

Around the Ranch

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THE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER OF LAKEWOOD RANCH

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2023



THINGS TO DO, PLACES TO GO, AND PEOPLE TO MEET! Lakewood Ranch Community Activities' Parks and Recreation Program offers something for a gamut of ages, interests, and abilities! For more information see pages 12-13.

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- Brian Higgins, Owner, with son Kyle

Lakewood Ranch Baking Artist Is Ready for Your Challenge

By Ernie Soller
Community Correspondent

Meet The Lume Kitchen. Martha, are you listening? Forget that cozy New England cottage-thing of yours. The action in baking and design is now firmly planted in the South – specifically in Lakewood Ranch, Fla., at the home of Elizabeth Olsen, and it is called The Lume Kitchen. How do I know this?

Well, I experienced Elizabeth's Lume Kitchen firsthand, that's how.

I ventured forth one sunny Florida morning to Elizabeth's home to check out just what the fuss was all about. I'd called ahead, and explained that I'd like to get a firsthand look – and, of course a taste – of her art.

We settled on a time in mid-morning, and she welcomed me with a cheerful smile, along with the promise of something very good to eat.

Now, anyone who knows me is aware of my rather large sweet tooth. And that tooth and its owner were absolutely not disappointed.

We sat down in her kitchen, and, on the table, artfully arranged, was a large cast iron pan filled with frosted cinnamon rolls, a couple of glasses of water, and a couple of forks. Simply done, and most welcoming.

Elizabeth served me a slice of the cinnamon rolls, and I proceeded to use my fork to its greatest advantage, cutting a small corner from the edge of the large, solid-looking offering. I hadn't eaten a cinnamon roll this good in decades.

It was tasty as all get out, with chopped pecans in the batter, and an absolutely delicious frosting. I was tempted to ask for a second helping, but then the first piece was of a good size, and I didn't want to appear greedy.

I also noticed that on her kitchen counter, Elizabeth had additional examples of what she could produce in her well-equipped kitchen.

There, right in the center of the large island counter in the center of her kitchen was a tall cake, frosted in blue and white, a plate full of thick, rich-looking cookies, and a board on which sat a yummy-looking coffee cake.

Then there was this "fresh cut flowers" box. This was a small box containing a half-dozen cupcakes – each designed as a bunch of flowers, with colored eggs to complete the picture. I can only say: WOW!

Maybe it was a good thing that I was on a bit of a schedule. Given enough time, I might have been tempted to sample everything in sight. It all looked that good.

And that wasn't all there was on display in The Lume Kitchen. On another counter, there was this ... let's call it a "construction." Think tall chocolate cake, very artistically frosted, and accented with chocolate-filled cookies, and ... big chunks and literal blocks of chocolate. It almost



looked like it had been designed by an architect.

Elizabeth explained that this cake was a special order for a customer, and I watched as she constructed a box to fit her creation. And, just as I was leaving Elizabeth and her Lume Kitchen, that customer arrived to pick up her custom-designed chocolate skyscraper.

Elizabeth Olsen spent 10 years teaching kindergarten, but then the whole pandemic thing happened and she found herself at home, and wanting to do what she loved – entertaining people in her home, but couldn't during the shutdown.

Her thought was: "How can I share my kitchen without having people over?"

In 2020, she hit on the idea of producing decorated cookies for Mother's Day, and her cook-



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER AND ELIZABETH OLSEN



ies became a big hit. People started to contact her, asking if she could make something special for their next big event.

Upon moving to Lakewood Ranch, she had her new kitchen remodeled, with a big center island, and a large, professional-grade stove. The Lume Kitchen was born; the name comes from a combination of parts of her daughters' names.

On Valentine's Day this year, Elizabeth advertised on Facebook that she was offering cupcake bouquets – and she sold out in one hour! And no wonder – these bouquets are AMAZING.

A Pennsylvania mom called her recently to ask if she could do something special for the lady's daughter, who was on a mission trip operating out of a Sarasota church and would be spending her first birthday away from her fam-

ily's home. Elizabeth called the church to set up the presentation, and produced a pink flower bouquet for the young woman.

Elizabeth is looking to expand her business; she loves to do custom work and is already contracted to do special cakes for upcoming weddings. She's also considering a possible partnership with a local florist, to do combination "floral and confection" presentations.

She's already had discussions with possible backers with the idea of opening her own shop as The Lume Kitchen grows.

For more information contact The Lume Kitchen at hello@thelumekitchen.com, call (970)396-4673, or visit thelumekitchen.com.

Get your taste buds ready for The Lume Kitchen experience!

Forestar Breaks Ground on First Amenity Campus for Star Farms at Lakewood Ranch

Forestar Group Inc. recently celebrated breaking ground on The Resort Club, the first amenity campus for Star Farms at Lakewood Ranch. Attendees at the ceremony included members of the Forestar team Tony Squitieri, Florida regional vice president; Ted Gadoury, land development amenity manager; John Barnott, director of real estate investments and development; and Christian Cotter, homeowners association manager.

The social hub of Star Farms, The Resort Club will be an innovative, amenity-rich campus including a hospitality-staffed clubhouse, where members can explore interests, stay active and connect with friends. Phase One will feature a resort pool and spa, poolside cabanas and beach areas, pet park, Trade Route Coffee Shop, Star Fit Wellness Complex - Fitness and Performance Centers, community lawn, courtyard, golf cart parking, and mail kiosk. Future phases are planned to showcase a poolside bar and grill, outdoor activities area, event center and The Terrace - Chef's Patio. Upon completion, Star Farms will offer four resort campuses: The Resort Club, Junction Place, Adventure Retreat and Cabana Corner, in addition to greenways and trails.

"We are thrilled to break ground on the



first amenity campus in Star Farms at Lakewood Ranch, laying the foundation for a truly exceptional hometown lifestyle and experience," said Squitieri. "This milestone represents our commitment to creating vibrant, engaging spaces that foster a sense of community and enrich the lives of our residents."

Surrounded by the natural beauty of Southwest Florida, Star Farms at Lakewood Ranch is a multigenerational lifestyle community. The 700-acre, gated village is a resort ranch hometown featuring 1,500 single-family homes, paired villa retreats and townhomes with a variety of amenities, clubs and hospitality services. Positioned within Lakewood Ranch, Star Farms is minutes from dining, shopping and cultural activities as well as top-rated beaches.

Visit www.starfarmslwr.com and join the VIP Club for the latest information.



THE FALL LINE-UP IS HERE!

By Brittany Lamont, President and CEO

Happy August! I can't believe how quickly this year is flying by. I hope you've all enjoyed making summer memories with family and friends in the beautiful Florida sunshine. Make sure to soak up these last few moments!

While the summer is winding down, the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance - your local Chamber of Commerce - is full speed ahead on a variety of programs and events to engage businesses in the region. If you are looking for a way to make business connections and highlight your products and services, we have some great opportunities for you!

Choose your team and showcase your business with a booth at the Tradeshow Tailgate: A Business Expo, from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Sept. 21, at Roberts Arena in Sarasota.

Next, grab your family, friends, and colleagues to volunteer for our sixth annual "Alliance Gives Back" volunteer days! This is



your opportunity to donate your time, talent or treasure to numerous Alliance member non-profit organizations on October 5th through the 7th.

Help us kick off the season of giving thanks by recognizing outstanding volunteers at the annual Sandies Awards from 11:30 a.m. to

1 p.m. Nov. 17 at Grove in Lakewood Ranch. The Sandies Awards honor volunteers in various categories for their dedication to the Alliance and their community!

Finally, get ready for the 34th annual Hob Nob, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Dec. 6 at Premier Sports Campus in Lakewood Ranch. You'll enjoy a night of mixing and mingling among some of the finest restaurants and businesses in Lakewood Ranch.

Not a member yet? Learn more about how you can join the LWRBA family by contacting Blake Frey at blakefrey@lwrba.org or visit lwrba.org.

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"Gardeners Out East" Brings HGTV Star Power to LWR

By Ernie Soller
Community Correspondent

Gardeners Out East, the garden club of Lakewood Ranch, has been around for a while now – since the 2014-'15 club year. Among other projects, they are responsible for some of the landscaping around the Lakewood Ranch Town Hall and are perhaps best known for the butterfly garden, which they established in the Summerfield Community Park in Summerfield/Riverwalk Village.

Well, the folks in Gardeners Out East managed to corral an HGTV star, John Gidding – a Yale and Harvard-educated architect and designer famous for his "Curb Appeal" and "Curb Appeal Xtreme" shows – to make a presentation in July to a large crowd at the Robert Toale and Sons Celebration of Life Center in Lakewood Ranch.

Gidding was introduced by Gardeners Out East president Carolyn Lowry-Nation, and began his talk by showing a few examples of the home transformations that he participated in as part of the Curb Appeal shows. The idea of these shows is to create a "look" that would enhance the resale potential of a home.

He noted that a lot of the changes that he and his colleagues made possible included portions of green grass. His talk on this occasion, however, was titled: "At Home With Nature."

During COVID, Gidding took the time for what he referred to as his "COVID project" – an effort to study the damage that had been done to the environment from the installation of soft grass lawns.

Now, the idea of a nice, green lawn has been around for quite a while – about three centuries. But according to Gidding, the whole green lawn thing began during the reign of that great spender of tax dollars and builder of perhaps the most famous example of royal excess ... Versailles Palace. The man himself was France's good old King Louis XIV, The Sun King, the undisputed style leader of the early 1700s.

Per Gidding, prior to the construction of Versailles, the idea of green lawn areas around your castle had not existed. Land was pretty much left as-is, unless it was being used to grow crops or construct buildings. But in building Versailles, Louis had created sumptuous garden areas, landscaped with fountains, and carefully trimmed plants and designed walkways, interspersed with green grassy areas.

Since King Louis XIV was THE arbiter of

taste in Europe, his nobles felt that they too had to have manicured gardens with areas of trimmed grass. Louis had apparently started a new landscaping movement. And as Gidding pointed out, you had to be wealthy to afford green grass. It was expensive to install, and it took many hours of physical labor on the part of multiple workers to keep all those blades of grass trimmed. Remember, there were no riding lawn mowers in the 1700s!

Gidding pointed out that the British aristocracy, in their desire to "keep up with the Bourbons," took a slightly different bent on the whole garden idea, but in the end there was still a whole lot of green grass being used on those English country estates.

Continuing to North America, Gidding noted that the native people had done a good job of being stewards of the land, but European settlers brought with them – along with the idea that natural resources could be exploited – the "lawn aesthetic." And another lawn-generating factor was brought over by Scottish immigrants – GOLF. He noted that in Scotland, the game of golf was reserved for the wealthy, but when displaced poorer Scots came to America, they brought with them a love of golf, and they went about establishing the game in America – along

John Gidding Brings a New Perspective to Landscaping in Florida



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER



with the requisite acres of green grass. The lawn aesthetic gave the impression that the bigger and greener your grass lawn, the more successful you appeared to your neighbors.

Gidding, as part of his "COVID Project," decided that there needed to be a new landscape aesthetic, which would involve removing grass and installing trees and native plants. Gidding also noted that planting a few trees in your yard will encourage the return of birds to the area.

He admitted that we are drawn to grass lawns, which have evolved into a kind of emblem of good suburban design but, he noted,

putting in a grass lawn is almost like putting a sheet of plastic over the soil of your yard, as it has a tendency to kill whatever may be underneath the sod layer, while it also sucks up a lot of water.

Speaking of water, Gidding pointed out that water is a finite resource even here in Florida, where we get a lot of rain, and he predicted that in perhaps as little as 20 years, new irrigation laws may prohibit lawn watering as we know it, at which time your green suburban lawn will be going brown – permanently.

In addition to planting trees, Gidding recommends that people here in Florida cut back on their lawn area and instead, plant native Florida plants that will do well in our climate, and won't require pouring water on them continuously.

Some of the plants that Gidding recommended include the "sunshine mimosa," a low-growing ground cover plant with delicate "puff ball" blossoms and leaves which, when touched, fold into each other. (I came across one of these plants out at Robinson Preserve a while back, growing on the side of a trail, and was amazed at how pretty it was.)

If the sunshine mimosa isn't tall enough for your garden, Gidding had several other suggestions, such as the Florida betony, which will grow to 1-2 feet in height, and the spiderwort, which can reach 3 feet. Then there's the gopher apple, a low-growing shrub which produces apple-like fruit that's favored by Florida's gopher tortoises which, in their digging of burrows, help to provide shelter for a variety of animals. He also gave out several packets of seeds for native Florida plants, as well as some potted examples.

Gidding suggested that gardeners look toward the concept of a "forest glen," with trees providing a shady canopy above native Florida plants.

Gidding encouraged his audience to pull back on their lawn areas, to try out the native Florida plants that he recommended and after they've gotten their garden going with them, to take notes and get back to him as to how their work is going.

He included a listing of native Florida plants in an insert for his book, "At Home with Nature," copies of which were on hand for sale at the meeting.

I feel like I need to go out and buy some native Florida plants, as I actually do have some bare areas in my landscaping. We'll see how they fare. Thanks, John.

Marmalade:

A “Beach Exercise” At LWR’s Waterside Place

By Ernie Soller
Community Correspondent

My wife and I took a sun-drenched stroll at Waterside Place a few days ago. We walked past some of the new stores that have opened, talked about having something good to eat – or drink, and saw a sandwich sign on the sidewalk marking the location of a new store called “Marmalade.”

Wikipedia defines “marmalade” as a preserve made from the juice and peel of citrus fruits, boiled with sugar. Now that sounds like a winner to me, and I freely admit that any restaurant that serves toast for breakfast and omits orange marmalade from its menu risks my culinary ire. Yes, I really like marmalade.

The sandwich sign made me curious, though – the shop didn’t look like a restaurant. There were no patrons drinking coffee outside the door – or inside, for that matter. It then dawned on me that the Marmalade at Waterside Place was not a restaurant, but something else entirely.

We walked into Marmalade and found ourselves in a space that could be referred to as “Beach Prep.” We also met a cheerful, smiling young woman, Lexie, who informed us that she had moved here from the Saginaw, Mich. area and had, in fact, come to Florida “for the beach” – and then decided to stay and got a job at ... Marmalade.

Marmalade at Waterside Place is absolutely not a restaurant, but instead a place to get ready for, or accent your arrival at, the beach. The area behind the sales counter proclaims that Marmalade is a “Sunny State of Mind.” Here you can find little unique items for your beaching pleasure, such as the plastic drink cups marked with the words: “Where’s My Cabana Boy?” My wife could not resist this item and bought a set. (Did I just get reincarnated as her “cabana boy?”) She also tried on a colorful dress, which she really liked, but found that the dress was made to fit a woman just a few inches taller. There were also a lot of home accent items, such as the kitchen towels which noted that “Mister Rogers did not adequately prepare me for the people in this neighborhood.”

I found that Marmalade has a goodly selection of sunglasses. Given the intense sunlight found in Florida and especially on the beaches, sunglasses are kind of a mandatory item here in the Sunshine State. One of my first purchase experiences when I came to Florida years ago



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER

was a good pair of “wrap-around” sunglasses. I found myself walking the beach and getting this total glare – not only from the sun overhead, but from the reflection of the sun on the beach and the water. If that experience sound like yours, you need sunglasses – fast!

Do you know what a “shower steamer” is? I did not, until I saw one of these items at Marmalade, and Lexie enlightened me as to what a shower steamer does. It is a little like a small bar of soap, only instead of rubbing it over your body while taking your shower, you place the item on the floor of your shower and let the hot water flow over it. When you do that, the shower steamer releases great smells which help to relax you. There was one in stock at Marmalade called “Parenting Done for Today.” Sounds like just the thing for a mom overstressed after a day chasing toddlers.

There are other colorful beach-inspired items to peruse at Marmalade, such as all sorts of casual earrings and other jewelry items – not pricey high-end “fine jewelry” items, but the fun, casual things. You can even find scented candles to go with your shower steamers, for a total relaxation scent immersion. (Think bathtub scene in Bull Durham.)

The store itself is decorated in a manner to get you to relax and have fun. On one high shelf, there is a vintage “bicycle built for two” – a real Schwinn, complete with two-tone seats, a headlight, a bell, and chrome fenders! There is also a small shelf on another wall decorated with pastel throws, and vintage “beach reads,” such as Pat Conroy’s “Beach Music,” a book called “Surf Shack,” and Richard Castle’s “Driving Heat.” Throw in a Beach Boys soundtrack, and you’re ready to go!

The Marmalade idea came from two ladies, Jenna and Nicky, who had established careers in hairdressing. The story goes that one day they were sitting at a favorite watering hole and started talking about what sort of business they’d like to get into. It would have to do with hair, of course, but then they got into the idea of a beach-themed business; not only hair, but all the stuff that one needs to be a true beach devotee. It would include beach-style clothing, accessories, sunglasses (of course), items to enhance relaxation, totes to haul all of your beach equipment, sunshades, etc.

The idea took shape and became a reality, and there are now three Marmalade locations:



Southside – This location contains the hair salon, and is located on South Osprey in Sarasota.

Surfside – located in Siesta Key Village ... Lifestyle and apparel merchandise.

Waterside – Located at 1561 Lakefront Drive in the Waterside area of Lakewood Ranch. The sign on the door offers: beauty, apparel, and home goods. I like to refer to it as “beach prep”!

Now, there is also what might be called an additional entertainment factor for the Waterside Place location. Ok guys, we know that going into a boutique that sells all sort of merchandise usually purchased by women can be a drag.

However, the friendly folks at Marmalade have made it easy for you guys to at least get a little enjoyment of your own. You see, the Waterside Marmalade is located right between the Florida Provision Company store and Kilwin’s.

So, while your significant other is checking out Marmalade ... you can take your pick – a cold craft brew at Florida Provision, or an ice cream on a hot day at Kilwin’s.

This could be a win-win.

For more information visit marmaladelifestyle.com or call (941)362-0276.

LAKEWOOD RANCH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Building a true sense of community, through memorable events and social clubs.



The summer heat hasn't stopped the Lakewood Ranch Community Activity team and partners from having a grand time in the parks of The Ranch! From family fun during program-packed first Saturdays at Bob Gardner Park, to weekly "Sunset Volleyball" at Waterside, and intriguing "Star Gazing" at Greenbrook Adventure Park, we've been connecting with the community, local businesses, and each other.



Aliye Presley

As the LWRCA summer 2023 parks & recreation schedule comes to an end, get ready for a bigger-than-ever collection of events and experiences curated for Lakewood Ranch residents this fall. We are bringing back all of the fan favorites and sprinkling in new programs you're sure to love.

With the fall comes one of the community's favorite large-scale events: Boofest will be back on Lakewood Main Street October 27! Following the next month, the Mindful Triathlon will be back on November 18, and then the second annual New Year's Eve at Waterside Place celebration will take place on December 31. If you are interested in sponsoring events, purchasing booth space, volunteering, or anything else, please contact info@lwrca.org.



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AROUND THE RANCH



Come Out and Play!

By Aliye Presley

When life hands you COVID, use it to build community. Amidst the challenges brought by the 2020 lockdown, when uncertainty loomed over people's lives, many sought meaningful and positive ways to fill their time. Among them, Lakewood Ranch Community Activities chose to persist in what it excelled at – fostering strong bonds with its residents. However, this time around, the organization had to adapt to a new reality, veering away from the grand-scale 1,000+ attendee events it was once accustomed to hosting. A simple “Yoga in the Park” program was planned and scheduled – and dozens of people showed up! This is when the organization knew they were onto something.

What began as a simple idea to stay connected during the pandemic has now blossomed into an extraordinary Parks and Recreation program in Lakewood Ranch. From its humble origins with “Yoga in the Park,” the program roster has grown exponentially, with over 700 events now taking place annually. The Parks and Recreation programming has truly become all-encompassing, catering to a diverse range of interests, abilities, and age groups. From sports and fitness to special interests and hobbies, there's something for everyone. The program

has even introduced new initiatives, such as “Yoga for All Abilities,” ensuring inclusivity for all residents. Popular programs like “Strength + Mobility + Balance” for adults aged 55+, captivating “Star Gazing” for children, and engaging “Family Kickball” are just some examples of the fun-filled activities now offered – not to mention the enjoyable “Bingo for All,” the inviting “Newcomer's Meet-up” for building community connections, and the beginner-friendly “Intro to Golf.”

Lakewood Ranch's Parks and Recreation program has truly become the heart of the community, bringing people together and promoting health, happiness, and harmony.

With so many different offerings, residents of all ages and interests can embrace the joy of being part of this vibrant and flourishing community program.

The Parks and Recreation roster continues to evolve and grow, largely based on input from the community. Hone your existing skills or learn something new, and form strong connections and friendships with neighbors, thanks to the diverse catalog of events the Parks & Recreation program in Lakewood Ranch has to offer you. Learn more at mylwr.com.



Your LWR Story

By Maggie Milne

Meet Jimmy and Karisa Rhode, Lakewood Ranch residents and business owners.

Christine grew up in Sebring, Fla. She met her husband when she was 16, during a family trip to the Islands of Trinidad and Tobago. She and her husband are now the proud parents of four athletic children.

Christine and her family were living in Sebring until their move to Michigan in 2019. The McMillan's learned quickly that a four-seasons climate includes winter, with snow. Christine and family soon began their plan to return to Florida.

When considering where they would live when returning to Florida, Christine thought about Lakewood Ranch. Between 2017 and 2019 Christine regularly drove two of her children to Premier Sports Campus for soccer tournaments. Their children are soccer players with dreams of playing professionally. Christine was hired by Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, so the Lakewood Ranch community is where they found their home and began their Lakewood Ranch life in 2021.

The McMillans are a busy family. Christine works fulltime at Lakewood Ranch Medical Center in emergency, and has recently opened her new business, Soltive Hydration Spa, which offers services such as hydration and vitamin replenishment. Christine is also in school to earn her nurse practitioner degree. Christine's spa business is located in a new multi-unit complex called the Wellness CoWork. Christine's dream is to work as a nurse practitioner and continue to grow her Soltive Hydration Spa business.

The McMillan kids are busy with soccer programs throughout the year, as well as school, and play. The McMillans live in Greenbrook, one of the first residential villages in Lakewood Ranch. Their home is located directly across from Greenbrook Adventure Park, offering basketball courts, dog parks, exercise stations, inline skating/hockey park, nature trails, playground, and sports fields. The McMillan children range in age from preschool to high school, with one attending Lakewood Ranch High, one at Mona Jane Middle School, one in Gullett Elementary School, and the youngest attending a local preschool.

Christine and her husband are thrilled their kids are passionate about Major League Soccer; two participate in a local MLS program. The two oldest McMillan boys began their soccer careers with the Lakewood Ranch Chargers organization; their other son currently plays with the Chargers.

With all that the children and parents are involved with, the McMillan family has a team approach keeping everyone on track and on time for their respective activities. In between all the scheduled events for each family member, the McMillans enjoy fun events like Music on Main Street, which is the first Friday of each month and Christine's personal favorite. She loves the atmosphere Music on Main offers, how all ages attend, the live music that is suitable for everyone, dancing, and kids' activities. She says the whole family revels in the carefree spirit of the event. The McMillans try to attend every month.

Christine's husband works as a data analyst, but plans to return to school too. When Christine feels caught up with work, her schooling, the kids' schedules, and tending to the needs of



her business, she engages with a couple of networking groups, such as the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance and a Lakewood Ranch networking group for women. She said she enjoys the positive and encouraging culture she is surrounded by through work, networking groups, colleagues, and mentors.

The McMillan family is happily living in Lakewood Ranch and cannot imagine leaving – ever. Christine's long-term goal includes opening a primary care facility of her own, one offering hydration spa therapies in addition to other holistic approaches to healing. The McMillans are a family team, each striving toward their personal goals, encouraging one another along the way in their Lakewood Ranch lives.

To contact Christine email christine@soltivehydrationspa.com and/or call 941-226-9805.

We would like to share Your LWR Story! Include who you are, why you chose Lakewood Ranch, your Lakewood Ranch life now, and what excites you about your Lakewood Ranch future. Send Your LWR Story and photos to yourlwrstory@lakewoodranch.com.

LWR Remains #1 Top Selling Multi-Gen Community in The Nation

Brisk Sales Far Outpace National and Regional Competition

Lakewood Ranch continues to be the best-selling community for all ages in the U.S., according to national real estate consulting firm RCLCO's 2023 mid-year survey. The Ranch secured 1,227 new home sales through the end of June of 2023, beating last year's numbers by 20% percent, and keeping it in the No. 1 position for more than five consecutive years.

Lakewood Ranch also distanced itself from other regional master-planned communities (MPCs), with more than two-and-a-half times the sales of Babcock Ranch, and almost three times as many sales as Wellen Park, the only other two MPCs in Southwest Florida to rank in the top 15 positions on the list.

"Post pandemic, we continue to see buyers attracted to Lakewood Ranch because of our lifestyle, multi-generational appeal, and diversity of neighborhoods," said Laura Cole, senior vice president of LWR Communities, LLC. "In 2023 we introduced three new entry-level villages and two new luxury villages to round-out our segmentation. This provided a boost to sales.

"The move-up and active adult markets continue to perform exceedingly well even in this high-interest rate environment," Cole continued. "Builders have helped buyers get across the finish line by assisting with closing costs."

There is no question that the new home market has benefited from low inventories in the resale market, Cole pointed out, but she doesn't feel that this advantage will be dampened when interest rates drop. "There is great pent-up demand within Lakewood Ranch for new homes."

Lakewood Ranch also benefitted from being in the nation's fastest growing state as well as in the Sarasota/Bradenton area, which continually appears in national and international rankings for its high quality of life.

RCLCO has been ranking master-planned communities since 1994.

THE (PET) DOCTOR IS IN!

By Erin Siems, DVM

Pet identification – it's not a subject often talked about and sadly, many people don't think of it until they need it. The reality is that 30% of dogs and cats get lost at some point in their lifetime. Animals who have identification are much more likely to be reunited with their family.

There are many forms of identification from very simple to super high tech. The simplest and most obvious means of identification is a collar with a tag or engraving on it. These are highly visible, usually comfortable and worn with little resistance. However, collars can become lost so it is a good idea to have multiple means of identification.

Microchips are commonly used throughout the pet industry. The microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is implanted under the skin, usually around the shoulder blades. The microchip can be scanned at any animal hospital or shelter for quick identification.

Along with the rest of the world, pet IDs have entered the high tech world, which now offers digital ID tags and GPS trackers. GPS devices track your pooch's location so you can hunt him down. The digital ID is scannable and holds your pet's important contact information and relevant history.

We can take all the preventable steps in the world but the reality is that some pets will still



get lost. If your fur baby gets lost, don't panic ... too much (nobody will fault you if you ugly cry for a hot minute). To set yourself up for success, always keep contact information up to date including your contact information as well as your vet's information.

Get into action early. The tried and true walking around calling for them is always a good start for stragglers but think bigger. We can reach so many people who will be glad to help through digital media. Sites like Nexdoor and Facebook are often great places to reach out to your neighbors and beyond to help you get reunited. If it has been more than a few hours, don't forget to call vet clinics and shelters in the area so they can be on the lookout for your lost companion.

If you find a stay pet, remember, they may not be a stray at all. Someone out there may be ugly crying for them. Do your due diligence by looking for any identification such as collars, traditional or digital tags. If that does not exist, take them to a vet clinic or shelter to scan for a chip. Accidents happen; pets get out. Let's work together to get them back home.

Dr. Erin Siems graduated from Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine in 2010, and has enjoyed working in both general practice and emergency care. She has been practicing in the Lakewood Ranch/Bradenton area for the past seven years. She enjoys general practice because it gives her the ability to build relationships with her patients and their families. Dr. Siems opened her own practice, Big Paws Animal Hospital in Lakewood Ranch, in May 2020. Email pet questions to reception@BigPawsAnimalHospital.com.

August Programs at Chabad of Bradenton & Lakewood Ranch

Please note that all events will take place at the Chabad tent (outside Chabad at 5712 Lorraine Road) or at the virtual Chabad House at chabadofbradenton.com/zoom, unless otherwise written.

Talmud Classes

Mondays, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

At the virtual Chabad House

Explore the Talmud and its laws in its original text. No prior knowledge of the Talmud or Hebrew is necessary. Book fee: \$45.

Torah Studies

Saturday mornings, 9 - 9:30 a.m.

At the Chabad House

Participate in a fascinating class on the Torah portion of the week. Discover the mystical meanings and lessons behind ancient stories. Admission is free.

Weekly Shabbat Services

Friday nights, 7 p.m.; Saturday

mornings at 9:30 a.m., Shabbat Kiddush at noon

At the Chabad House

Enjoy warm, family friendly services at The Chabad House. Saturday morning services are followed by a delicious buffet Kiddush.

Tanya Class

Thursdays, 9-9:30 a.m.

At the virtual Chabad House

Delve into the secrets of the soul with Rabbi Mendy at this weekly Tanya class. Admission is free.

Grand Open House & Rosh Hashanah Fun Day

Sunday, Aug. 27, noon to 2 p.m.

At the Chabad House

Join Chabad of Bradenton & Lakewood Ranch for a fun-filled day with family and friends, featuring a beekeeper presentation, Rosh Hashanah crafts, petting zoo, moon bounce, delicious BBQ & Shofar making demo. Open to the entire

community. Find out what Chabad has to offer you for the upcoming year! Suggested donation \$5 per person, or \$18 per family. Sponsor for \$250.

Chabad Hebrew School of the Arts

Sunday, Aug. 27, 9:30 a.m. to noon – first day and orientation

At the Chabad House

Give your child the experience of a lifetime at CHS, featuring an outstanding curriculum, professional and warm teachers, hands-on lessons, CKids motivational system and an innovative Hebrew reading Aleph Champ program.

For more information on any of the ongoing events or to reserve, call Rabbi Mendy Bukiet at (941)752-3030, email rabbib@chabadofbradenton.com, or visit the Chabad website at chabadofbradenton.com.

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Lakewood Ranch Medical Center Receives National Recognition

Lakewood Ranch Medical Center has received two American Heart Association Get With The Guidelines and Mission: Lifeline achievement awards for demonstrating commitment to following up-to-date, research-based guidelines for the treatment of heart disease and stroke, ultimately leading to more lives saved, shorter recovery times and fewer readmissions to the hospital.

Every 40 seconds, someone in the U.S. has a stroke or heart attack, and heart disease and stroke are the No. 1 and No. 5 causes of death in the United States, respectively. Studies show patients can recover better when providers consistently follow treatment guidelines.

Get With The Guidelines and Mission: Lifeline put the expertise of the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association to work for hospitals nationwide, helping ensure patient care is aligned with the latest evidence- and research-based guidelines. As a participant in both / Mission: Lifeline / Get With The Guidelines programs, Lakewood Ranch Medical Center qualified for the award by demonstrating how their organization has committed to improving quality care.

"Lakewood Ranch Medical Center is committed to improving care by adhering to the latest treatment guidelines and streamlining processes to ensure timely and proper care for heart attacks and strokes," said Judy Young, chief nursing officer at Lakewood Ranch Medical Center. "The Mission: Lifeline and Get With The Guidelines programs make it easier for our teams to put proven knowledge and guidelines to work on a daily basis, which helps us ensure more people in Lakewood Ranch and surrounding communities, experience longer, healthier lives."

This year, Lakewood Ranch Medical Center received these achievement awards:

- 2023 Quality Achievement Award – Mission: Lifeline – STEMI Receiving Center – GOLD PLUS

- Get With The Guidelines – Stroke GOLD PLUS with Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite

"We are pleased to recognize Lakewood Ranch Medical Center for its commitment to caring for those in their community who need cardiovascular care," said John Warner, M.D., FAHA, past president of the American Heart Association and CEO of The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. "Hospitals that follow the American Heart Association's quality improvement protocols often see improved patient outcomes, fewer readmissions and lower mortality rates – a win for health care systems, families and communities."

Art, Home, & Coffee – Via la Casa May Pleasantly Surprise You!

By Ernie Soller
Community Correspondent

As the saying goes ... a little bird told me about this new coffee shop that recently opened in San Marco Plaza.

Via la Casa is an effort by a mother and daughter team, Silvia Teixeira Costa and Gabriella Teixeira Moss, to create a place where people can go to check out some great art and enjoy spending time with friends over a cup of coffee and a pastry – or maybe a nice glass of wine, paired with a charcuterie board – and while you're at it, shop for some dynamite home décor items.

Mom Silvia Teixeira Costa is the artistic member of the dynamic duo. Born in Brazil, she earned a degree in law, and went on to live in Italy and the Caribbean before moving to Florida. When her children went off to college, she found herself wondering ... "What do I do with my time, now that I'm not busy with my children's activities?"

She gave considerable thought to finding the answer to that question, and finally came to the conclusion that she had found a calling to study painting. She put a lot of effort and time into learning both the technique and the design factors of a good painting and found that she had both the talent and the drive to become a successful painter. The paintings to be found on the walls of Via La Casa are a testament to her persistence and talent. The lady is good. Visitors to Via la Casa can peruse a good selection of Silvia's paintings, which cover several different image categories, from still life to portrait to landscape, and from fishing to polo. These original paintings are for sale and if you like a painting, but want to go for a print rather than an original oil, prints are available, too!

Daughter Gabriella Teixeira Moss earned a degree in materials engineering from the University of Florida. She interned for several manufacturing companies, and for a while, worked at a cosmetics manufacturing plant before becoming a recruiter.

And then she tore her ACL, and spent a long time at her parents' home, recuperating.

During this recuperation, the idea for Via la Casa slowly took hold. Her parents had made an investment in San Marco Plaza, purchasing the unit at 8209 Nature's Way, Suite 121. They hadn't quite decided just what sort of business would thrive in that space, but, over time, and with a lot of planning and effort during Gabriella's rehab period, Via la Casa changed from an idea to its eventual reality.

To further her education in the art of coffee, Gabriella took classes from a well-known coffee roasting company, learning the essential techniques of being a good barista. She informed me that there are six elements of coffee, and that there is a certain way that a good cup of

coffee should be prepared so as to accentuate the sweetness and flavor of the beans.

When a visitor enters Via la Casa, the first thing he or she notices is the eye-catching, welcoming quality of the space itself. Via la Casa puts out a visual welcome mat. You can relax here in a comfortable chair or couch. You can stay for a while and actually enjoy your coffee, your snack, or your glass of wine. There is no sense of "get in and get out" in this place.

This is not a cookie-cutter, "one-on-every-other-corner" coffee shop. Someone close to me recently referred to a certain major coffee chain's stores as being about as welcoming as a warehouse. They pretty much all look the same, and there is a distinct absence of what might be called "personality" to them. They are not places that you'd refer to as a favorite hang out with friends.

At Via la Casa, the personality of these women is abundantly clear – they love coffee, wine, pastries, art, and the ability to help others enjoy all these things.

There are chairs for sitting and reading. There is a small bar area. There are tables and benches for groups to enjoy the day. On one table, there is a riotous display of tableware, wine glasses, and so forth, accented with a big bowl of flowers.

The old is mixed with the new, the plain with the colorful. There are white ceramic bowls, trays, and serving pieces from Italy, and also stunning pieces of white accented with deep blue. There are nice wine glasses – just in case you need some. They might just tempt you to throw out those "souvenir logo from the last gala" glasses that are crowding your cupboard. Check them out, and while you're at it, enjoy a glass of wine with a charcuterie board before heading to one of San Marco Plaza's good restaurants for dinner.

On the décor side, Via la Casa has some interesting towels for your home, guaranteed to get your visitors laughing – or, maybe

coming into Via la Casa themselves for a few. My wife bought several, one of which states: "I need a glass of wine ... or a bottle ... or a vineyard in Italy." She contends that "There is no such thing as a bad glass of wine in Italy."

And, speaking of languages, these ladies speak English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. So, if you have friends in town from South America or Europe, bring them in to Via la Casa. Gabriella and Silvia will make them feel most welcome.

If you're looking for a place to enjoy coffee, wine, art and home décor, Via la Casa is a place you need to visit ... and come back to.

Hours are 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday; and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For more information call 941-448-0876 or visit vialacasa.art.

Enjoy!



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER





Our Sincere Thanks

The Lakewood Ranch Community Fund, LWRCF, is excited to announce the Builders Give Back program. For every new home closing, participating builders make a donation to the LWRCF in the new homeowner’s name. The developer of Lakewood Ranch then matches each contribution.

With a ‘live here, give here’ approach, the work of the LWRCF is to support the non-profits making an impact in Lakewood Ranch, as well as Manatee and Sarasota counties. And the Builders Give Back program allows new residents to experience the giving culture of Lakewood Ranch right when they move in, while also benefiting the Fund. By introducing new homeowners to local philanthropy through this program, we hope to ensure support for LWRCF in the future.



Learn more at lwrfund.org



Builders Give Back

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& AVANTI AT WATERSIDE

HOMES BY TOWNE
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AT WATERSIDE

AR HOMES
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WILD BLUE AT WATERSIDE
& THE LAKE CLUB

JOHN CANNON
WILD BLUE AT WATERSIDE,
MONARCH ACRES, STAR FARMS
& KINGFISHER ESTATES
AT WATERSIDE

LEE WETHERINGTON
WILD BLUE AT WATERSIDE
& STAR FARMS



THE UNASSUMING WINE BRO



Summertime in Sonoma California

Regarding the world of wine, few regions can rival Sonoma, California's elegance, diversity, and quality. Nestled in the heart of Northern California's wine country, Sonoma County is renowned for its picturesque vineyards, bountiful wineries, and a long-standing winemaking tradition that dates back to the early 19th century. Boasting a myriad of microclimates and terroirs, this wine region has earned its place among the top wine-producing areas globally. It continues to captivate oenophiles (a fancy word for wine lovers) and novices alike. With a short five-hour flight from Tampa to San Francisco, we're off on another wine adventure.

I'm Vigo, The Unassuming Wine Bro (UWB) – a regular guy who loves everything about wine, including writing about it. I aim to explore the nuances of wine, share my adventures with you, and have a little fun along the way.

With my original intent of running the Sonoma Half Marathon (a medical issue foiled that plan), I pivoted and turned my sour grapes into a sweet wine adventure with my close friends and lovely wife. Though Sonoma was our base camp, we did venture an hour north to drop in on one of the first wineries I visited when I got home from my combat deployment to Iraq (keep reading, I will get to that). So, a short 45-minute drive over the Golden Gate, we're in my wine nirvana, Sonoma, Calif.

Rating system: UWB symbol. Ratings are given on a 1-5 scale, with five being the highest.

GUNDLACH-BUNDSCHU WINERY, SONOMA, CALIF.

If you have ever driven through the Sonoma Valley, it's like going on a 'Homes of the Hollywood Stars' tour. I was "OOO! Gloria Ferrer, Hey! Roche, What!? Valley of the Moon," so this article could have taken up the entire *Around the Ranch* if I had to write about all the wineries and wines we visited. The one winery that left a lasting impression on me was Gundlach-Bundschu. Nestled in the heart of Sonoma Valley, Gundlach-Bundschu Winery is a charming gem that embodies the essence of California wine country. Gundlach-Bundschu has a rich history dating back to 1858, when it was founded by Jacob Gundlach, making it one of the oldest family-owned wineries in California. In 1991, Jim Bundschu had a cave dug in the hillside adjacent to the original tasting room. He intended to mimic wine caves he had seen while visiting France. Wine genius hadn't fallen far from his great-great-grandfather, because the wine cave is the place to be on a scorching hot summer day in the Sonoma Valley. So, with taste buds a-ready, I found the following gems in the Gundlach Bundschu wine cave.

2022 Gewurtztraminer, Gundlach-Bundschu Winery, Sonoma, California, \$29 U.S., 13.5% ABV

I've gotten out of the habit of tasting and consuming sweet white wines such as gewurtztraminer because, though sweet, it will leave you with a sourer headache in the morning. Something soft but sweet might do the trick, as our palates were already bone dry from the oppressive California heat. The trick is the Gundlach-Bundschu gewurtztraminer isn't cotton candy sweet; it's a well-balanced, refreshing white wine. On the nose, it presents the aroma of soft tropical fruit but a hint of pepper. It's smooth and refreshing on the palate, with semi-sweet apples and lime. It made me fall in love with gewurtztraminer again.

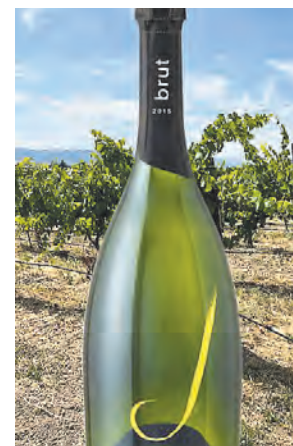
Rating:



2022 Gewurtztraminer



2022 Rhinefarm Rosé



2015 Vintage Brut



2018 Canfield Vineyard Pinot Noir

2022 Rhinefarm Rosé, Gundlach-Bundschu Winery, Sonoma, Calif., \$28 U.S.; 13.9% ABV

The 2022 Rhinefarm rosé from Gundlach-Bunshu is a captivating and refreshing addition to the rosé wine world. As a seasoned rosé lover, I was delighted to delve into this young but sassy vintage, which promises an exceptional tasting experience. On the nose, the rosé fills the air with a delightful bouquet of fresh strawberries, juicy watermelon, and a hint of ripe peaches. The aroma signaled me to "go for it." On the palate, the rosé exhibited a perfect balance between crispness and smoothness, showcasing the winery's artistry in crafting a well-rounded rosé. Each sip revealed a nuanced complexity, with gentle floral hints intermingled with the fruit-forward profile. Another solid gem from the wine cave!

Rating:

J VINEYARDS AND WINERY, HEALDSBURG, CALIF.

If you're breaking out your California wine-country map, you'll notice that J Vineyards and Winery aren't in the Sonoma Valley, but an hour north in the Russian River Valley. And you would be correct, but I'm writing this article, and though just a valley north, J Vineyard and Winery have special memories for me. So, on with the review.

Located in the heart of the picturesque Healdsburg, Calif., J Winery is a shining star that beckons wine enthusiasts and food lovers alike. From the moment you step out of your car and enter the beautifully manicured grounds, it's evident that J Vineyards and Winery offers an unparalleled experience of luxury elegance and delectable gastronomy. With these delights in mind, we had reservations for the Bubble Room. The Bubble Room is an unforgettable food and wine-tasting experience. As we were seated, it was impossible not to notice the Bubble Room's ambiance, which exudes elegance and sophistication with its modern yet cozy interior. With five wine flights and five food courses paired (man, the food pairing was unbelievable), I have selected two of the five wines that were highlights of the experience.

2015 Vintage Brut, J Vineyards and Winery, Healdsburg, Calif., \$60 U.S., ABV 12%

Regarding starter courses, J's Bubble Room's chef knows what he's doing. With a salad containing baby gem lettuce, walnut

granola, and tangerine snow, you must balance off the granola's sweetness and the tangerine snow's tanginess to make the pairing work. Well, 2015 Vintage Brut to the palate rescue. On the nose, the brut has an enticing scent of green apples, pear, citrus, and a hint of toasted brioche and almonds. On the palate, it's crisp, creamy, and playful, with tight bubbles. The green apples and lemon zest flavor paired nicely with a fresh and skillfully constructed first course.

Rating:

2018 Canfield Vineyard Pinot Noir, J Vineyards and Winery, \$75 U.S., ABV 14.01%

It has been a while since I tasted a pinot noir that meets my impression of what a pinot noir should taste like. It should be subtle, with hints of cherries, stone fruits, and a touch of spice, but not too spicy. The 2018 Canfield Vineyard Pinot Noir met my definition of what a pinot noir should taste like. On the nose, it greets you with a bouquet of red cherries, ripe strawberries, and a note of cranberries. On the palate, delightful, with a well-balanced flavor of red fruit, juicy cherries, and strawberries. Tannins are well-balanced and smooth. The 2018 Canfield Vineyards Pinot Noir made me believe in pinot noirs again.

Rating:

VIGO'S OVERALL IMPRESSIONS:

Just like a trip to Disney World, sooner or later, you're going to have to leave, but oh the memories you take with you. Sonoma, California, is a testament to the harmonious marriage of nature's gifts and human ingenuity. With its diverse microclimates, distinct terroirs, and passionate winemakers, Sonoma County continues to produce wines that captivate wine enthusiasts worldwide. Whether you're a seasoned wine connoisseur or just beginning your journey into the world of wine, a trip to Sonoma promises an extraordinary and unforgettable exploration of some of the world's finest wines.

ATTENTION FANS AND READERS:

Like our Facebook page "The Unassuming Wine Bros," follow us on Instagram @theinassumingwinebros, or email me at vigoloveswine@gmail.com. Let me know what you think about this article, these bottles, or suggestions for upcoming articles.

Host A Food Drive!

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1. Register online or call to schedule drop-off and pickup of food barrels
2. Print supplied marketing materials to advertise food drive
3. COLLECT FOOD!



The Food Bank of Manatee is the only food bank located in Manatee County and the largest hunger-relief organization based in Manatee County, helping our local neighbors in need. The Food Bank of Manatee is an independent Food Bank. That means we rely 100% on the support of our community to make sure the shelves are always stocked! We need businesses, organizations, neighborhoods, faith groups and families to help feed food-insecure families. You can greatly impact our community by coordinating a Food Drive!

Food donations can also be dropped off at any Manatee County Goodwill or Public Library as well as at The Food Bank of Manatee

CRITICALLY NEEDED ITEMS:

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Fire Destroys Greenbrook's Adventure Park Pavilion

By Ernie Soller
Community Correspondent

Government meeting agendas for the supervisors of the Lakewood Ranch District 4 (Greenbrook Village) Community Development District usually deal mainly with budgetary items, requests by residents, plans for common area landscaping, and so on.

However, at their July board of supervisors meeting, a good portion of the discussion among the supervisors had to do with the fire that destroyed the Greenbrook Adventure Park pavilion on the night of July 4/morning of July 5. The fire burned almost the entire structure, with the wooden tops of the picnic tables almost totally consumed under the collapsed roof. The Little Free Library unit, which was housed at the pavilion, was also destroyed. The blaze burned hot enough to partially melt signposts along the edge of the nearby parking lot.

According to Operations Director Tom Merrell, the call reporting the fire came into the Manatee County emergency operator at 12:15 a.m. on July 5. The fire is being investigated as a possible arson crime. There were operational security cameras at the pavilion.

The District's insurance company also is investigating the fire, and they made sure that the site was secure by quickly installing a fence around the perimeter of the area.

In discussing the fire and their next moves with reference to rebuilding the facility, District 4 supervisors were thinking in terms of how important the pavilion is to the community, and looking at the idea of "building back better," rather than simply replacing the current facility in its original form. Supervisor Keith Davey commented that he felt that the residents of Greenbrook should be given options as to what sort of facility should be built to replace the old pavilion.

The District 4 board had been planning on possibly authorizing a repaving project for the parking lot at Adventure Park at their July meeting. Now their focus is on rebuilding the pavilion, and the consensus among board members was that the paving project will be put on hold, pending the rebuild of the pavilion.

The District 4 board is also continuing to explore options for the replacement of the decking on the bridge that connects Adventure Park to Heron's Nest Park in District 1. One question which came up: does District 1 own a portion of the bridge? If so, that district may be asked to participate in the cost of repairs.

The Community Garden project is about to become reality, and District 4 supervisor Nancy Johnson noted at the board meeting that, since the garden is in Greenbrook, that Greenbrook residents should have first priority in claiming plots. Her fellow supervisors agreed.

PAVING

Another reason that the District 4 board decided to hold off on authorizing a paving con-

tract for the Adventure Park parking lot was the current whopping cost of paving. Executive Director Steve Zielinski noted during the District 2 and 5 board meetings that their proposed paving projects might have to be put on hold, or bonds might have to be issued to pay for paving if projects need to be done now. The cost of paving projects has, in the past couple of years, TRIPLED, and district paving reserves are only sufficient to cover about a third of the current paving cost.

One supervisor noted that Manatee County has recently made paving work a priority, therefore local paving contractors have all the jobs they can handle, and don't appear to be looking for additional work. Executive Director Zielinski also commented that request for bid proposals went out to multiple contractors, and that he had received bids from only two paving companies.

GATES

Per Executive Director Zielinski, the proposed joint meeting among the supervisors of Districts 2, 5, and 6 (the Country Club districts) regarding gate issues has been postponed.

There have been connectivity issues regarding kiosks at the gates, and these issues are being worked on. District 2 resident Ero Selander has sent out a list of questions to residents of Augusta and Oakmont asking for their opinions as to whether they would prefer to keep manned gate coverage as-is, move to 24/7 manned coverage, or eliminate manned gates entirely. He expects to make public the results of the survey at the August District 2 board meeting.

GOLF CARTS

A few days ago, I visited one of the restaurants located on State Road 70 just east of Lakewood Ranch Boulevard. I observed a parked golf cart in the parking lot of the restaurant. Obviously, the driver of this golf cart was unaware that driving a golf cart in an area not within a designated golf community is illegal in Florida.

During the District 1 Board meeting, resident Roberta Fernandez inquired about the use of golf carts, asking if they could be prohibited, and also reported that she had seen a young kid being instructed – apparently by an adult – on driving a golf cart on a sidewalk in the area, with the result that the kid was swerving the golf cart all over the sidewalk (also ILLEGAL). She also asked about the possibility of installing bollards to prevent golf carts from entering district recreational spaces where they don't belong.

CHECK FRAUD

A large check for District 1's irrigation water, made out to Braden River Utilities, was recently fraudulently cashed, without so much as an endorsement, at a bank which is not used by BRU. A criminal fraud investigation is ongoing.

MEETING SCHEDULES FOR 2024

The Lakewood Ranch Community Development Districts approved their 2024 meeting

date schedules. Instead of the usual mid-week schedules, two of the dates, on March 18 and August 19, will be held on Mondays, due to the use of Town Hall facilities use by the Supervisor of Elections.

NEW SUPERVISOR FOR DISTRICT 5

After questioning several candidates, the District 5 board appointed Mike Miller to fill the vacancy created when Supervisor Alan Silverglat resigned. Miller is a 17-year resident of the District, and has served on the CEVA board, part of that time as president of that board.

Supervisor Steve Peters, in questioning the candidates, tried to make sure that candidates held no partisan political opinions that might sway a supervisor's voting, noting that the job is a non-partisan position.

HOORAY!!!

The installation of traffic lights and the repaving of the intersection of Balmoral Woods and Lakewood Ranch Boulevard, including a revised right-turn lane from Lakewood Ranch on to Balmoral Woods, has been completed! The project had been delayed by multiple factors, including the now-familiar "material shortage issues."

Lakewood Ranch officials are still in discussions with Manatee County regarding the potable water turnover in District 6.

The sanitary sewers in that district have already been turned over to the County.

Operations Director Merrell reported that a large diseased Medjool palm had been removed at the intersection of Balmoral and Arnold Palmer Green in District 6. The rest of the palms in that planting area have been treated for disease, but the replacement for the diseased palm may have to be postponed, as due to the size of the removed tree, replacing it with a similar size tree will be very costly, to the tune of over \$10,000. The Operations Department will monitor the condition of the other palms in the area before taking any further action.

District 6 Supervisor Susan Ellis asked about installing an aerator in one of the district's ponds. The District 6 supervisors approved that expenditure, along with the purchase of a new radar speed sign.

District 6 Board Chairman Jim Rogoze commented that the HOA is on the lookout for residents who are over-watering their landscaping, in violation of regulations.

Rogoze also commented that District 6 should be able to swear in a new supervisor at their August board meeting, in order to have a full board.

RAINFALL

June rainfall in Lakewood Ranch, as reported by Operations Director Merrell, was still below average, with only from 1-2 inches falling in the area.

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Check out all of the events happening around The Ranch!



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HEALTH AND WELLNESS

"My Robotic Splenectomy Has Been Life-Changing"

When Taylor Butler, 23, of East Bradenton, received an urgent call from his doctor's office shortly after having routine blood work in September of 2019, he felt like his worst fear was coming true.

"I had a phobia about seeing doctors and, instead, would just power through," said Butler, who had been experiencing extreme fatigue, night sweats and excessive nose bleeds for as long as he can remember. "But I finally felt that it was time to get checked out to make sure everything was OK."

Very quickly he understood the urgency of his doctor's calls. The lab work indicated dangerously low levels in his blood counts, including his platelets, which help blood clot, and neutrophils, a type of white blood cell that helps protect the body from infection and injury.

He was admitted to a local Florida hospital and, after almost two weeks of tests, more blood work, and evaluations from several specialists, he was diagnosed with idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP).

WHAT IS ITP

ITP is a rare autoimmune disease that occurs when the spleen destroys too many of the body's platelets prematurely.

"As fast as the body makes the platelets, the spleen filters them out too quickly," said gen-

eral surgeon David Dexter, MD, of Lakewood Ranch Medical Group General Surgery, in explaining the condition. "Science has not yet figured out why this happens."

MONITORING AND TREATMENT

Once stabilized and discharged from the hospital, Butler was prescribed steroid medications and if necessary, infusion therapy.

"I was on a high dosage of steroid medications," said Butler. "I was bloated and had migraines. I felt extremely sluggish and super fatigued and depressed. I had a 'moon face,' because my face rounded out so much from the water retention. When I looked in the mirror, I felt as if I did not even know who I was anymore."

Despite the distressing side effects, the medication did help to stabilize Butler's condition. But then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and he had trouble accessing the healthcare he needed and resorted to self-monitoring. Fast forward to July 4, 2022 – Butler experienced a nosebleed that was so bad, he was soaking through towels, and blood was filling his nasal cavity and coming out of his eyes. His fiancé rushed him to the emergency department at Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, where lab work indicated that he was back to where he was in 2019, with dangerously low blood level counts.

This time he was admitted to Lakewood Ranch Medical Center and stayed for five days. Upon discharge, he began seeing hematologist Amir Harandi, MD, who restarted treatment with steroid medications. Butler was once again dealing with debilitating side effects, and then treatment with the medication stopped working. He was referred to Dr. Dexter for robotic splenectomy.

ROBOTIC SPLENECTOMY

Robotic splenectomy is a minimally invasive procedure to remove the spleen, a fist-sized organ in the left side of the abdomen and an important part of the immune system. When the spleen needs to be removed, the liver can take over many of its functions. Surgery preparation includes receiving vaccinations to boost the immune system and medications to normalize blood platelet levels as much as possible.

"Since the spleen is the site where the platelets are destroyed, if you remove the spleen, you remove that process," Dr. Dexter said. "Splenectomy is not a guarantee, but for most people, it does help." According to Butler, his blood levels began to normalize within one day of having the surgery.

"Dr. Dexter made me feel immediately comfortable," Butler said. "He was very thorough in explaining everything to me. When I woke up

from the surgery, I felt an incredible weight lifted from my shoulders." Since the procedure is minimally invasive, Butler did not have to worry about missing too much time at work in his job as a supervisor for a luxury-boat-building company.

"Robotic surgery requires only a very small incision," said Dr. Dexter. "This often means a much quicker recovery than with open surgery and a significant decrease in the risk of wound infection."

"Our practice is very proud to offer advanced and complex surgeries, right here at Lakewood Ranch Medical Center," he added.

Butler's advice to other ITP patients is to consider every option. "In my case, robotic splenectomy was life-changing," he said. Butler and his fiancé recently purchased a house in Arcadia, Fla. The couple plans to get married in 2024.

Individual results may vary. There are risks associated with any surgical procedure. Talk with your doctor about these risks to find out if robotic surgery is right for you.

Physicians are on the medical staff of Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, but, with limited exceptions, are independent practitioners who are not employees or agents of Lakewood Ranch Medical Center. If you need a doctor, visit doctors.lakewoodranchmedicalcenter.com or call 800-816-4145.



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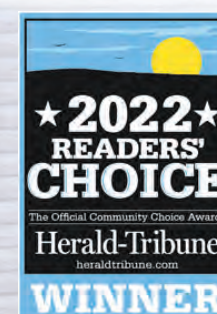
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