities packages and integrated garages. These are being built by Arizona developers BBLiving, one of the industry pioneers, and homebuilder Toll Brothers.

Each offers on-site management and maintenance.

The bottom line is that build-to-rent as a concept doesn't cater to a particular socioeconomic or age demographic but offers options for a broad range of the populace. And the only difference between these and homes built in more traditional developments is who the monthly payment goes to. Oh, and they also have all the benefits of being able to call someone when the dishwasher is on the fritz and getting it fixed without spending more money.



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A man with dark curly hair, wearing a light blue t-shirt, grey pants, glasses, and a grey face mask, is working in a clothing store. He is holding a black hanger and looking down at it. In the background, there are racks of clothes and shelves with various items. The store has a warm, yellowish lighting.

# *PULSE*

THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

In the past, severely disabled individuals were pushed to the side. The Haven makes sure they feel right at home.

**PAGE 48**





Photos by Lori Sax

Yvonne Martin, Rob Commissar, Donna Downes and Nancy Sykes

# Game Changers

Armed with spreadsheets, data and plenty of empathy, Nancy Sykes and her fiercely dedicated team at Esplanade Gives Back offer critical help to the surrounding community.

BY NAT KAEMMERER

Without the organizational skills of Nancy Sykes, Esplanade Gives Back might just be a discombobulated dream of most of the 1,250 households in the Lakewood Ranch community.

Instead, thanks to Sykes' spreadsheets, data, decision trees and meetings with the community's board and Lifestyle Group, it's a concerted effort that has made a good deal of commu-

nity impact in the past year.

"It's not about me," Sykes says. "I'm just lucky enough to lead a small organization that gives back. We live in paradise, and we're anxious to give back to others because we know how lucky we are."

Esplanade Gives Back, of which Sykes is the leader, is the organized philanthropic arm of the Esplanade

*Continued on Page 46*





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*Continued from Page 44*

Golf and Country Club community, and even though it's only been around for about a year, the group has already led a diaper drive and hurricane preparedness drive. During the height of the pandemic in 2020, it donated more than 900 meals to Lakewood Ranch Medical Center employees. The group even became the largest local contributor to Habitat for Humanity, thanks to an opportunistic endeavor in which Esplanade Gives Back members answered surveys en masse. Each product review consisted of three to five questions and, once completed, generated \$2 for a Habitat for Humanity project that built a home for a local veteran. In total, Esplanade Gives Back members contributed \$14,000 through the survey.

"We just have great neighbors," Sykes says. "When you make the call and make it make sense, they respond. The whole point of this is you can't do just random (things) here and there. It has to be organized because it's about focus, organization and execution."

Sykes is the one with the organization. There are other community philanthropy efforts in Esplanade — as she's quick to say, there's much more to Esplanade than what she does — including a golf tournament benefiting the local chapter of the Special Olympics. That, however, was just organized among that one street in the community, though there are other streets that organize similar events. Esplanade Gives Back is the organizer of the larger community efforts.

"So that's the kind of neighborhood we're in," Sykes says. "I just try to do some of the bigger things that get everyone together, right around the community."

Sykes organizes a literal ton for Esplanade Gives Back. During its hurricane preparedness drive, the club brought in more than 2,000 pounds of canned food, flashlights, manual can openers, paper products and other items that people might not grab until it's too late. She, the Esplanade board and the Lifestyle Group organize their schedule and generally focus on one interest quarterly.

Two of the keywords that Sykes and the strategy team keep in mind when choosing organizations to support are "important" and "impactful." Esplanade

Gives Back focuses specifically on Manatee County, and Sykes wants to focus efforts to make the strongest effect on the many needs in the area. She tries to coordinate with other local philanthropic organizations to make sure they're not doubling up on efforts.

"We get everybody's priorities, and we think about what's most important to our community and impactful to the broader community," Sykes says. "We think about what we can get 2,000 people to get their heads around and then what can it do for the broader community."

The idea of Esplanade Gives Back had been brewing for a while. There are more than 35 neighborhood organizations in the Esplanade community. The board of the Esplanade Lakewood Ranch community is at the top, followed by groups including the Lifestyle Group and, finally, subgroups, like Esplanade Gives Back. The Lifestyle Group had been organizing social events, including Friday Music on the Green and other get-togethers, and wanted to do something for the community around the neighborhood.

During the pandemic, that bubbling desire to help burst. Sykes says she feels lucky to have the life she and her husband have and wanted to give back in her community. When the pandemic started, she and her neighbors had the time and opportunity. The Lifestyle Group took the idea to the board and got started.

"Why not do something for others?" Sykes says.

Sykes, who describes herself as data- and planning-oriented, is a natural choice to head up this altruistic outfit. She is a mechanical engineer by education, worked with GE for 20 years and was a senior HR leader who led countless meetings throughout her career. Esplanade Gives Back needs her spreadsheets. She got involved with volunteerism through United Way and does readings at local schools.

"As I was growing up, my family had nothing, and we had lots of people that helped us, and I had people along the way who have always helped me, whether it be financial, mental or physical," Sykes says. "I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't have people helping and supporting me. If I'm not working now, I can do that for others."

To finish out 2021, Esplanade Gives Back will do another round of lunches



at the Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, this time with a Thanksgiving menu around the holiday.

Sykes is also planning a volunteer fair with representatives from dozens of Manatee County organizations that work with the arts, schools, veterans and a host of other interests, including Habitat for Humanity, United Way and Meals on Wheels Plus. The idea is that this will make it easy for attendees to choose who they want to support with their time. Sykes thinks it's important that Esplanade Gives Back help facilitate even more community involvement.

"I'm just lucky enough to be able to coordinate, but it's all of our neighbors who make it work and make it happen," Sykes says.

"It's not about me. I'm just lucky enough to lead a small organization that gives back. We live in paradise, and we're anxious to give back to others because we know how lucky we are."

—Nancy Sykes



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*charity snapshot*

# Homes With Heart



Photos by Heidi Kurpiela

**Above:** Jim Kaspar sorts hangers for Bealls. Haven residents and day clients can earn a paycheck without having to leave the DeSoto Road campus. **Inset:** Photo collage inside the Mary Jane House. **Below:** Marlene's House is one of six single-family homes on The Haven's 32-acre campus.



The Haven has long provided residential services, full-time care, jobs and more for people with severe disabilities. By the time 2022 dawns, the organization plans to break ground on two new group homes.

BY ERIC SNIDER

**E**lizabeth, a vivacious woman with an intellectual disability, has lived at The Haven for 54 of her 64 years. She's fortunate, to put it mildly.

The facility, nestled on 32 bucolic acres a mile west of University Town Center, has provided a wide range of programs for people with disabilities since it opened as a school for developmentally disabled children in 1954. Elizabeth attended The Haven's preschool, which was located in a building at Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport. She then became part of the first group of residents at the Children's Haven, living in a dormitory-style environment. There, she received attention, full-time care and love, as well as the opportunity to interact with her peers and the outside world.

It could have been far different. Most developmentally disabled kids of Elizabeth's generation were either shamefully hidden away in parents' homes or, worse, warehoused in institutions amid often squalid conditions with indifferent or outright cruel staff members. Instead, Elizabeth lives with seven others — she has her own room

*Continued on Page 50*



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— in Harmony House, one of six group homes on The Haven's campus. The first was built in 1984, and two more are coming in the next year or so.

The homes are staffed around the clock by professionals, but residents live together as a quasi-family — cooking, cleaning, organizing, socializing, having fun, having (and solving) disputes. They also have jobs, be it out in the community or in one of the micro-businesses run on campus. The 49 current Haven residents range in age from 21 to 72. They have physical and intellectual disabilities that include Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, spina bifida and cerebral palsy — many with multiple conditions. Some get around in wheelchairs.

Elizabeth, she's thriving. "She certainly blossomed by living here," says Brad Jones, The Haven's president and CEO. "She works in our kitchen, is part of our janitorial crew and takes part in the Special Olympics. She gets out and about — one of our residents who's a kind of celebrity in the community."

The Haven is set to break ground on two new homes late this year, each of them 5,800 square feet at a cost of \$1.1 million. (Four donors got together and covered the entire amount.) Construction should be completed in about nine months, Jones says, making room for 16 more full-time residents. The waitlist, as of mid-September, was 155.

One of the new buildings will be called Brad's Place, named after Jones, who has run The Haven for 11 years. The home will be specially designed and earmarked for senior residents. Over the years, Jones has stood by as older residents had to move into nursing homes because The Haven could no longer provide the necessary care. The devastation it causes among the residents and their families, "saddens me and sort of pisses me off," he says. "One of the new houses will be licensed for a specialized program that provides a high level of care — say, for someone who has advanced dementia — that allows our residents to age in place. Brad's Place will be the last stop."

A residence like Brad's Place is all the more necessary because people with severe disabilities are simply living longer, in part because they are no longer being shunned or locked away. Jones and staffers have taken large



groups of residents on trips to San Antonio and the mountains of Tennessee.

Living cooperatively in a group setting contributes significantly to a developmentally disabled person's quality of life. One of the homes at The Haven includes only men, another only women, and four are mixed-gender. Both of the new homes will include men and women. "We've found over time that the coed model works better," Jones says.

Why? "There's less drama," he says. "When they interact with the opposite sex, they tend to manage disagreements or issues better."

It's not uncommon for romantic relationships to bloom among The Haven's adult live-ins. "The women will meet with the nurse, the guys will meet with me, and we talk about the situation, safety and other issues," Jones explains. "Most of the time, it's not too intimate, more holding hands and hugging. It's a big deal for them.

Quite a few of them have had the same boyfriend or girlfriend for 10 years or more. They're like sweet friendships."

Many of the relationships end, of course, and that has found Jones consoling men with broken hearts. "Usually, after a day, they're over it," he says. "They have an ice cream and start talking about this other girl they like. It's onto the next."

Residents at The Haven enjoy a quality of life that's superior to most other residential environments for the severely disabled, and staff members find that working there has benefits that go beyond a career or a paycheck.

"The people in our care are happy," says Alison Thomas, The Haven's chief operating officer. "They have this hope and optimism. You can be having the worst day in the world, and when you show up here, it all tends to go away. These guys are just happy, even though they've been dealt a pretty crappy hand. It rubs off on you."

Brad Jones, president and CEO; Carol Jones, director of residential services; and Alison Thomas, CEO, stand outside The Haven's Mary Jane House.



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# calendar winter 2021

## DECEMBER

### DEC. 1

#### PARADE OF LIGHT

Starting at 6 p.m. from the parking lot of the Chabad of Bradenton and Lakewood Ranch, 5712 Lorraine Road, Bradenton, Chanukah celebrations continue with a Parade of Light. A limited supply of optional car menorahs is available. The parade will include community menorah lighting stops and Chanukah swag. Car registration for the parade is available online.

■ Visit [ChabadOfBradenton.com](http://ChabadOfBradenton.com).

#### RANCH NITE WEDNESDAYS

This midweek community event features food trucks, cornhole, live music and cocktails from Good Liquid Brewing & Scratch Kitchen. Ranch Nite continues every Wednesday through May from 6-9 p.m. at Waterside Place, 1561 Lakefront Drive, Sarasota.

■ Visit [MyLWR.com](http://MyLWR.com).

### DEC. 2

#### CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Celebrate classic cars in this show the first Wednesday of each month, from 5-8 p.m. at Lakewood Ranch Main Street. Bring your car, truck or anything on wheels. Cost is \$10 to enter a vehicle, but attending as a spectator is free.

■ Visit [CollectorCarsTV.com](http://CollectorCarsTV.com).

#### HOLIDAYS AROUND THE RANCH

Watch Santa Claus make his grand entrance on a horse-drawn carriage and the lighting of the holiday tree at Main Street Lakewood Ranch. From 6:30-8:30 p.m., listen to carolers, sip hot cocoa and eggnog from street vendors, and enjoy other holiday activities. Event continues Dec. 8 and 16.

■ Visit [LakewoodRanch.com](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

### DEC. 3

#### MUSIC ON MAIN

This monthly event returns on Lakewood Ranch's Main Street from 6-9 p.m. Enjoy a free concert by Midnight Mama, food vendors, beer trucks and kids' activities. Proceeds will benefit Lakewood Ranch Community Fund.

■ Call 941-907-9243.



### DEC. 4

#### JINGLE AND JOG 5K AND 1-MILE RUN/WALK

Participants have the option of a 5K or 1-mile run/walk to benefit The Haven, which supports adults and children with disabilities. Registration starts at 7 a.m., and the run starts at 8 a.m. at The Haven, 4405 DeSoto Road, Sarasota. Cost is \$35 for adults, \$15 for children. All registrants will receive a T-shirt, a runner's bag and refreshments.

■ Visit [TheHavenSRQ.org](http://TheHavenSRQ.org).

#### YOGA IN THE PARK

Begins at 9 a.m. at Bob Gardner Park, 2710 White Eagle Blvd., Lakewood Ranch. The public is invited to participate in a free yoga workout at Bob Gardner Park that will emphasize sound meditation. All ages and levels are welcome.

■ Visit [LakewoodRanch.com](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

#### HOLIDAY GIFT MARKETS AT UTC

Shop local for your friends and family this holiday season. More than 100

local businesses will be open from 1-9 p.m. in the parking lot at The Mall at University Town Center Drive, 140 University Town Center, Sarasota. Event continues Dec. 5, 11 and 12. Sunday hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

■ Call 727-674-1464.

#### SHOEBOX RECEPTION

Drop in from 4-6 p.m. to donate money or decorated shoeboxes filled with items for seniors supported by Meals on Wheels Plus of Manatee. Collections will be taken at the Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota Elks Lodge, 4602 Lena Road, Bradenton.

■ Visit [MealsOnWheelsPlus.org](http://MealsOnWheelsPlus.org).

### DEC. 5

#### THE MARKET AT LAKEWOOD RANCH

The Market at Lakewood Ranch features fresh produce, baked goods, pastas and more, along with ready-to-eat foods like empanadas, bagels, donuts, barbecue and coffee from local vendors. Hours are 10 a.m. to

Trevon Redmond, Markesha Hardin, April Johnson and Makaela Redmond, who attended the 2019 Holidays Around the Ranch, say wearing holiday sweaters is a tradition.

*Continued on Page 54*

# Is your child misbehaving?

Nicole Theiler, LMHC, child behavior expert, may be able to help.

## ABOUT:

- Specialist in behavioral therapy for young children, adolescents, teens, and families
- Identifies signs of anxiety and addresses in age-appropriate language.
- Uses play-based therapy, allowing your child to interact in their typical setting while being observed.
- Focuses on teaching children to communicate their feelings, react to struggles, and practice better behavior.
- Family-friendly environment, allowing you to be involved in your child's progress.
- 15+ years of experience.



My name is  
**Nicole Theiler,**  
I go by **Niki.**

I am a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC) at The Blend Institute. Kim and Tim Blend, my mother and father, opened The Blend Institute over ten years ago. Since then, I have watched their practice evolve and serve a much greater purpose than initially intended. As the behavioral health portion of their practice has grown immensely, my parents invited me to join their team and serve the younger population in the area.

My specialties include treating anxiety, OCD, ADHD, ODD, and other behavioral concerns. I have extensive experience treating children and teens. Parent-Child Interaction Therapy is an approach that repairs the relationship between the child and parents, while providing the parent with consistent, predictable discipline and structure. Children thrive on routine and predictability and PCIT is proven to help the parent and child achieve that.

During my years as a social worker, over 10 years ago, I realized how difficult it is to find a therapist that genuinely wants to work with and help children of all ages and backgrounds, especially children with daily challenges and disabilities. The greatest part of treating children is watching their faces when lessons and skills you have taught them finally click. My main goal is to help children feel confident and happier.

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## What to expect:

My first goal is to make your child as comfortable as possible. Having age-appropriate toys and therapeutic activities helps your child feel safe and more engaged in their treatment. What has helped me get the best results with my patients is not only being comforting and supportive, but also challenging them and observing their response. We will work as a team to get positive results in your child's behavior.



**Niki Theiler, LMHC**

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*Continued from Page 52*

2 p.m. at its new location, Waterside Place in Lakewood Ranch. Continues every Sunday.

■ Visit [TheMarketLWR.com](http://TheMarketLWR.com).

#### DEC. 9

##### LWR 101: RESIDENT ORIENTATION

This event introduces you to Lakewood Ranch's history, clubs, governance and other features of the community. It will be held virtually on the Lakewood Ranch Community Activities Facebook page from 6-6:30 p.m. Continues Jan. 13 and Feb. 10.

■ Visit [MyLWR.com](http://MyLWR.com).

#### DEC. 11

##### BREAKFAST WITH SANTA AT GROVE

Indulge in a breakfast buffet with St. Nicholas from 8:30-10:30 a.m. at Grove, 10670 Boardwalk Loop, Lakewood Ranch. Snap photos with Santa, and get creative at the arts and crafts table.

■ Call 941-893-4321.

#### COMMUNITY NATURE WALK

Join Lakewood Ranch Ambassador Greg Spring for a 2-mile, one-hour nature walk on some of the trails in Lakewood Ranch. The walks start at 8 a.m. at the pavilion at Greenbrook Adventure Park, 13010 Adventure Place, Lakewood Ranch. Continues Jan. 8 and Feb. 12.

■ Visit [LakewoodRanch.com](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

#### DEC. 12

##### BARRE IN THE PARK

Begins at 9 a.m. at Waterside Place, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Lakewood Ranch. The public is invited to participate in a free barre workout hosted by Barre3 at Waterside Place. Bring your own mat and water bottle.

■ Visit [LakewoodRanch.com](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

#### LUNCH WITH SANTA AT THE TRATTORIA

Enjoy lunch with Santa from 1-3 p.m. at Main Street Trattoria, 8131 Lakewood Main St., Lakewood Ranch.

■ Call 941-907-1518.

#### DEC. 15

##### SUNCOAST BLOOD CENTERS BLOOD DRIVE

From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, 8330 Lakewood Ranch Blvd., Lakewood Ranch,

Suncoast Blood Centers is holding a blood drive. Donors will receive a free T-shirt, and all blood donations will be screened for COVID-19 antibodies.

■ Visit [LakewoodRanchMedicalCenter.com](http://LakewoodRanchMedicalCenter.com).

#### DEC. 17

##### JINGLE 5K

Move your feet to the jingling beat for this festive jingle bell run. The 10th annual race begins at 7 p.m. at Lakewood Ranch Main Street. The children's Santa dashes begin at 6, and the walk begins at 7:10. All runners receive jingle bells and laces before the race and afterward a medal. The run/walk costs \$35 or \$40 starting Dec. 6; the kids race costs \$15; the virtual 5K option costs \$40. The race benefits Lakewood Ranch Medical Center Foundation and Health Careers' Scholarship Program.

■ Visit [TheJingle5K.org](http://TheJingle5K.org).

#### DEC. 18

##### BIKE RIDE

Lakewood Ranch Ambassador Greg Spring leads a 10-mile, one-hour bike ride through Lakewood Ranch. Participants will meet at the fountain at 8 a.m. at Lakewood Ranch Main Street. Continues Jan. 15 and Feb. 19.

■ Visit [LakewoodRanch.com](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

#### SUNCOAST BLOOD CENTERS MOBILE BLOOD DRIVE

From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Grove, 10670 Boardwalk Loop, Lakewood Ranch, Suncoast Blood Centers holds a blood drive. Donors will receive a \$10 Grove gift card, a 10% discount on a meal that day and a free wellness checkup that includes blood pressure, temperature, iron count, pulse and cholesterol screening. All blood donations will be screened for COVID-19 antibodies.

■ Visit [SunCoastBlood.org](http://SunCoastBlood.org).

#### CHRISTMAS GLOW RUN 5K

Nathan Benderson Park will be decked out in holiday spirit for this glow-in-the-dark run. Participants receive a tank or tech tee and a finish medal with entry. Race begins at 6 p.m. at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Cost is \$45 in advance or \$48 on race day. Parking costs \$5 cash.

■ Visit [RunEliteEvents.com/sarasota-christmas-glow-run-5k.html](http://RunEliteEvents.com/sarasota-christmas-glow-run-5k.html).



#### LUNCH WITH SANTA AT MCGRATH'S

Join McGrath's Irish Ale House & Restaurant for lunch with Santa from noon to 3 p.m. at the restaurant, 8110 Lakewood Main St., Lakewood Ranch.

■ Visit [McGrathsIrish.com](http://McGrathsIrish.com).

#### FISHING SATURDAYS

From 9-10 a.m. at James Patton Park, 5725 White Eagle Blvd., Lakewood Ranch. Lakewood Ranch Community Activities hosts the free event that offers casting and knot-tying instruction followed by fishing on Lake Patton.

■ Visit [MyLWR.com](http://MyLWR.com).

#### MAIN STREET MARKET

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Lakewood Ranch Main Street, more than 30 vendors will be out with food, beverages, retail and more at the boutique market, hosted by Main Street Market LWR.

■ Visit [MainStreetMarketLWR.com](http://MainStreetMarketLWR.com).

#### DEC. 19

##### WEST COAST HALF-MARATHON AND 5K

Nathan Benderson Park hosts the ninth stop on the South Florida Half Marathon Tour. Participants receive a tank or tech tee and a finish medal with entry. Both races begin at 7 a.m. at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota.

Lakewood Ranch's Katana Carotti attended the 2020 Mega Challah Bake with her mother, Bree Goldberg. Neither had made challah dough before.

*Continued on Page 56*



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Continued from Page 54

Entry to the half-marathon costs \$119; entry to the 5K costs \$45. Parking costs \$5 cash.

■ Visit [WestCoastHalf.com](http://WestCoastHalf.com).

#### **BREAKFAST WITH SANTA AT ED'S TAVERN**

Join Ed's Tavern for breakfast with Santa from 9-11 a.m. at the restaurant, 10719 Rodeo Drive, Lakewood Ranch.

■ Call 941-907-0400.

#### **SARASOTA POLO**

The Sarasota Polo Club kicks off its season with an afternoon of tailgating and polo. Gates open at 10 a.m., and matches start at 1 p.m. at the Sarasota Polo Club, 8201 Polo Club Lane. General admission is \$12 for adults; children 12 and under are free. Polo matches will be held every Sunday through April 24.

■ Visit [SarasotaPolo.com](http://SarasotaPolo.com).

#### **DEC. 22**

##### **CHRISTMAS ON MAIN**

This celebration will include food,

games, rides, music and Santa, as well as a candlelight service from 4-8 p.m. at Main Street at Lakewood Ranch.

■ Visit [LakewoodRanch.com](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

## **JANUARY**

#### **JAN. 13**

##### **MEGA CHALLAH BAKE**

Chabad of Bradenton and Lakewood Ranch hosts this challah-making event for girls and women ages 9 and up at 7 p.m. at Grove, 10670 Boardwalk Loop Lane, Lakewood Ranch. The event is \$36; reservations are required.

■ Visit [ChabadOfBradenton.com/MegaChallahBake](http://ChabadOfBradenton.com/MegaChallahBake).

#### **JAN. 29**

##### **THE BIG 5K**

Start the new year with a run around Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota, beginning at 8 a.m. The 5K is \$45; a virtual 5K is \$40. The race benefits Big Bill Foundation, which gives scholarships to children who have had cancer and other life-threatening conditions.

■ Visit [RaceRoster.com](http://RaceRoster.com).

## **FEBRUARY**

#### **FEB. 4**

##### **MUSICAL SHABBAT AND DINNER**

Shabbat services will be led by professional singer and Cantor Aryeh Hurwitz, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at Chabad of Bradenton and Lakewood Ranch, 5712 Lorraine Road, Bradenton. The services will be followed by Shabbat dinner. Cost is \$36.

■ Visit [ChabadOfBradenton.com](http://ChabadOfBradenton.com).

#### **FEB. 17**

##### **LECOM SUNCOAST CLASSIC**

Begins at 8 a.m. each day through Feb. 20 at Lakewood National Golf Club, 17605 Lakewood National Parkway, Lakewood Ranch. The Korn Ferry Tour brings professional golf to Lakewood Ranch for the fourth year. Activities, food trucks and vendors will be on site throughout the weekend. Volunteer opportunities will be available, and ticket information is TBA.

■ Visit [LECOMSuncoastClassic.com](http://LECOMSuncoastClassic.com).

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# Handmade Treasures

Lakewood Ranch artists and artisans bring a human touch to the handcrafted, one-of-a-kind treasures they create.

BY HARRY SAYER | CONTRIBUTOR

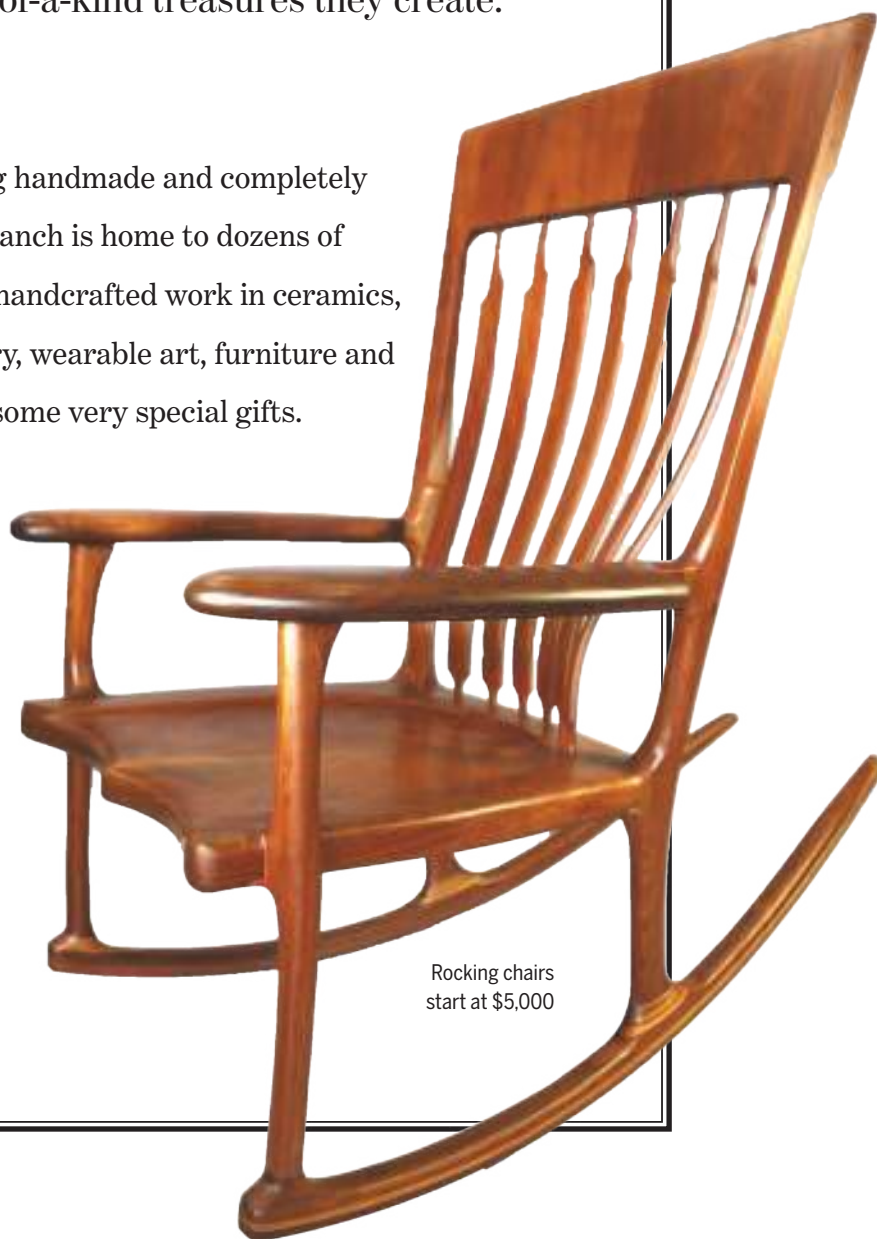
Looking for something handmade and completely unique? Lakewood Ranch is home to dozens of artisans who create handcrafted work in ceramics, decorative fiber, glass, jewelry, wearable art, furniture and food. Here's a quick peek at some very special gifts.

## **Parker Converse's Custom Rocking Chairs**

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[ParkerConverse.com](http://ParkerConverse.com)

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Rocking chairs start at \$5,000

## Carol Krah's Stained Glass Art

CKrah.FavoriteThings@gmail.com  
CAALR.com

Carol Krah, the president of the Creative Arts Association of Lakewood Ranch, specializes in the time-honored craft of stained glass. Her dazzling, light-filled creations include flower pots, planters, holiday ornaments and sun-catchers.

Holiday ornaments: \$15



Shooting star orchid: \$500



Three-way wraps: \$125



## Deborah Jernigan's Natural Fiber Wear

DJPsychu@aol.com, 650-245-7741

Fiber artist Deborah Jernigan learned to weave with natural fibers, such as alpaca, angora and wools, while living in the San Francisco Bay area. Five years ago, Jernigan and her husband moved to Lakewood Ranch, and she adapted to the heat by creating her elegant tunics, wraps, scarves and capelets from lighter fabrics, including linen, silk, rayon, chiffon and cotton.

Cap \$65



## Danielle Ferrantino of Driftheory

The Market at Lakewood Ranch  
941-894-9049

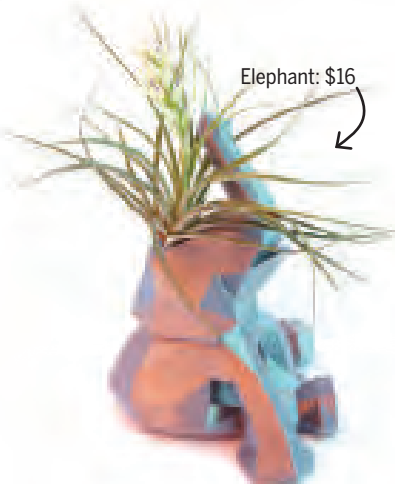
Danielle Ferrantino's jewelry brand, Driftheory, features handcrafted pieces that are inspired by nature and created using natural elements — including shards of sand dollars, shells and pressed flowers — embedded in mesmerizing resin.

Lido square pendant: \$45



Shell: \$24

Elephant: \$16



Sitting yogi: \$16



## LWR3D's Printed Air Plant Vessels

The Market at Lakewood Ranch  
Instagram.com/LWR3D

Lakewood Ranch resident Eric Thompson creates his ingenious plant holders using a 3D printer. Look for artful designs that include yogis in sitting poses, resting elephants, colorful abstract urns and geometric succulent planters.



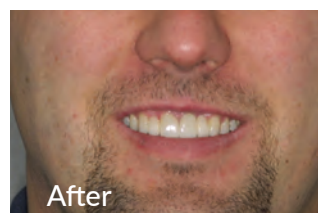
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Kathryn Ross-Nash  
Smile Makeover Patient



*Actual Patient,  
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# *Free Bird*

East County birder Margi Haas found her search for meaning in the sky — and when the pandemic hit two years ago, so did everyone else.

BY HEIDI KURPIELA



Photos by Heidi Kurpiela



"Birding can be an enormous healing for people who might be wondering what's the point of life," Haas says. "All people should be connected to nature because we are nature."



Margi Haas steps out of her River Club lanai outfitted for an evening of birding: digital camera slung over one shoulder, Nikon bins (that's birder slang for binoculars) clipped to a harness strapped to her back. The harness helps support the weight of her gear much like a brassiere, as Haas wryly points out. It also protects against neck strain caused by hours of gawking up at trees through heavy optics — an ache grudgingly referred to as “warbler neck” by those in the field.

“We birders find ourselves going into a trance state,” Haas says of the endeavor’s all-consuming nature. “I’ve walked so far enthusiastically birding that walking back can feel daunting.”

A psychotherapist, public speaker and coach, she’s well aware of the benefits of meditation. Birding to her is easier, though, and in many ways more therapeutic than stillness.

She walks in the direction of the wooded wetlands that hem in her golf course community. It was in this spot five years ago that Haas, then a casual bird-watcher, felt the urge to wade into serious birder territory after witnessing 34 swallow-tailed kites glide into the high canopy of a tall longleaf pine behind her home one July night. The observation was so rare that she still talks about it in presentations at nature parks and Audubon societies around the area, including Sarasota Audubon Society, for which she serves as program director.

Says Haas, “That tree changed my life, my interest in birds.”

The swallow-tailed kite is regarded as something of a bird de resistance in Florida. Revered for its sleek body, forked tail and ability to seemingly glide for miles without flapping its wings,

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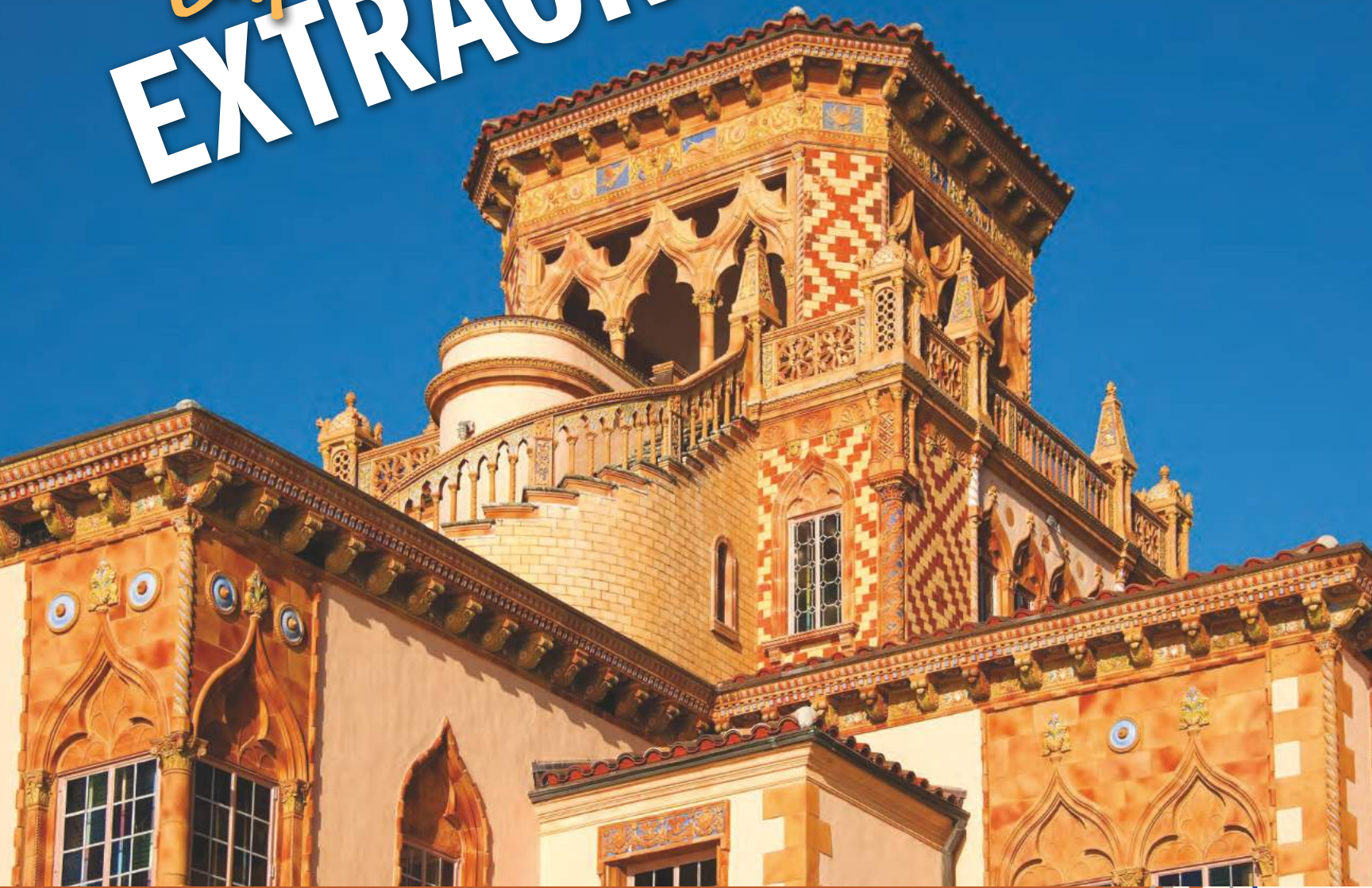


Haas has watched this brood of black-bellied whistling ducks grow up on the lake behind her house. The species is commonly seen around Florida in freshwater lakes, ponds and marshes.

“Once viewed as a fuddy-duddy pastime for khaki-clad retirees, bird-watching has been appropriated by hipsters in the past year and a half.”



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Continued from Page 66

kites can be challenging to spot for a number of reasons. First, they build their nests in the highest crooks of pine trees. Second, they spend most of their time in flight, traveling between nests in the southern U.S. and pre-migratory roosts in Central and South America, a 10,000-mile round-trip odyssey they embark on each year.

"It's a gorgeous bird," Haas says. "The kind of bird people wax poetic about."

## FROM URBAN EXPLORER TO WILD BIRDER

Ten years ago, the former headhunter couldn't tell a house sparrow from a finch.

A driven entrepreneur with degrees from both Harvard and Stanford universities, Haas spent the first three decades of her career in New York City, engrossed in the study of a distinctly heavier species: humans.

Highly cerebral and preternaturally adept at reading people, Haas found she was a natural fit for Wall Street, even when she felt at odds with the ethos of that world. Not long after landing in the financial district, she launched her own business, an executive recruiting firm with offices in Manhattan and Tokyo, where she'd routinely fly to recruit bilingual business execs for senior-level positions. Having spent much of her 20s in Japan, Haas had another unique advantage over many of her high-powered peers: She could speak fluent Japanese.

"I found myself coaching people, always asking them if they really wanted the job I was trying to put them in," Haas says. "It was like I was blowing my own cover."

Not one to ignore her instincts, she decided to get licensed in psychotherapy, counseling and other alternative healing modalities while running the firm. As usual, this inclination gave Haas even more leverage with executive-types, many of whom seemed unhappy, stuck on a hamster wheel or clearly on the wrong career path.

"I was always more interested in what made people tick," she says.

In those years, her burning curiosity did not extend to birds, except for noting the occasional robin when she was out walking the dog, a signal that spring was about to start in New York.

## A NATURAL PANDEMIC PANACEA

In case you didn't notice, bird-watching became a thing during the pandemic.

Once viewed as a fuddy-duddy pastime for khaki-clad retirees, the leisure pursuit was appropriated by hipsters in the past year and a half. Although it happened under the radar in urban areas across the U.S., the craze was documented

Continued on Page 70



Black-bellied whistling ducks take flight over the lake behind Haas' home.

*Haas remembers sitting on the edge of her bed facing the lake, looking out past the old mossy trees at a ruckus of birds she'd never seen before. Watching them soar in and out of the landscape, listening to them all atwitter, she felt an immediate sense of peace.*



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*Continued from Page 68*

by The New York Times, Associated Press and National Geographic, to name a few publications. As social distancing and quarantining became the norm, so too did interest in the great outdoors. Add boredom, technology and existential dread to the mix, and voila, you've got the perfect captive bird-watching audience: millennials.

"I think birding became accessible in ways it hadn't been before," says Lee Amos, the land stewardship manager at Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. "People say it's fun, but maybe it feels fun now because it's easy."

Goaded by birding apps, such as eBird and other bird-watching and identification apps, millennial homebodies found themselves trekking for the first time into parks, preserves and faraway fields in search of birds they'd never heard of before. Some of these apps, eBird included, actively encourage competition among bird nerds. Haas herself holds the No. 10 spot on eBird's list of Top eBirders in Sarasota County.

Case in point: From 2019 to 2020, eBird.com — a global, open-access birding database launched 19 years ago by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology — reported a 24% uptick in its number of recorded observations. And last year, the project, which began as a way for "citizen scientists" to record, track and share sightings to help further the research of actual scientists, announced it had officially logged 1 billion bird observations.

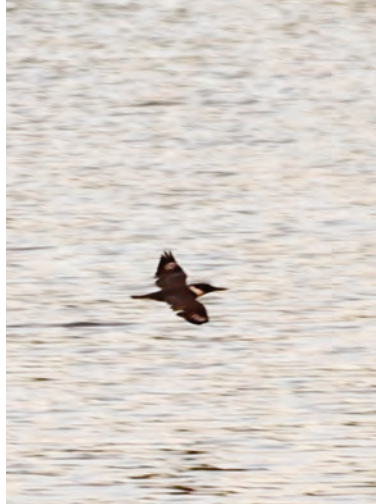
During the height of the pandemic, Amos says he saw more people milling around Bay Preserve in Osprey (home to the Conservation Foundation offices) than ever before. Although that initial surge in usage has petered out, Amos says there are still some hangers-on, including a dance workout group. He sees this small change in behavior as a measure of hope, an indication of a growing desire to understand the environment and our place in it.

"The word is mindfulness," Amos says. "Birders have always been mindful, but anyone who engages with nature on a regular basis is. Mindfulness sets you on a path of discovery and self-improvement, which leads to better wellness. There are studies out now about how powerful nature can be when it comes to treating health and wellness. It's to the extent that doctors are prescribing it as a treatment for anxiety, depression and ADHD."

So maybe this millennial birding thing isn't just a lark.

It certainly isn't for Haas. When she and her partner, fellow coach, public speaker and psychotherapist Leslie Austin, arrived in East Manatee County seven years ago, Haas felt like she'd washed up on an island with the Swiss

*Continued on Page 72*



A belted kingfisher announces its presence before buzzing the water. Haas knew the bird was coming as soon as she heard its brash, telltale rattling call pierce the air.



A black-crowned night heron makes a rare break for a tree. These stocky, hunch-backed recluses spend most of their time sitting still in trees hidden out of sight behind thick branches and foliage.

## UP, UP & AWAY

Are you a bush-league bird-watcher who wants to be a bona fide birder? It takes more than luck and a pair of binoculars to play that game. If you're lucky, you might find an avid bird-watcher who can take you under their wing. If not, then let these few tips be your wingman. And if all else fails, remember that even the most eagle-eyed ornithologist can end up on a wild goose chase. Here are some do's and don'ts to help sharpen your bird brain.

**DO** watch "The Big Year." This 2011 comedy starring Jack Black, Steve Martin and Owen Wilson did for competitive birding what "Best In Show" did for dog shows: draw attention to a niche interest by perpetuating the mostly true stereotypes of its quirkiest devotees.

**DON'T** overlook the boss birders in your life. There's nothing bird people love more than to take a fledgling under their wing, drop bits of wisdom on them and then push them out of the nest when it's time to fly.

**DO** get an old-fashioned field guide if tech turns you off. Sometimes carrying around a book on an endless subject is better than turning to the internet every time you need help. Not sure which to pick? The Cornell Lab of Ornithology (the authority on all things avian) recommends these three: "Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America," "Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern and Central North America" and "The Sibley Guide to Birds." All of them are small enough to be stuffed in a glove box, a backpack or an armpit.

**DON'T** go birding in bad shoes. Flip-flops are fine for staring at seagulls on the beach. But once you head out into more rugged terrain, sandals and floppy tennis shoes won't cut it. (Enter fire ants, crooked boardwalks, jagged tree roots, mud and ticks.) Waterproof sneakers and hiking boots are your best bet, and you'll be surprised by the number of lightweight, trendy choices on the market.

**DO** download a birding app. As interest in bird-watching has grown, so has the number of apps designed to help citizen scientists track, record and identify species. eBird is the gold standard, but other platforms are taking off, including Merlin Bird ID, iBird, Song Sleuth, Raptor ID and Audubon Bird Guide: North America.

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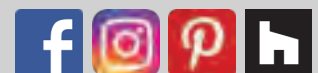


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Family Robinson.

She remembers sitting on the edge of her bed facing the lake, looking out past the old mossy trees at a ruckus of birds she'd never seen before. Watching them soar in and out of the landscape, listening to them all atwitter, Haas felt an immediate sense of peace. She had no idea watching birds could be so therapeutic. It made her think that had she watched them sooner, maybe she would have been spared the depression she experienced near the end of her time in New York.

## FREE BIRD

Back at The River Club, under the pine tree where it all began, Haas focuses her binoculars at the highest branches of the tree. For the moment it's vacant, which isn't a surprise given swallow-tailed kites won't arrive in Florida until February or March. Not that Haas doesn't have plenty of other feathered friends to occupy the tree until then, including fish crows, kestrels and bald eagles.

Undeterred, the birder roams on. She heads for the lake, crossing the rolling Bermuda greens on the golf course and one man rolling past on his golf cart. Thunder rumbles to the north over the interstate as clouds start to creep in from the east. Haas, admittedly more night owl than early bird, pays no attention to the watch on her wrist, having long-ago accepted the elasticity of time.

And then, as if scripted to make the usual cameo, a pair of sandhill cranes — the unofficial mascot of Lakewood Ranch — comes into view.

Nibbling at bugs in the ground, the bowed-over cranes eat head to head, their lank bodies touching at the feet to form a heart. "Look," Haas whispers as to not startle them. "Over there, black-bellied whistling ducks."

A mother duck and 11 ducklings are setting sail across the water in a perfect row. Haas, who is acquainted with this particular duck family, questions the whereabouts of the father duck as the babies float single file behind their mother into the middle of the lake.

Stepping out of the thicket and back onto the golf course, Haas perks up at the sound of a sharp rattling cry. Darkness is starting to set in, but this dogged rambler is not ready yet to call it quits. A belted kingfisher — one of the more alpha birds on the Florida wetland scene, thanks to its brazen call — swoops in over the lake low and fast. No sooner does the kingfisher pass when another bird appears from out of nowhere like a winged ninja and settles into the twisted branches of a nearby tree.

It's a black-crowned night heron, and the fact that Haas can spot it in the dark, much less identify the species, is remarkable.



A pair of sandhill cranes is spotted out for an evening dilly-dally on the fairway at The River Club.

She keeps her sights on the bird for a while, even though it's entirely obscured by foliage. Birding is like a "Magic Eye" book sometimes, an optical illusion. But just like everything else in life, once you lose focus on the thing you want, you risk finding something else entirely different.

"If I were independently wealthy, I'd have probably been an adventurer," Haas will later muse. "Like a female Indiana Jones, just geekier."

For now, she's just content to turn in for the night, having enjoyed a sufficient mid-October bird show. The few washes of blue left in the sky have faded to pink, and the darker parts are bleeding into purple. The golden hour just before sunset is over, and now all that remains is a psychedelic hue and the subtle but beguiling winds of change.

*“Nibbling at bugs in the ground, the bowed-over cranes are eating head to head, their lank bodies touching at the feet to form a heart.”*

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# The Joys of Bubbly

BY SU BYRON AND MARTY FUGATE

Champagne and sparkling wines are not just for special occasions. What makes classy bubbly a sip for all seasons? Three Lakewood Ranch experts weigh in.

“

*Too much of anything is bad, but too much Champagne is just right.*

— MARK TWAIN

“Bubbly, effervescent, sparkling...” get a deeper taste of Champagne’s multifaceted character. To do so, we spoke to three Champagne and sparkling wine gurus in Lakewood Ranch: Jean Christophe Nebra, the chef-owner of Paris Bistrot; Greg Campbell, Grove’s executive chef and director of operations; and Emily Wines, the master sommelier at Cooper’s Hawk Winery & Restaurants.

We decided to dive beneath the bubbles and Here’s what they uncorked for us.



Photos by Heidi Kurpiela  
Almond sparkling  
wine at Cooper's  
Hawk Winery &  
Restaurant



## Jean Christophe Nebra *of Paris Bistrot*

Nebra's Champagne experience is hard to beat. He enjoyed his first taste of the intoxicating bubbly at the age of 5. What has his long experience taught him? Can he share the inner secret of what champagne really is?

Nebra shrugs. "I doubt it," he says. "The answer is very complicated. But I can tell you what Champagne isn't."

### **Champagne isn't always a party animal.**

"Champagne is a great aperitif, but it doesn't have to be just that," he says. "It's not just for parties and special occasions. You can drink Champagne just as you would wine throughout any meal."

According to Nebra, the logic of pairing Champagne with food follows the same logic as pairing any wine with food.

"The grape creates the character of the vintage," he says. "You match the grape to the food — it's just that simple."

He explains that Champagne is a blend of various combinations of three grapes. A "Blanc de Noirs" is made from two grapes, pinot noir and pinot meunier, which are ordinarily used to create red wines. A Blanc de Blancs is made solely from chardonnay and tends to be lighter than other Champagnes, with a lower alcohol level. Rosé Champagne — created by adding more pinot noir to the blend or "bleeding" color from the skins of red grapes during the pressing process — has become a hot trend. Finally, Champagne is produced in a variety of sweetness levels, ranging from brut nature and extra brut (bone dry with less sugar) to the nectar-like doux (sweet, with more sugar).

"In the same way an artist mixes paints, so the vintner mixes grapes," Nebra explains. "That makes all the difference. When you choose how to pair it with food, you consider the grape and the level of sweetness." His general philosophy? "Champagne can be drunk any time and with any food — from breakfast to dessert and beyond."

Nebra's favorite Champagne? He



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*I only drink  
Champagne on  
two occasions:  
when I am in love  
and when I am not.*

— COCO CHANEL

has several, with a leaning toward anything produced by the house of Laurent-Perrier.

Want to learn — and taste — more? You're in luck because Paris Bistrot now offers a separate Champagne Bar menu, where you can taste — and learn about — more than seven great Champagnes on any given night.

Nebra's old-world authenticity and steady presence at Paris Bistrot over the past 13 years is the real secret to the restaurant's success. The secret to Nebra's success? His long marriage to high school sweetheart/business partner Alexandra Nebra — and a lot of Champagne.

### **CHAMPAGNE, QU'EST-CE QUE C'EST?**

What is Champagne, anyway? Good question, in any language. Champagne (aka "vin de Champagne") is a French spirit wine protected by a controlled designation of origin. Champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wines are Champagne. The real deal can only be made in the Champagne region of northern France. It's created from three main grape varieties: chardonnay (white grapes), pinot noir and meunier (black grapes). The earth where these grapes grow is also crucial. The "terroir" of the Champagne region is second to none.

### **A DELICIOUS ROMANCE**

Champagne makes a beautiful aperitif before dinner, bien sûr. But it's just as delightful during the meal. A few broad strokes:

■ **Rosé Champagnes** pair nicely with shrimp, prawns, lobster and other seafood.

■ **Blanc de Blancs Champagnes** go great with white fish, oysters and shellfish.

■ **Blanc de Noirs Champagnes** are excellent with chicken, pork and other light meats.

■ **Demi-Sec Champagnes** make a sweet companion to fatty meats, such as duck and goose. They also pair perfectly with any dish with a hint of sweetness.

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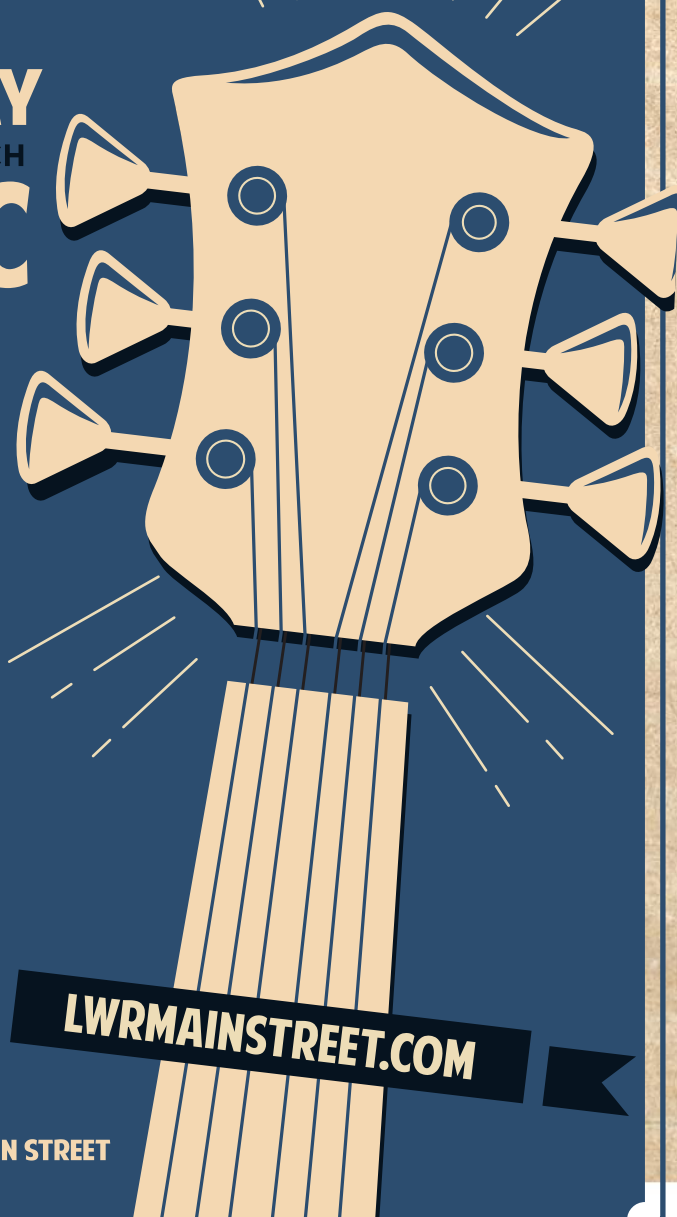
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## Greg Campbell *of Grove*

Greg Campbell, the executive chef and director of operations at Grove, has earned a reputation as a chef's chef across the region. And he's also a dedicated explorer of the Champagne and sparkling wine universe. Campbell loves to boldly go where few bubbly aficionados have gone before. He enjoys helping others launch their own bubbly voyages, as well.

Grove features five Champagnes on its menu: JP Chenet, Veuve Clicquot, Dom Perignon, Moët & Chandon Brut Imperial and Nicolas Feuillatte Reserve. It also offers up a selection of sparkling wines and sparkling wine craft cocktails. But Veuve is, without a doubt, Grove's most in-demand brand. Grove goes through about 100 cases a year — more, according to Campbell, than almost any other restaurant in Florida. One reason? Grove's popular bottomless Veuve mimosas served on weekends. Hiccup.

Campbell understands that the multitude of choices can be overwhelming to Champagne newbies. A deer-in-the-headlights response is not uncommon. Many give up before they've started. That's why Grove offers its intoxicating "Wines Around the World" series. A recent sparkling wine and Champagne odyssey voyaged from Italy (Marsuret Prosecco) to Tasmania, Australia (Jansz Sparkling Rosé), to Spain (Juvé & Camps' Rosé Brut) to the land that started it all, France (Drappier Champagne). Each glass was paired with the ideal taste.

"That's only four vintages, but it gives you a taste to learn more and more," he says.

### **Campbell's bubbly best.**

What's Campbell's favorite Champagne? If he had to settle down with only one vintage for a long evening, what would it be?

He doesn't have to think about his answer.

"Oh, Dom Perignon is my all-time favorite," he says. "You definitely don't want to drink a bottle of Dom every



### **IF YOU GO**

Grove  
10670 Boardwalk Loop,  
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Greg Campbell, the executive chef and director of operations at Grove, and fiancée Karissa Seeberger share a bottle of the restaurant's most popular bubbly.

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Champagne for  
breakfast? Doesn't  
everyone?*”

— NOEL COWARD

day — or even once a month. It's a world-class, special Champagne for over-the-top, special times. Nothing beats a bottle of Dom for celebrating any major event, big success or milestone in life.

"We raised a glass of Dom when my daughter got into nursing school — and when I proposed to my fiancée."

### **TINY BUBBLES**

**Who put the bubbles in the bubbly?** It's the brainchild of monks in the Champagne region, who invented the "méthode champenoise" technique of allowing fermentation to continue inside the bottle after the vintage had been sealed. (It took them a hundred years or two to get it right.)

**Uncorked and Unexploded.** The "pop" of a Champagne bottle sounds great in the movies. It could actually put your eye out (no kidding). How to avoid explosion? Put your Champagne bottle in the freezer for 20-30 minutes to decrease its carbonation pressure. (Be sure to use a timer!) Then remove the bottle. Keep the bottle at a 45-degree angle as you open it. That way, the bubbles press against the glass, not the cork. Loosen the wire cage protecting the cork, but don't remove it. Once it's loose, grip the cork in place, and rotate the bottle a few times. Once the cork is loose, gently release it. There won't be a loud, cinematic pop, which means you've kept most of the bubbles inside.

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# Emily Wines of Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurants

The aptly named Emily Wines is the master sommelier at Cooper's Hawk. Her title sounds intimidating; her approach is anything but. Wines translates the complex (and often snobby) in-group vocabulary of oenophiles into simple, direct language. Her love of great vintages is infectious, and she's positively effervescent on the subject of bubbly. Yes, that includes sparkling wine.

Wines is a wine expert, but she's no wine snob. She notes that Cooper's Hawk doesn't offer Champagne on its menu; instead, it features some of the best sparkling wines from around the nation and world. "People continue to enjoy Champagne, but the good values that prosecco and cava offer drive their popularity," Wines says. "Cremant, a category of sparkling wine from France that is made like Champagne but comes from other regions, is also growing in popularity." Wines notes that the best way to taste the various sparkling wines is to try the sparkling wine flight, which features Cooper's Hawk lux sparkling, prosecco, sparkling moscato and almond sparkling.

Wines is a Champagne lover. What's her favorite?

"It depends on my mood," she says. "For big celebrations, I love Krug and Ruinart. For pure pleasure, I really enjoy the Special Club category of Champagnes from the smaller grower-producer houses. Blanc de Blancs are bright, fresh and crisp, while the more pinot noir heavy blends have a beautiful cider-like finish that is so wonderful. You can see that I'm terrible at picking just one!"

What's the most enjoyable way to imbibe a glass of bubbly? This celebrated sommelier was happy to share a few tips:

## Best foods for pairing with Champagne?

Everything! But fried foods are my favorite. A bucket of chicken and a bottle of bubbles is the best.

## IF YOU GO

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& Restaurant  
3130 Fruitville Commons  
Blvd., Sarasota  
941-263-8100  
[CHWinery.com/locations/florida/sarasota-fl](http://CHWinery.com/locations/florida/sarasota-fl)

## Best Champagne glass?

I actually prefer a wine glass over a flute. Flutes are nice for seeing the line of bubbles, but a glass allows you to smell the wonderful aroma more as you enjoy it.

## Correct way to open a bottle of Champagne?

Never remove the wire cage. Simply untwist it and use it to help grip the cork. While corks don't often go flying, there are horrible stories every year of injuries from those volatile toppers. Open slowly as a pop will likely be accompanied by a spill of wine.

## What's the secret to keeping an open bottle of Champagne bubbly?

Drink it fast! If you use a good stopper, you can hold the bubbles for a couple of days, but you are best off finishing the bottle sooner than later.

## What are some of your favorite memories drinking Champagne?

Every memory that is accompanied by Champagne is a delight.



Emily Wines is the master sommelier at Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurant.

## RAISE A GLASS!

Sorry to burst your bubble, but two of the most popular glasses aren't the best. The broad opening of the classic Champagne coupe lets bubbles escape quickly. (It still looks great in Champagne towers, though.) The iconic, slim Champagne flute is a faulty way to savor Champagne or any other form of bubbly. Its narrow opening preserves the bubbles, but it keeps oxygen from getting in and dims perception of flavors and aromas. Bubbly is wine, after all, and the best way to appreciate it is in a wine glass. A white wine glass or a large bowl glass will both do nicely. For a more high-tech approach, consider LAV's Vinglacé Champagne flutes. It's a gene-splice of a thermos bottle and a Champagne flute. Double-layered insulation keeps the bubbly cool. The opening is wider than a classic flute, allowing you to savor the flavors with more gusto.

## FUN FACTS

- A respectable bottle of Champagne costs \$50 to \$300. Vintage bottles from exclusive wineries can sell for \$1,000 and up.
- More than 300 million bottles flow out of the Champagne region every year. More than \$5 billion flow back in.
- Champagne's carbonation is three times greater than beer.
- A 7,500-milliliter bottle of Champagne has approximately 50 million bubbles.



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## Scott Shortt of Fine Wine & Tastings on Main

When it's time to purchase your bubbly, Scott Shortt, the owner of Fine Wine & Tastings on Main, invites you to visit and taste his curated selection of Champagnes and sparkling wines. His favorites? When it comes to Champagne, it's Bollinger Special Cuvée Brut (featured in almost every Bond movie since "Live And Let Die"), Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosé Brut and Collet's Esprit Couture Brut. For sparkling wine, he suggests the Gancia Brut Prosecco from Italy, the Chic Brut Cava from Spain and the Schramsberg Blanc de Blancs Brut from Napa Valley.

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# MAN WITH A PLAN

Photos by Jay Heater  
Former SMR  
President and CEO  
John Clarke says he  
takes pride in being  
part of the vision of  
Lakewood Ranch  
becoming a reality.





John Clarke, the former president and CEO of Schroeder-Manatee Ranch Inc., looks back at the early days of Lakewood Ranch — and the family that made it all possible.

BY JAY HEATER

**I**t was a huge, mowed field during the infancy of Lakewood Ranch in 1980, but it was an unknown spot to Schroeder-Manatee Ranch CEO Mary Fran Carroll.

Carroll, who died in 2014 at age 92, used to say she loved venturing into the fields on the SMR property, picking tomatoes or citrus on her way to work. She would slip her bounty into a pair of bags she always kept in her car.

One particular day, though, as she hiked away from the road to find some produce, she came upon a strange sight while filling up her bag. It was the aforementioned field. And what were those white pipes coming straight up out of the ground at each end?

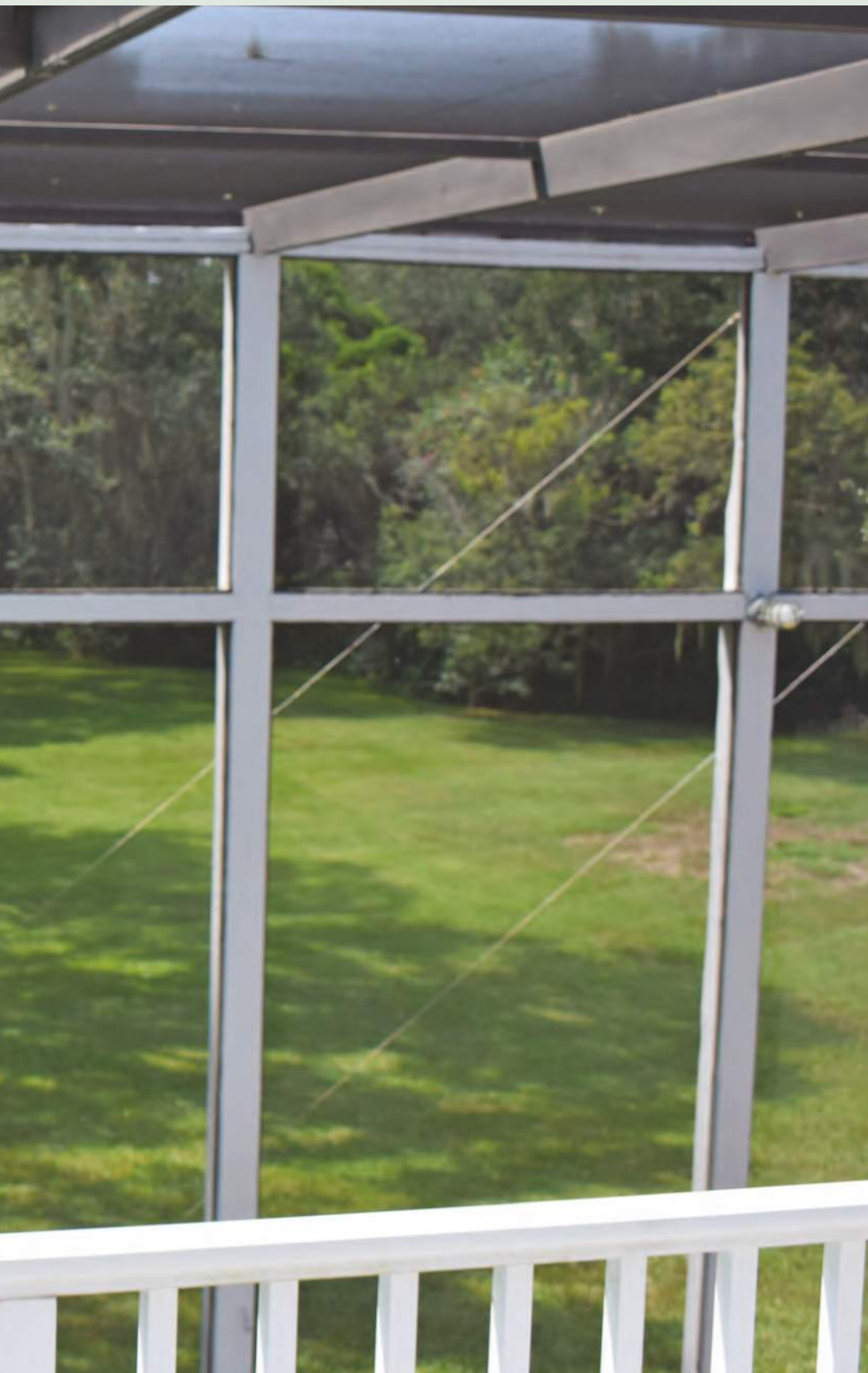
“Our first polo was played on a Bahia grass cattle pasture,” says John Clarke, who at the time was a president at SMR. “Our agricultural manager, Clive Morris, had played polo all his life and was a very good rider. He found a nice flat field and asked a tomato farmer to run his leveler over it. Then Clive mowed it and put up some white pipes for the goals.”

An avid polo player himself, Clarke joined Morris to recruit several other polo enthusiasts who worked for SMR. They just hadn’t mentioned it to Carroll, who was all business. Upon finding the field, Carroll told Morris and Clarke, “Well, just do not install lights.”

On a warm September morning, Clarke stands on the Sarasota Polo Club field and reminisces about his career with SMR. He has been retired since 2005 and hasn’t played polo in more than a decade, but he drives past the polo club each day as he makes his way to the eastern end of University Parkway, where he walks his own dogs and others that belong to his immediate family members. SMR owns land there that is used partially as a tree farm, and the dogs love it. At 83, Clarke enjoys his dogsitting duties and the exercise that goes with it but loves the bird-watching on his daily route even more.

His love and understanding of finances and agriculture originally led him to SMR, which needed his expertise of managing vast farms and ranches to clean up SMR’s 30,000-plus acres. His success in making the ranch’s agri-

*Continued on Page 86*





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cultural sector profitable led him into a greater role in forming what eventually became the Lakewood Ranch master-planned community. Oddly enough, that off-the-beaten-path polo field helped lead to Lakewood Ranch becoming a national phenomenon.

Eventually, Robin and James Uihlein, who were in Florida playing polo in Palm Beach, came over to the ranch and found the rough polo field that had been constructed. They were members of the Uihlein family who owned the 48-square-mile tract of land that had been pieced together by John Schroeder in the 1920s. They began playing with the SMR employees and some local cowboys.

"They encouraged us to build a polo complex," says Clarke, who had owned farms in Kenya, where he grew up, and later Rhodesia. Those farms both included a selection of polo ponies because of Clarke's love of the sport.

SMR struggled to make gains in getting development approvals in Sarasota County, so Clarke and SMR executives decided to present a polo complex to the Sarasota County Commission as a quasi-agricultural development.

"That worked, and suddenly we were doing business in Sarasota County," Clarke says, noting that Robin Uihlein was a major stockholder who sat on SMR's board of directors and who was the main force in taking the project forward.

Lakewood Ranch's recognition as the nation's No. 1-selling master-planned community earlier this year didn't come without a lot of work and some strokes of genius. The roughly constructed polo field led to one of them.

Carroll quickly got on board with the idea of a polo complex. Lots of Floridians get to live alongside a golf course, she reasoned. How many live alongside a polo field?

The polo club began selling homes in 1990. By 1991, a polo complex accompanied the parcels all around it. The polo club was a kick-start to what followed as Carroll would convince many well-to-do folks in the region to drive to the boonies to watch polo. Once there, they would realize the area wasn't all that remote. Some were future Lakewood Ranch homeowners.

## AT A GLANCE

**Who:** John Clarke

**Age:** 83

**Position:** Former Schroeder-Manatee Ranch CEO and president, retired in 2005

**Lives:** Sarasota's Meadows community for the past 30 years

**Wife:** Lorna

**Children:** Four: James Clarke (Polo Club), Victoria Campbell (Polo Club), Sarah Cottrez (Sarasota), Kate Kirby (Sarasota)

**Grandchildren:** Seven

**Did you know?** Clarke grew up and owned a farm in Kenya (Natolia, 2,500 acres) and moved in 1968 to a farm in Rhodesia (Vureneme, 7,000 acres). He lived there for nine years and moved to the U.S. in 1977.



“  
*At the end of the day,  
what those trips said to  
us was to not try to cut  
off little pieces of land.  
Think of it as a new town  
and it will be much more  
valuable than cutting it  
into pieces.*”

## FROM VISION TO REALITY

Carroll had hired Clarke in 1983 because he had been managing huge ranches with absentee owners in Florida through his company, AMS, a subsidiary of Turner Foods Corp., in Punta Gorda. He did that so well he sold AMS and was hired as SMR president in 1989.

Standing in front of the clubhouse at the Sarasota Polo Club, Clarke smiles as he talks about how the vision of Lakewood Ranch became a reality and the pride he has in being part of it. Several times he excuses himself for his octogenarian's memory, saying his dates and facts might be a bit off. Upon checking, however, his recollection remains sharp. Despite his age, the Cambridge-educated Clarke retains the aura of a leader. He is a tall man of about 6-foot-3, and even if he no longer is flag-pole straight, he oozes authority. That had to help him in his early days with SMR because he self-admittedly wasn't the dynamic, aggressive, tough director that Carroll was or that Rex Jensen would be in following Clarke as president and CEO.

"I am a sweetheart," Clarke says with a laugh as he compares himself to Carroll and Jensen.

Sweetheart or not, Clarke knew how to get things accomplished.

Carroll recognized that when she hired him. Besides his business aplomb, she knew he had overcome adversity. In Kenya, he was a successful farmer whose main crop was pyrethrum, which has been used for centuries as an insecticide. As Kenya gained independence in the 1960s, the farm land was nationalized, and Clarke was forced out of the country in 1968. He moved to Rhodesia, where he started another farm, this one of 7,000 acres, where his main crop was tobacco. After 10 years there, internal strife in the country once again forced him out. He moved to the U.S. in 1977. His road eventually took him to the area that became Lakewood Ranch, which had few roads when he arrived.

Zoned for agriculture, Lakewood Ranch had no choices when Clarke went looking for a home. He has lived more than 30 years in Sarasota at the same Meadows home that was built by developer Roger Postlethwaite, who eventually served as a president

Continued on Page 88





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*Continued from Page 86*

of SMR Communities.

"This was as close (to Lakewood Ranch) as I could get," he says.

Driving down University Parkway today is a stark contrast to when Clarke moved into the Meadows; University Park ended at Interstate 75 at the time, unless you wanted to drive a dusty shell mining road.

Things were exciting for the new resident in December 1989, as Carroll's vision for a residential revolution came to fruition with the approval of the Cypress Banks Development of Regional Impact, an area that now includes some of Lakewood Ranch's original communities, such as Summerfield and Riverwalk.

It came after Clarke, Carroll and several other team members visited some of the biggest master-planned communities in the U.S., including the 90,000-acre Irvine Ranch in California, the Howard Hughes development near Las Vegas that became Summerlin and The Highlands in Texas.

Clarke buzzes through his memories of those early days of Lakewood Ranch but says he doesn't want to proceed without touching upon the history of the area. He talks about the early 1920s when Schroeder fell into financial misfortune because he went into the furniture business in Milwaukee. Clarke says Schroeder went to his friends, the Uihleins, who had made a fortune after taking over the Joseph Schlitz Brewing Co. Clarke says the Uihleins bought the property in 1922 for an outrageously low \$2 an acre.

The 48-square-mile property hosted several business endeavors, such as timber, vegetable and citrus farming and ranching, but never made money in an agricultural sense. Most of the Uihleins lived in Milwaukee during the first half of the 20th century, and there was no coordinated effort to make money. Their Florida property was more for recreation, where family members and friends could hunt quail or deer.

Clarke says the Uihlein family was at odds with what to do with the property until the early 1980s, when Marie Uihlein went to Carroll, a banker with Northern Trust in Chicago, and asked Carroll to represent her on the SMR

*Continued on Page 90*

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*The plan was to build a place where you could go to school, to college, the theater. We wanted a full life for everyone.”*

**Left:** John Clarke has lived in Sarasota's Meadows community for the past 30 years. "This was as close (to Lakewood Ranch) as I could get," he says.

*Continued from Page 88*

board of directors. Carroll managed to unify the Uihlein family in their plans for Lakewood Ranch.

"She brought a business sense to the operation," Clarke says. "Agriculture had to be thought about."

Carroll was elected as board chair and hired Clarke to get the agricultural side working efficiently.

One of the keys was landing a deal with Manatee County and the city of Bradenton to get treated wastewater. The irrigation had been done to that point with wells. Aggregate mining took off with Wendel Kent (who died in 2017) leading the way with his business, Quality Aggregates. Clarke says it was a relatively simple and straightforward business. It was quickly profitable for SMR.

Carroll was aware there were moves to build an airport on SMR land. That wasn't going to happen, but it did force the Uihleins to begin to make decisions about their land.

Developers saw what was coming and started making offers for parcels of SMR's land. But after SMR executives had visited other master-planned communities, they turned them down.

"At the end of the day, what those trips said to us was to not try to cut off little pieces of land," Clarke says. "Think of it as a new town, and it will be much more valuable than cutting it into pieces."

Everything steamed forward, and Carroll retired from her CEO duties in 1995. Clarke took over as president and CEO. Although Carroll remained chair of the board, she retired completely in 1997.

"We knew where we were going and where we had to go," Clarke says.

## **A PLACE OF PRIDE**

Looking back on it all, Clarke is proud of the overall development, though as a former farmer he says he does miss the cows and the citrus. But he also loves what Lakewood Ranch provides

*Continued on Page 92*

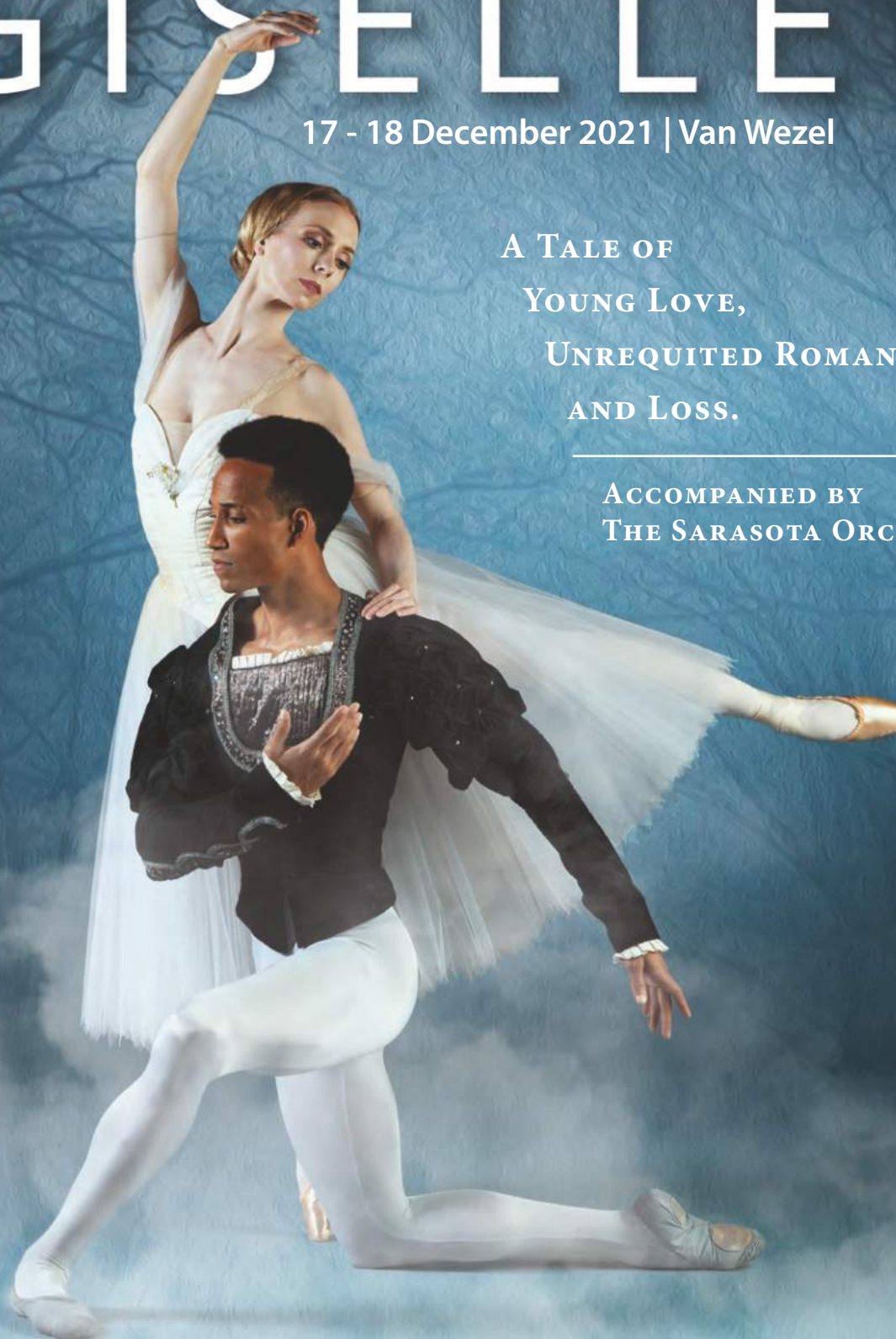


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*Continued from Page 90*

for families. Lakewood Ranch’s slogan of “Live, Work and Play” is personal.

“The plan was to build a place where you could go to school, to college, the theater. We wanted a full life for everyone. We offered land to the Sarasota Orchestra, but they said, ‘Hell no.’”

SMR created other things that make him proud.

“One of the great things the Uihleins did was set aside corridors of land that were natural environmental corridors,” he says. “There are defined stream beds and river beds out there, and it would be difficult to develop anyway, but one shouldn’t. Places like Heritage Ranch, which is gorgeous country.”

Another piece of visionary work was SMR negotiating to buy the right-of-way land that eventually allowed Lorraine Road and Lakewood Ranch Boulevard to be extended to Fruitville Road. That has become a big deal as Waterside Place, in Sarasota County, expands.

SMR’s battles with Sarasota County made it seem unlikely that Waterside Place could ever happen. But it did with Jensen, who had been involved in all aspects of permitting for that very first Polo Club project, leading the way. Clarke says he originally hired Jensen because of his expertise in getting development approvals. But Jensen pulled some miracles in Sarasota County as Lakewood Ranch grew.

“I very much didn’t believe Waterside would be that dense,” Clarke says.

He also says he never anticipated Manatee County would take over the Premier Sports Campus, but it did. And he tips his hat to James and Misdee Miller for buying the Sarasota Polo Club from SMR.

“Rex was wise to sell the polo club,” he says.

After retiring from SMR, Clarke started the Lakewood Ranch Community Fund, which supports the community’s local nonprofits.

“I still feel a part of Lakewood Ranch because I go there,” he says. “I think it is turning into a very nice hometown. People enjoy it so much. Lakewood Ranch has excellent schools, sports, aesthetics, churches and so many other special aspects. Look at Bob Gardner Park. ... Those kinds of things make for a greater quality of life.”

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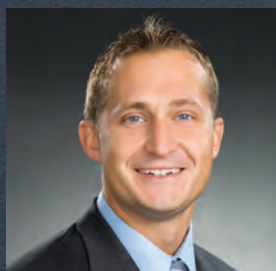


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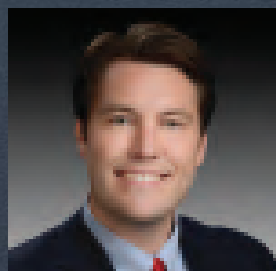
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# HAVEN

SPOTLIGHTING LIFE ON THE RANCH

A former model home continues to dazzle after 15 years of family living. **PAGE 96**

Expansive gardens feature a pool, a spa, a fountain and an outdoor living area, all overlooking a lake.



# Winning the Test of



The 7,280-square-foot home includes five bedrooms and eight baths and is set on 1.2 acres.

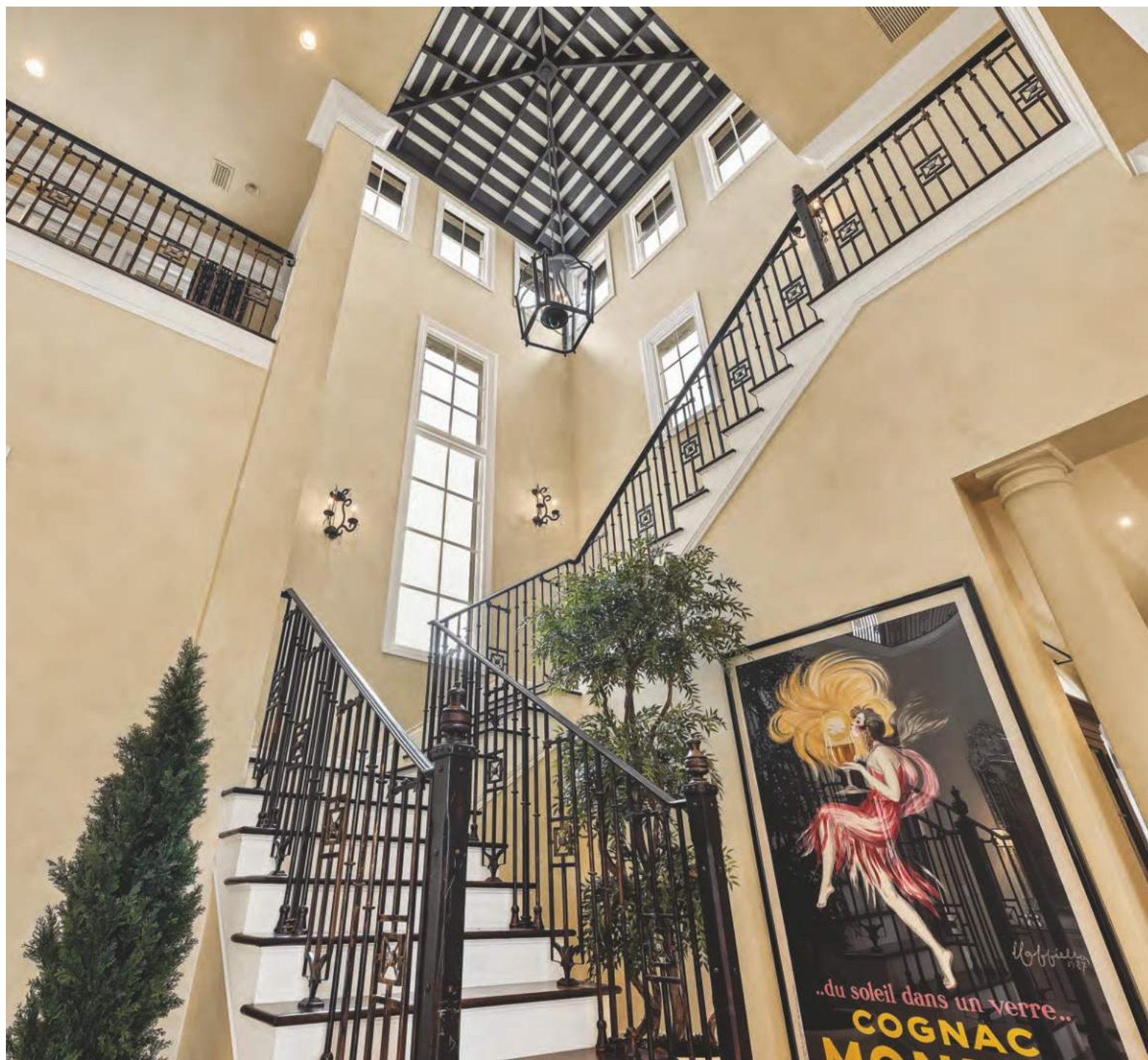


# Time

An exquisite home in The Lake Club only gets better  
with the passing years. BY ROBERT PLUNKETT | CONTRIBUTOR







Fifteen is a dangerous age for a house. Styles and trends have moved on, and it is the rare dwelling that can hold its own against the relentless advance of changing tastes.

But for a few lucky homes, the passing years only enhance their appeal. These are the timeless ones.

There is such a house in The Lake Club. It has an excellent pedigree. As one of the original models on Model Row, it helped introduce the splendors of The Lake Club to the world back in 2007. All the homes were showstoppers, but none could quite top the 7,280-square-foot residence from Landmark Builders. The company was intro-

A spectacular staircase complete with iron railings and a beamed ceiling in its light-filled tower leads to two guest bedrooms, each with bath, and a game room.

*Continued on Page 100*





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**Left:** A guest bedroom on the ground floor is decorated in soothing colors, with custom moldings and baseboards as finely finished as the rest of the home. The door at center left leads to an en suite bath with intricate marble tiling.

**Below:** A wood-paneled library that doubles as a home office adjoins the primary bedroom. The ship model was handcrafted by owner Susan Briemann.

*Continued from Page 98*

ducing itself to the local market and was determined to pull out all the stops.

Enter Joe and Susan Briemann. They already owned a home in the Ranch, but when some close friends were interested in seeing what Model Row had to offer, the Briemanns took them for a look around.

When they came to the Landmark model, it was love at first sight — for the Briemanns. “The house spoke to me,” Susan recalls. “I kept thinking, ‘If I built a house, it would be exactly like this.’” Shortly after, the house ceased being a model home and became the Briemann residence. At the time, it was the highest-priced home in Lakewood Ranch.

“I’m an interior designer,” Susan says. “We pay a lot of attention to detail, and this house had it all. The moldings, the Venetian plaster walls, the transom windows, the wood paneling in the library.”

The Briemanns bought the home furnished. “We brought in some of the things we love,” Susan says. “But it was my taste. There was nothing to do over.”

The home’s success lies in its skillful blend of the traditional and the



*Continued on Page 102*



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**Left:** High ceilings and custom cabinetry define the spacious kitchen. You'll find two refrigerators and two dishwashers, plus a hidden door to a walk-in pantry. Nearby is a wine cellar and butler's pantry.

**Bottom:** The home's outdoor living area provides a shady spot for year-round entertaining. There are several seating and dining areas plus a fireplace and summer kitchen.

*Continued from Page 100*

contemporary. The exterior is formal at first glance, with an imposing entryway of solid mahogany doors surrounded by coral stone. The symmetry of the facade is broken by a three-story tower that gives the home a commanding presence. Ornamentation is kept to a minimum, with balcony railings and shutters providing a carefully composed balance.

Inside the home is traditional, but there's a contemporary aesthetic at work, too. The living room soars to a beamed ceiling, with an impressive stone fireplace as a focal point. Columns and arches delineate the space, with a dark wood floor to warm the atmosphere.

But it's the view outside the French doors that really attracts the attention. Unlike most homes in the Ranch, the living area does not open to a caged pool. Here, you see a spacious formal garden. All the hallmarks of Florida living are here — the saltwater pool, the spa — but they are set in a beautiful, open space that suggests the European inspiration and landscaping that has made The Lake Club a legend among Florida planned neighborhoods.

Back inside, there are more details to check out. The elaborate kitchen has



top-of-the-line appliances, with two dishwashers, warming drawers and a six-burner stove. A butler's pantry and wet bar are nearby, along with a wine room that keeps the various vintages at a constant 53 degrees. The family room features comfortable furniture and three French doors that open to the outdoor living area complete with

two dining areas and a summer kitchen. The floor is travertine, and wooden beams accent the pyramidal ceiling.

There is also a home theater that seats eight, with surround sound and its own bar. Here, Susan and visiting grandchildren have watched count-

*Continued on Page 104*



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*Continued from Page 102*

less Disney movies. “I’ve seen ‘Mulan’ more times than I can remember,” she says with a happy sigh.

The private areas of the home are particularly luxurious. There are four guest bedrooms, each outfitted with custom detailing and a private bath. Three are located on the second floor — yes, there is an elevator — where you will also find a bonus room and several balconies overlooking views of the two lakes, one in front of the home, the other behind. The size of the lot (1.2 acres) and the careful landscaping ensure a private feeling. Part of the yard is discretely fenced as a play space for Scooter, the Brielmanns’ 12-year-old pug.

Scooter is also welcome in the luxurious master suite. It features his-and-her baths and closets, plus a breakfast bar. The atmosphere is cool and serene, with a grayish-brown palette contrasting with all the greenery just outside the oversized windows. An opulent wood-paneled office/library



A comfortable eight-seat home theater has been a hit with visiting grandchildren.

*Continued on Page 106*



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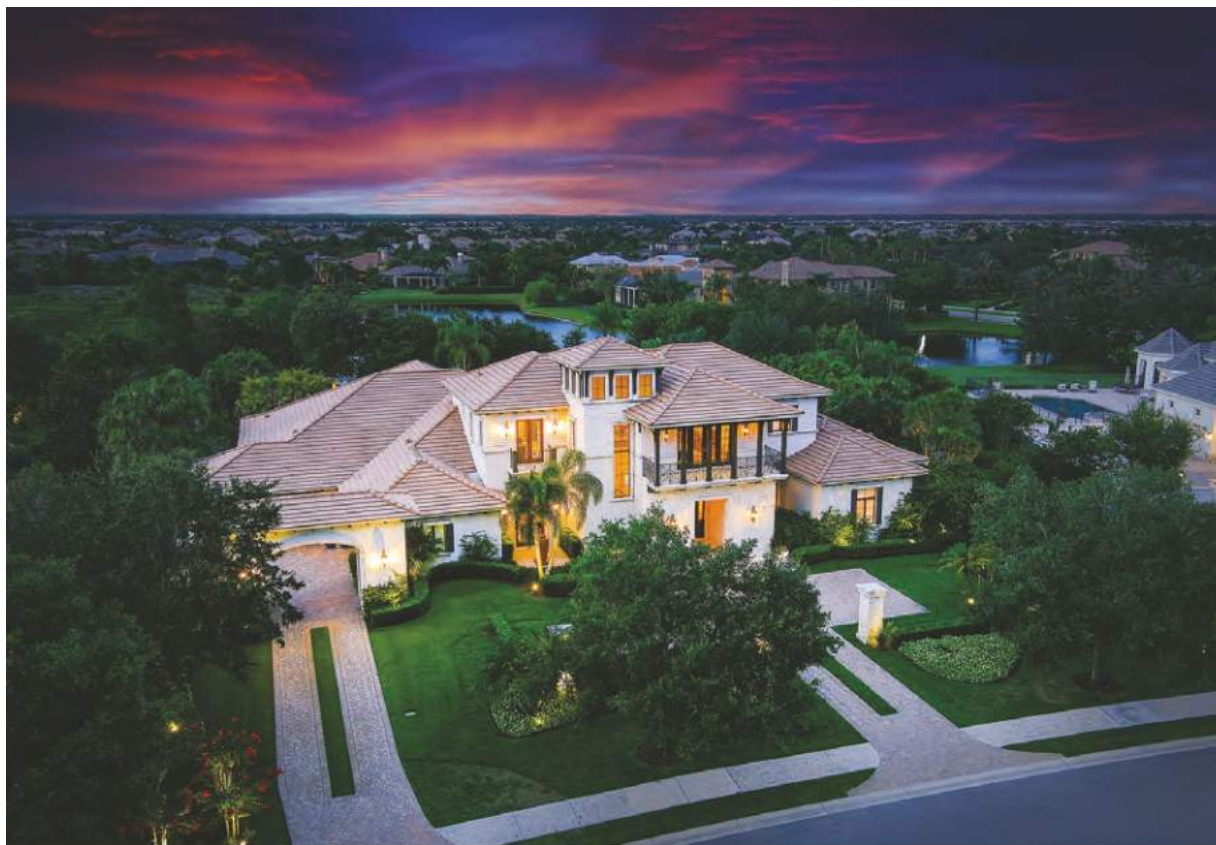
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completes the impressive retreat.

It was a difficult decision for the Briemanns, but they recently decided to sell their home. "We're changing the way we live," Susan says. Horses have long been a part of her life, particularly at their home in North Carolina. Now they are planning a new home in the nearby Polo Club, where they will be able to keep horses right on the property. Susan's particular interest is dressage, a form of competitive riding and exhibition where the horse and rider perform a series of finely tuned maneuvers.

And their Lake Club home already has a new owner. It has been purchased by the very first person who looked at it. Donna Soda, of the Schemmel Soda Group at Premier Sotheby's who brokered the sale, reports that the new owner is "over the moon. He fell in love with all the details and custom touches that make the home so special." He is also paying a price that has set a record for recent home sales in the Ranch. It's proof that a real classic only gets better with time.



The home was one of the original models that introduced The Lake Club back in 2007.

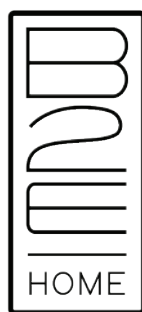
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# art and about

## ‘Tis the Season

We’re up and running! Our region’s arts and cultural season is here, and it’s as strong and vibrant as ever. These are just a few of the culturally cool events happening.



SU BYRON  
CONTRIBUTOR



See Vitus Shell's work Jan. 27 to March 6 at Art Center Sarasota.

Courtesy photos

**Everything is illuminated.** Selby Gardens lights up the night with more than 2 million multicolored lights in its “Lights in Bloom” extravaganza. The delights are powered by imagination — and not just electricity. Psychedelic butterflies, flowers and flamingos buzz and flit to create a dazzling bioluminescence, and the garden paths are transformed into tunnels of light. This interactive experience includes children’s crafts activities, Santa visits and entertainment. *6-9 p.m. Dec. 11-23, Dec. 26 and Jan. 2 at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, 1534 Mound St., Sarasota; 941-366-5731.*

**“Judith Linhares: The Artist as Curator.”** Judith Linhares’ lively paintings evoke a magical-realist realm where women have nothing to hide and nothing to fear — a world without violence,

bullying or male domination. Her visions are informed by the unfettered visions of her dream journals. This retrospective exhibit pulls you into her world of pure imagination. But it also shows another side of Linhares. As much as she wants to unleash her own dreams, she also liberates the visions of other artists. Together with Linhares’ dreamy paintings, this exhibit reveals the imaginative worlds of five other artists she’s curated. Although their mediums and styles are radically different, they all have something in common: Their dreams are wild and fearless, and there’s no internal censor to tame them. *Through April 3 at Sarasota Art Museum, 1001 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota; SarasotaArtMuseum.org.*

**Sound exploration.** “How can art explore the fundamental issues of hu-

man existence and venture into topics outside of traditional understanding?” Composer/performer Elizabeth A. Baker answers that question with music — an edgy, evening-length composition called “Void.” EnsembleNewSRQ, Baker and Atlanta-based ensemble Vim will bring her piece to life in a powerful collaboration. The unforgettable multimedia experience combines the power of visual projection, electronic processing and live acoustic music. Baker herself will perform the electronic installation portion of the show. *ENSRQ’s founders and co-artistic directors, violinist Samantha Bennett and percussionist George Nickson, will also be joined by cellist Natalie Helm. 8 p.m. Jan. 31 at First Congregational Church, 1031 S. Euclid Ave., Sarasota; ENSRQ.org.*

*Continued on Page 110*

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Continued from Page 108

**Let the sunshine in.** “Hair” unfolds the experience of a tribe of hirsute hippies, back in the days when baby boomers actually had hair. They turn on, tune in, dig the counterculture scene, dodge the draft, make love (not war) and sing. Born off-Broadway in 1967, this revolutionary, free-form rock musical became a Broadway smash in 1968 and changed Broadway’s style forever. Unless you still get carded, you probably know the songs: “The Age of Aquarius,” “Let the Sunshine” and “Hair” were all top hits in 1969. Josh Rhodes will direct and choreograph this Asolo Rep production. *Through Jan. 1 at FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota; 941-351-8000; AsoloRep.org.*

**A breath of fresh air.** Wind and percussion are the breath and heartbeat of music. The Lakewood Ranch Wind Ensemble will tap into that power for an evening of uplifting song. The soaring compositions include: “Barnum and Bailey’s Favorite,” Karl King’s beloved circus march; “A Symphonic Portrait

of Cole Porter,” a delightful cocktail of Porter’s beloved show tunes; William Schuman’s “Chester Overture” in all its brassy glory; and Camille Saint-Saëns high-stepping “Pas Redouble.” If that doesn’t make your blood race, what will? *2 p.m. Jan. 30 at Peace Presbyterian Church, 12705 S.R. 64, Unit E, Lakewood Ranch; LWRWindEnsemble.org.*

**Something to sing about.** In 1860, poet Walt Whitman heard America singing. In 2021, the talents of the Sarasota Orchestra still do. “American Voices,” part of its Masterworks series, celebrates our nation (and the democratic spirit of many nations) in song. The program includes Teddy Abrams’ genre-defying “Overture in Sonata Form,” Beethoven’s revolutionary Piano Concerto No. 1, Ellen Reid’s all-encompassing, earthy “Petrichor” and Aaron Copland’s soaring arrangement of the Shaker hymn “Simple Gifts.” The concert features pianist/composer Conrad Tao (“the kind of musician who is shaping the future of classical music,” as New York Magazine described). Abrams himself will conduct in his Sarasota debut. *Dec.*

*10-12 at Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, 777 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota; 941-953-3434; SarasotaOrchestra.org.*

**Perceptions of the Black experience.**

Louisiana-based artist Vitus Shell’s mixed-media work reveals his investigations of the past, present and future of Black experience and identity in America. Shell says he hopes to open people’s eyes to the Black experience and “what we identify as Black and perceive to be Black.” Shell accomplishes this through powerful images that deconstruct, sample and remix issues of identity, civil rights and contemporary Black culture. His work is informed by Black history and references the painful legacy of Jim Crow and mass media’s racist caricatures. Shell is equally attuned to the artistry of contemporary Black creators in a broad spectrum of media from film and visual arts to hip-hop. While he appreciates the new wave of Black superheroes, Shell’s work celebrates the Black heroes of everyday life. *Jan. 27 to March 6 at Art Center Sarasota, 707 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota; 365-2032; ArtSarasota.org.*



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*the jolly rancher*

# Keeping Up with the Griswolds

There's nothing like Christmas for true enlightenment. Not up to DIY?

Pack the kids in the car, and indulge in some Christmas cruising.



BY GABRIEL JIVA  
RIVERWALK  
RESIDENT AND  
DAD TO SONS  
ALEXANDER  
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FREDERICK

It occurs to me that when I was a bachelor, casually assessing my compatibility with various women who may or may not have had any interest in me, I had my priorities all wrong. It was always politics and religion and good looks and seeing all the UNESCO World Heritage sites. But guess when was the last time my wife and I went abroad? If you responded “before kids,” ask the nearest person to give you a high five.

Having the same ideology can be good — though debate is also fun — but when the rubber hits the road of everyday life, other things matter much more. Things like never ever opening a window. Not in the car, not at home, not ever. Fresh air, like swimming, is for the outdoors. Music taste is another one, and I dread the day when — knock on wood — one of the kids be-

comes a rebellious teenager and blasts Tim McGraw all day while I beg him to give Aerosmith a chance. Thankfully, sharing a lot of these everyday tastes just happened anyway, and I now also wholly appreciate how much we both love going out to the movies and despise paying for parking but will happily splurge on a cocktail that costs four times as much. And during the holidays, our philosophical alignment on Christmas lights is at the top of the list.

Because, you see, there are two kinds of Christmas decorators: white lights and colorful lights. And for those of you who are in the white lights camp, let me illustrate why you're wrong, with a counterexample: the Griswold house from “National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation.” Their house, when Clark finally gets it working, is absolutely

blanketed in white lights. It is literally brilliant and literally awesome and just brings joy to the soul. Now, the spirit of Christmas is obviously strong with Clark Griswold, so the white lights are good, right? Wrong. The only reason it works for their house is the sheer scale of luminescence: All the human brain can perceive is that the house is bright, probably dangerously so, and that either angels or aliens might emerge at any second. If the lights were in color, it wouldn't even make the top 10 things you'd notice. In fact, I bet you thought they were in color.

Griswold house aside, most of us can't aspire to that level of Christmas cheer — at least not with a few mere white lights in the bushes. Because, I would argue, white lights aren't even

*Continued on Page 114*

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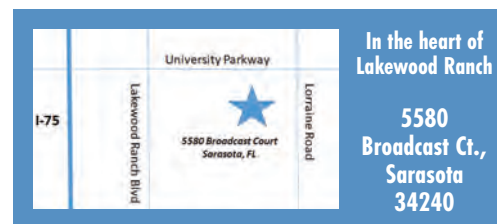


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Continued from Page 112

Christmas lights. And by “would,” I should say “did,” with a previous HOA that quoted to me chapter and verse from its rule book, which said strung lights were only allowed during the holiday season. They didn’t budge even after I pointed them to various streets and restaurants that use white lights to “class up” the place year-round, which is all I was trying to do with my bachelor pad. And which would’ve totally worked, and girls would’ve thought I was sophisticated, because that’s what white lights are: classy — though it’s strange because they’re literally just normal, everyday light bulbs, only tiny. It’s baffling, really, but then tiny spoons are also the height of class.

My wife has not-so-secret wishes that our house be Griswold-level — but in color — and honestly, I might

go for it were it not for the logistics involved. It takes me a few hours, spread out over a couple weekends, to just string up the bushes and the gutter. Even if I had a ladder that could reach the roof, I can’t imagine where I’d find the time to climb up there and cover it all, especially during the busy holiday season. And then there’d be the hospital bills. There’s also that pesky electricity; I can’t even manage to keep the circuit breaker from tripping even with just the bushes lit up. Cue more hospital bills. And the storage: Where does Griswold keep what must be hundreds of boxes of lights strands? And then half of them somehow break while just sitting there unperturbed for 11 months, so I guess he just buys a thousand dollars’ worth of lights every year? Must be why he needs that Christmas bonus so badly.

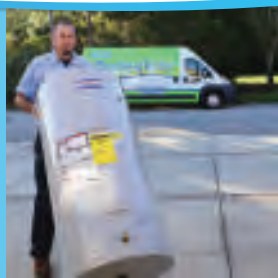
I should’ve seen this coming, but as

soon as I convinced the spouse that such an extravagance is impractical for all but the movies and the wealthy, the news featured two local neighborhoods full of Griswold houses: Cedar Hollow (at Honore and Camus, just south of Fruitville) and Colonial Gables (at Bee Ridge and Woodmont, just east of Honore). There are literally thousands of decorations in each neighborhood; pretty much every house and yard is decked out in lights. I can’t even imagine their electric bill, but I am so glad I don’t have to face that kind of peer pressure in our own neighborhood. Instead, we pack the kids in the car, pick up some drive-thru food and slowly meander through theirs, taking many, many pictures that we never look at again. This is yet another thing that I appreciate having in common with the spouse: Christmas cruising, as we call it — with the windows up, of course.

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34/900-1

# BOOFEST

OCT. 31 AT THE MARKET AT LAKEWOOD RANCH



Lakewood Ranch 4-year-old  
Julianne Fortunate has the perfect  
bag to carry her candy.



Photos by Jay Heater  
Lakewood Ranch 2-year-old Amelia  
Dinapoli looks for the next stop at Boo Fest.



**Above:** Lakewood  
Ranch 2-year-old  
Weslyn Sierra  
shows her Hal-  
loween bounty to  
Lakewood Ranch  
4-year-old Leo  
Dinapoli.

**Left:** Wrigley, a  
4-year-old cava-  
lier, dresses as a  
pineapple. Wrigley  
was with owner  
Allison Martin of  
Lakewood Ranch.





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Feb 1 | 7:30 pm | Van Wezel

Nocturnes and mazurkas,  
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**Violinist Benjamin Beilman**

and pianist **Alessio Bax**

Feb 25 | 7:30 pm | Riverview PAC

Busoni's Sonata and Franck's Violin Sonata.

**Takács Quartet with pianist Joyce Yang**

March 15 | 7:30 pm | Riverview PAC

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# EMPTY BOWLS

MEALS ON WHEELS PLUS OF MANATEE

NOV. 5 AT MAIN STREET AT LAKEWOOD RANCH



Photos by Liz Ramos

**Above:** Maribeth Phillips, the president and CEO of Meals on Wheels Plus of Manatee, helps Heritage Harbour's Steve Gandel and Paulette Gandel pick out their bowls to take home.

**Left:** Mark Keckstein, the instructor of the culinary program at Manatee Technical College, and Brianna Brookins, an MTC culinary student, serve gumbo soup.



Country Club East's Susan and Len Tabicman say they are overwhelmed by the number of soups from which they could choose.



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3Natives - Acai & Juicery takes a healthy twist on the "fast food" mindset by serving healthy and convenient food at an affordable price. This healthy lifestyle cafe is well-known for its fresh and flavorful acai bowls, smoothies, salads, wraps, cold-pressed juices, and more! With 18 locations across Florida, the Lakewood Ranch location is the first and only location to break ground on the west coast of Florida. Each 3Natives is locally owned and operated and this healthy lifestyle cafe is one you must check out!

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**11577 E State Rd 70, Lakewood Ranch**  
**941.751.1119 | [www.3Natives.com](http://www.3Natives.com)**

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## ED'S TAVERN

A Jersey Joint in Lakewood Ranch, Ed's Tavern is the perfect blend of local neighborhood sports bar and family friendly restaurant right in the heart of Main Street (next to the movie theater). We're the only lakefront dining in Lakewood Ranch! The menu has something for everyone, from Southern favorites like pulled pork and fried pickles to our authentic New Jersey classics like open-faced sandwiches and disco fries. Our newly remodeled full-service bar now includes 26 ice cold draft selections plus over 31 flat screen TVs.

Daily Specials, Trivia every Wednesday and Thursday. Live Music every Friday & Saturday night. Mon - Thur 11am - 12am, Fri - Sat 11am - 2am, Sun 11am - 11pm.

**10719 Rodeo Dr, Lakewood Ranch**  
**941.907.0400 | [facebook.com/edstavernlwr](https://facebook.com/edstavernlwr)**

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## GROVE - RESTAURANT, PATIO & BALLROOM

GROVE specializes in contemporary American offerings and onsite event planning. The menu is elevated yet approachable and locally inspired. Overlooking the charming Main Street center, at Grove there's room for everyone at the table! Gathering spaces include a casual patio, a relaxing lounge, intimate private rooms and a lively, modern bar. We serve breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner.

**10670 Boardwalk Loop, Lakewood Ranch**  
**941.893.4321 | [www.GroveLWR.com](http://www.GroveLWR.com)**

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## MCGRATH'S IRISH ALE HOUSE

Experience a taste of Ireland in Lakewood Ranch; where our community is family. Enjoy a mix of family inspired Irish offerings, as well as everyone's favorites like a Chopped Salad, a Pub style BLT, Traditional Shepherd's Pie, and Fish & Chips. Alongside dinner, enjoy a Kilkenny, Guinness, or choose from our wide range of whiskeys and cocktails that will transport you to the heart of Ireland, all from Lakewood Ranch Main Street. At McGrath's, we believe that no dish can be better than its ingredients.

Mon - Thur 11am - 10pm, Fri - Sat 11am- 12am, Sun 9am - 10pm

**8110 Lakewood Main St, Lakewood Ranch**  
**941.210.4398 | [www.mcgrathsirish.com](http://www.mcgrathsirish.com)**

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## PINO'S

Pino's is back in a NEW location! Sarasota's favorite, Chef Pino, formerly of Pino's Italian Dining, is now offering a private dining experience. Looking for the perfect night out? Chef Pino will be serving up his signature specials such as grilled octopus, ossobuco, homemade pasta, 16 oz. veal chops, fresh seafood, choices along with an a la carte menu.

Larger parties can enjoy the private wine room that seats up to 18 guests. Call to make your private party reservations now & ask about our At-Home Catering. Come visit us at our NEW location inside of Appizza a pizza. Near Detweiler's at the intersection of Lockwood & University. Visit our website for private dining menu.

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DINING OUT



# *PARTING GLANCE*



Phil Pape captured this shot of a black-bellied whistling duck coming in for a landing.



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