

# Around the Ranch

AROUNDTHERANCH.COM

THE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER OF LAKEWOOD RANCH

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2023



**THE HOLIDAYS ARE NOT JUST FOR THE KIDS!** Main Street at Lakewood Ranch hosted its monthly Music on Main event, and held its tree lighting ceremony the same night! There was truly something for everyone. For more photos, see pages 12-13. For more information on holiday events, visit [lakewoodranch.com](http://lakewoodranch.com). Photo by Ernie Soller

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AND WELLNESS**

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Program 4 | FSU Center  
**GRAZIANO  
CELEBRATED**

**Ricardo Graziano's Sonatina**  
**Ricardo Graziano's In a State of Weightlessness**  
**Ricardo Graziano's World Premiere**

<b>JAN 26</b> 7:30 PM	<b>JAN 27</b> 2:00 PM   7:30 PM	<b>JAN 28</b> 2:00 PM   7:30 PM	<b>JAN 29</b> 7:30 PM
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Ricki Bertoni and Oliva Dugan in Ricardo Graziano's *In a State of Weightlessness*  
Photography by Frank Atura



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*Club Havana* by Pedro Ruiz | Photo by Erin Baiano





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- Brian Higgins, Owner, with son Kyle





# Car Show Cookout Raises Dollars for St. Jude's Kids

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

The weather could not have been much better. The cars were some of the classiest to ever be seen in Lakewood Ranch. The crowd was so large that the sponsors of the event, the Knights of Columbus of Council #13341, started running out of food more than an hour prior to the 2 p.m. closing time for the event, but everyone who came had a great time drooling over great cars and refreshing the memories of their car experiences from years before. The large parking lot at Our Lady of the Angels on State Road 70 was packed with drool-worthy cars, both old and new, from classics of the 1930s to custom-built supercars of today.

This year's Car Show Cookout presented me with an experience unlike I've ever had. It brought me back to a time in my younger years when other than worrying about getting good grades in high school, a lot of my attention was focused on cars. As a teenager in Detroit, cars were a constant presence all around us, especially during the fall new model introductions.

Of course, being a teenager at the time, I wouldn't be in the market for a new car for a while, but there were cars, even those which were a few years old, which had a certain appeal for me. One was my aunt and uncle's 1953 Packard four-door sedan. This car was a big, heavy, and very luxurious vehicle for its time, and was painted in "Orchard Green" with a metallic "Galahad Green" top. The interior was upholstered in tufted nylon material, the back seat was like a big couch, with lots of leg room, and the doors were so heavy that closing one reminded me of closing the door on a safe.

Packard had long been one of the top premier car brands to build cars in Detroit. Their advertising slogan was "Ask the Man Who Owns One."

During World War II, Packard became a producer of 12-cylinder high-power aircraft engines, known as the "Packard Merlins," under license from Rolls Royce. These engines were used in the Spitfire, the Lancaster bomber, the P-51 Mustang, and also in P.T. boats. Having gone through the war making large profits, the company made a big effort to come back into the automobile market with new models, and that 1953 Packard was one of the nicest.

Right about the time I got my first driver's



license, the Packard was traded for a new Cadillac. Packards were no longer in production by then. Some 40 years later, my aunt told me that prior to trading the car, she and Uncle Joe had offered to sell the Packard to my dad so that I'd have a car to drive. My dad had turned down their offer.

Imagine my excitement when I spied a 1954 Orchard Green Packard Super Clipper four-door sedan with a Galahad Green top – the exact same colors as the car I'd loved as a teenager. The "cormorant" hood ornament was the same. The big, chromed bumper and grille were the same. The 327 cubic inch straight-eight engine was the same. It was like I'd been transported back to the '60s. Wow! After talking to the car's owner, Joe, for a while about the Packard, I had to check out some of the other cars.

There were some really distinctive cars on display. For starters, a whole lot of Corvettes were at the show, in every color of the rainbow including a couple of rare split window '63 coupes and a couple of Indianapolis 500 pace car models. There was also a red Mustang in



Indy pace car trim.

One guy had brought two cars to the show and told me that he wanted to sell both – a sharp yellow and white '72 Chevy C-10 pickup and a gorgeous creamy yellow '70 Jaguar XKE coupe. I asked him what he wanted for the Jag. The price he mentioned was about what I paid for my last house.

The Ford brand was represented by a number of vehicles, from a huge red '65 Mercury Parklane convertible, several T-Birds (new and old), to Mustangs, to a couple of '30s vintage Model A's with outside rear luggage racks, to a red Cobra and a red Ford GT – nice little cars – especially if you want to race.

Off-road fans got to check out a customized Jeep Wrangler, loaded with aftermarket accessories, and, if they were into older off-road vehicles, an older Toyota Land Cruiser – the kind that Toyota made before they turned the Land Cruiser into a luxu SUV.

Chrysler was represented by Road Runners and Dodges to a late 40's Chrysler Windsor convertible. One of the Dodges was an orange "General Lee" Charger, which had a picture of Burt Reynolds lighting a cigar on its hood.

As for car guys who want more POWER – one of the hits of the show was a late-model Mazda Miata that had undergone an engine transplant, from a small four-cylinder to a 500 horsepower GM LS3 V-8! I was totally amazed that such a big motor could be crammed into such a small engine compartment.

Perhaps the strangest-looking two-seater car at the show was called the Caddi-Whompus, which had what appeared to be a grille from a '58 Caddy, and a tail end comprised of parts from a '59 and possibly a '60 Cadillac. It was totally unique – including the "ejection seats"!

All proceeds from the Knights' Car Show Cookout – about \$11,000 – are being donated to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER



# LWR Women's Club's Holiday Market Raises over \$7500 for Charity

In November, the Lakewood Ranch Women's Club (LWRWC) held its annual Holiday Market charity fundraiser at the Palm Aire Country Club with well over 200 women in attendance. The event sold out in 10 days. Attendees enjoyed a holiday bazaar, a buffet lunch, the camaraderie of many friends, and a split-the-pot raffle with eight lucky winners!

Best of all, the Holiday Market raised well over \$7,500 that will benefit the LWRWC's four amazing 501(c)(3) local adopted charities, HOPE Family Services (providing critical lifesaving & life changing services to victims of domestic violence); SMART (Sarasota Manatee Association of Riding Therapy - dedicated to enhancing the physical, emotional, and cognitive growth of individuals with special needs); SOLVE Maternity Homes (helping pregnant women in need with unplanned pregnancies and babies for over 45 years); and Children's Guardian Fund (providing funding for the immediate and ongoing needs of children removed from abusive or neglectful homes in Florida's 12th Judicial Circuit).

The Lakewood Ranch Women's Club sincerely thanks all its vendors and local artisans for making its 2023 Holiday Market a phenomenal shopping experience. A special thank you to the Holiday Market co-chairs Diane Laybourn and Linda Stone and their committee, for coordinating the event.

To learn more about the Lakewood Ranch Women's Club, their fundraising events, and the charitable organizations they support, please visit [lwrwc.org](http://lwrwc.org).



Holiday Market committee, from left: Ann Sledz, LWRWC president; Linda Stone, event co-chair; Helene Levin, vendor co-chair; MaryLee Danahy, registration chair; Diane Laybourn, event co-chair and Cheryl Breining, vendor co-chair.

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## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

# Gut Health and Wellness: What You Should Know

With Dr. Ronald Andari, M.D.

‘Gut health is at the core of wellness,’ said gastroenterologist Ronald Andari, M.D., who sees patients at Lakewood Ranch Medical Center. A healthy gut has a significant influence on our overall wellbeing, including decreased risk of cardiovascular disease, cancer and type II diabetes, among other conditions.



## FIBER AND GUT HEALTH

Gut health often begins with the foods we eat, said Dr. Andari, who emphasizes a diet high in fiber. Fiber helps to regulate our metabolism, reducing constipation and keeping our weight at a healthy level. Fiber also helps to support a healthy gut microbiota (the naturally occurring bacteria in our digestive system).

“Microbiota diversity matters. A balanced gut microbiota has been associated with better health,” Dr. Andari said. “Consuming a variety of foods rich in fiber supports the bacteria environment.”

According to Dr. Andari, probiotics (good bacteria) can be found in fermented foods, such as Greek yogurt, kefir and sauerkraut. Prebiotics (fiber that feeds good bacteria) are found in foods like onions, garlic and bananas. Healthy gut bacteria has also been shown to positively influence our brain health, promoting improved cognition and positive mood.

Dr. Andari often recommends a Mediterranean-style diet, which he said can “significantly improve health and prolong life.”

The diet emphasizes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans and legumes and includes low-fat or fat-free dairy products, fish, poultry, non-tropical vegetable oils and nuts. The diet limits added sugars, sugary beverages, sodium, highly processed foods, refined carbohydrates, saturated fats and fatty or processed meats. People are encouraged to ask their healthcare provider if this diet is right for them.

“Proper hydration also supports the mucosal lining of the intestines, helping to

maintain overall gut health,” said Dr. Andari. “Consider the 8x8 rule, which suggests drinking eight, 8-ounce glasses of water every day.”

## WHEN TO SEE A SPECIALIST AND DIAGNOSTIC CARE

Common complaints of patients who come to see Dr. Andari include heartburn, trouble swallowing, abdominal pain, diarrhea or constipation, bloating, blood in the stool, urgency and/or fecal incontinence, among others. “Listening carefully to my patients most often reveals the path for an accurate diagnosis and successful intervention,” Dr. Andari said.

The diagnostic workup is individualized and may include blood or stool testing and/or endoscopic evaluation, said Dr. Andari. The endoscope is a flexible tube with a light and camera or ultrasound on its tip. The procedure allows for the visual inspection and biopsy of internal organs, including the esophagus, stomach, pancreas and bile duct (biliary) systems, small bowel and colon.

## GASTROINTESTINAL CARE AT LAKEWOOD RANCH MEDICAL CENTER

Dr. Andari and his partners, gastroenterologists Tonantzin Matheus, M.D., and Avantika Mishra, M.D., treat a wide range of patients from ages 16 to 100.

“Lakewood Ranch Medical Center offers advanced gastrointestinal care with a wide range of endoscopic procedures and sophisticated equipment, technical support, laboratory and pathology services,” said Dr. Andari. “We offer treatment for a wide range of conditions, including reflux disease, esophageal disorders, diseases affecting the liver, pancreatic cysts and cancers, celiac sprue, Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, colon polyps and cancer, among many others.”

To find a doctor, visit [doctors.lakewoodranchmedicalcenter.com](https://doctors.lakewoodranchmedicalcenter.com).

*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. The hospital shall not be liable for actions or treatments provided by physicians. For language assistance, disability accommodations and the nondiscrimination notice, visit our website.*





# Lakewood Ranchers Eat Soup While Helping Feed the Community

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

In November, I ventured forth to Lakewood Main Street to check out the 21st anniversary Empty Bowls event, which benefits Meals on Wheels PLUS and the Food Bank of Manatee.

I got there a bit early – there were multiple booths being set up on Main Street by lots of soup providers. A few minutes later a large crowd of folks came into the event area.

The earlier, less visible crowd was made up of the VIP donors, who were allowed in a half-hour early to the event. They not only got to sample the soup early, but their tickets also gave them first choice of the hand crafted, hand-painted ceramic bowls that Meals On Wheels PLUS gave out to Empty Bowls ticket holders. The bowls were provided by the Clay Club of State College of Florida, Lakewood Ranch High students, the Clay Club of The Cascades, and the Florida West Coast Woodworkers.

As for the soup vendors, the list was long and as varied as the type of soup each vendor was providing. Here are some of the selections by provider:

Anna Maria Oyster Bar – Seafood Gumbo  
Chicken Salad Chick – Chicken Artichoke Florentine  
Chef Amalia Flores – Leek and Potato  
Culinary Creations by Metz – Lobster/Truffle Bisque  
First Watch – Tomato Basil  
Fusilly's – Chicken Escarole  
The Granary – Cream of Chicken with Pesto  
Grove – Manhattan Clam Chowder  
Metro Diner – Chili  
Mean Dean's – Butternut Pumpkin  
Manatee Tech Culinary – Broccoli Cheddar  
McGrath's – Tomato Basil  
Oak and Stone – Beer Cheese  
Popi's Place – Lemon Chicken Rice  
Remy's on Main – Chicken Noodle

The Empty Bowls event provided multiple taste choices. No wonder that lots of patrons came to enjoy these soups! Dessert for the VIP donors was provided by Nothing Bundt Cakes.

Each of the Empty Bowls diners was provided with a “return bag” to take home and fill with food for the hungry. A card stapled to the bag listed the types of food items needed, from canned veggies and soup, to pasta, rice, and beans, to juice and trail mix and breakfast bars. The filled bags were to be returned to any Food Bank of Manatee barrel. Locations for drop-off barrels included any local Goodwill, any Manatee County Public Library, The Lakewood Ranch Town Hall, and numerous merchants in our area.

The Empty Bowls event raised \$27,000 for Meals-On-Wheels PLUS! That makes for a whole lot of meals for homebound seniors and those who are food insecure.

For more information on Meals on Wheels programs, visit [mealsonwheelsplus.org](http://mealsonwheelsplus.org) or call (941)747-4655.



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER





# LAKEWOOD RANCH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

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



By Danielle Bugel

Lakewood Ranch Community Activities recently hosted its highly anticipated 2023 Mindful Triathlon, and it surpassed all expectations, leaving participants buzzing with excitement and accomplishment! The event not only promoted physical fitness but also emphasized the importance of mental well-being and mindfulness.

With the support of our amazing sponsors – the Brain Health Initiative as the presenting sponsor, Center of Revitalizing Psychiatry as the water stop sponsor, and SHACK yoga + fitness as the leading yoga and meditation instructor – the Mindful Triathlon proved to be an outstanding success! We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our additional supporting sponsors, Lakewood Ranch Medical Center and Lakewood Ranch Communities, for their invaluable contributions! We can't wait until next year!

Looking forward, we are so excited for our upcoming New Year's Eve celebration, presented by Capstan Financial Consulting Group and Waterside Place. Happening from 6 p.m. to 12 a.m. on Dec. 31 at the beautiful Waterside Place, this annual event promises an unforgettable night of festivities and entertainment!

Produced by your friends here at Lakewood Ranch Com-



munity Activities, our New Year's Eve event will feature live music from the one and only DJ Truth! Prepare your taste buds for food trucks from various vendors that will be serving up delectable food options! Sip on delicious drinks and partake in thrilling games for all ages! There will truly be something for everyone at this event; whether you're going out as a family to celebrate the end of 2023 or you're ready to dance the night away with champagne until midnight, our NYE celebration will be unlike any other.

Ready to hear the highlight of the night? We're bringing you a mesmerizing LIVE drone light show by Sky Elements Drone Shows. As the night sky transforms into a stunning canvas, prepare to be captivated by synchronized aerial acrobatics and dazzling visual formations. With cutting-edge technology, a curated soundtrack, and precise coordination, this extraordinary performance will be the showstopper of the night! Witness an unforgettable spectacle that will leave you in awe as we welcome 2024 in an innovative and breathtaking way!



If you are interested in becoming a sponsor or a vendor at our New Year's Eve celebration, there's still time! Please reach out to Joanna at [joanna@lwrca.org](mailto:joanna@lwrca.org).

In addition to our signature events, it's important to highlight the diverse community we have at Lakewood Ranch Community Activities. With over 60 groups and clubs, there truly is something for everyone, irrespective of age or interest. Whether you're passionate about sports, arts, or socializing, we encourage you to find your tribe! Visit [LWRCA.org](http://LWRCA.org) to explore the variety of groups and clubs that welcome you!

See you around The Ranch!

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# AROUND THE RANCH



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER



## ‘TIS THE SEASON: Kick Back and Enjoy!

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

Those words were emblazoned on the back of a T-shirt worn by a visitor to the Music On Main/Tree Lighting party on Lakewood Ranch Main Street on the evening of Dec. 1.

The design of the shirt included a picture of a woman sitting in a margarita glass. The evening was actually warm enough for beach wear. And that pretty much set the tone for the festivities.

Everyone was out to have a really good time. The Christmas tree was lit. Restaurants and watering holes were doing a booming business. If a brick-and-mortar restaurant didn't fit your needs, there were several food trucks and food booths on hand to take care of your hunger, from a cookie cart to Andor's Sausage, where you could get a hot Hungarian sausage meal (I tasted a sample – was great!), to a Chic-fil-A trailer, up to and including a lobster food truck (I kid you not!). If you needed something sweet, the Kona Ice truck was there to accommodate your needs.

Kids, along with parents and grandparents, lined up to see Santa and tell him what they wanted for Christmas. One little boy sat in Santa's lap and seemed to be more interested in the toy he held in his little hand than in the big guy with the white beard. A little girl, whose mom had handed her over to Santa,

appeared to have a look on her face that fell somewhere between "Mommy told me not to talk to strangers" and "OK, who are you and what am I doing here?"

Adults, on the other hand, appeared to be more interested, not in sitting on Santa's lap and telling him what they wanted for Christmas, but in getting a selfie with that evil doer ... The Grinch, who prowled around Main Street looking, well ... green and nasty!

There were booths lining Main Street from the Christmas tree all the way down to Grove restaurant. Various charities were represented, along with booths from Lakewood Ranch Communities, the Sarasota Orchestra, the Manatee County Library (the new Lakewood Ranch branch is expected to be opening in January!) and the Lakewood Ranch Medical Center.

As if seeing Santa and getting stuffed with all sorts of food wasn't enough, the kids had a ball playing in one of the several bounce house offerings sponsored by Grace Community Church. The kids dropped their shoes on the street, hopped into a bounce house, and had a terrific time chasing each other in and around the inflatables.

For those who just wanted to sit and listen to music and relax, the band, Shell and the Crabs, played on the stage set up at the south end of Main Street, and those party-goers wise enough to know the score brought their own lawn/beach chairs – enough to fill up the street for a whole block in front of the stage.

'Tis the season – in more ways than one!





# Your LWR Story



By Maggie Milne

Meet Adam Zubowsky, a proud Lakewood Ranch resident and a director of sales with Erickson Senior Living.

Originally from Virginia, Adam's journey led him to Louisiana State University, where he earned his undergraduate degree. After starting his career in Virginia and meeting his wife, they became the proud parents of three children, including twin sons and a daughter.

Driven by Adam's career trajectory, the Zubowsky family embarked on their relocation journey to Lakewood Ranch in 2023, where Erickson Senior Living plans to establish a continuing care retirement community. Adam, having played a pivotal role in launching the 21st community in Richmond, Va., will now assume the role of sales director for the latest Erickson Senior Living venture in Lakewood Ranch. What enticed them to come to this charming community? The allure of the Gulf Coast, a more temperate climate, and a community thoughtfully designed to meet the diverse needs of families at every stage.

Choosing Lakewood Ranch as their new home was an easy decision for the Zubowskys. Adam's childhood memories of visits to Southwest Flor-

ida, combined with top-rated schools, athletic opportunities, entertainment, and easy access to airports, made Lakewood Ranch the perfect fit. As the No. 1 best-selling master-planned community in the nation for all ages, Lakewood Ranch offered a family-friendly atmosphere and diverse amenities they were seeking.

Before their move in the summer of 2023, Adam and his family explored Lakewood Ranch and chose to build a new home in Lorraine Lakes due to its proximity to schools, work, and a range of village amenities. Their new home is set for a spring 2024 closing and move. In the meantime, they are renting a home within Lorraine Lakes, enjoying the village social life and clubs.

During their free time, the Zubowsky family enjoys local beaches, hiking through the numerous parks, trying new restaurants, and attending professional sports games in Tampa. The children are actively involved in local schools: their daughter is excelling in third grade at Gullett Elementary. Their twin sons are enrolled in the Braden River Elementary English-Spanish program.

Adam is eagerly anticipating opening the Erickson Senior Living sales office in December of 2023, located at the intersection of State Road 70 and White Eagle Boulevard. His dedicated team will be

available to share information about the exciting opportunities Erickson Senior Living has to offer.

As Adam and his family embrace Lakewood Ranch and their future here, they are thrilled about how their children are thriving in school and all the available recreational activities. With a passion for local adventures, the Zubowskys look forward to attending matches at the Sarasota Polo Club, Ranch Nite Wednesdays, and Music on Main. Adam envisions a long and exciting life in Lakewood Ranch while seeing Erickson Senior Living through to completion and beyond.

Here's to many more adventures in Lakewood Ranch!

To connect with Adam, feel free to reach out via email at [Adam.Zubowsky@erickson.com](mailto:Adam.Zubowsky@erickson.com) or by phone at 941-324-3100

*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](mailto:yourlwrstory@lakewoodranch.com).*



# Manatee County Commission Votes for Traffic Light on Lorraine Road

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

At its Nov. 14 meeting, the Board of County Commissioners of Manatee County voted to go with the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Lorraine Road and Players Drive.

This vote caps a months-long tug-of-war between residents of the eastern portion of Lakewood Ranch's Country Club West – many of whose homes (in the Presidio neighborhood in Lakewood Ranch District 5) back up to Lorraine Road in the area of that intersection – and residents of Country Club East.

On both sides of Lorraine Road, there are entrance/exit gates for the respective club areas. The Lakewood Ranch Country Club gate on the west side of Lorraine Road is quite a bit closer to Lorraine Road than the gate on the Country Club East side. This means that any traffic control installation might make it harder for Country Club residents to enter or leave their neighborhood, as the ability to get into or out of the Country Club at the Players Drive gate might be compromised. These residents preferred a "roundabout" solution as a result, in addition citing the possibility of more noise and air pollution from large trucks that might be stopped at a traffic light right behind their homes.

On the other hand, Country Club East residents were very adamant about wanting a traffic signal. Their argument was that pedestrians, cyclists, and golf cart drivers would have a much harder time negotiating a roundabout, especially in times of heavy traffic.

The Manatee County Public Works Department held an informational meeting at St. Mary Magdalene Church on Sept. 27. Representatives of the County were there to answer questions and presented the public with diagrams as to how a roundabout would look versus a traffic signal. Over 200 people showed up for the meeting, many of them wearing red shirts, signifying their solidarity as residents of Country Club East.

The next day, on Sept. 28, the East County Observer printed an opinion letter from Rex Jensen, president and CEO of Schroed-

er-Manatee Ranch, the developer of Lakewood Ranch. Mr. Jensen pointed out that Lorraine Road has traffic signals all the way from north of State Road 70 to University Parkway, continuing down to Fruitville Road, and that putting in a different type of traffic control device – a roundabout – would be inconsistent with what is already there. He also noted that the cost factor for a roundabout would be significantly higher than that for a traffic light.

The County Commission was originally supposed to act on the proposal at its Oct. 10 meeting, but that agenda item was pushed to Nov. 14, at which the Commissioners voted to take the less costly alternative, and authorized a traffic signal at Lorraine Road and Players Drive, saving up to \$3 million in the process. A large contingent of Country Club East residents were in attendance, wearing their red shirts.

As for what can be done to mitigate the expected increase in noise and pollution at Lorraine Road and Players Drive, a barrier wall could be installed, possibly using some of the money saved by electing to go with traffic light.

## NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER HIRED

Executive Director Steve Zielinski reported at the November Lakewood Ranch Community Development District (CDD) board meetings that the Lakewood Ranch Inter-District Authority (IDA) has hired a new chief financial officer.

She is Liliya Sablukova, who has had years of experience in the financial area of local governments both in Sarasota and Manatee counties. She started in her new position with Lakewood Ranch on Nov. 13.

## FEMA

Steve Zielinski noted that the Country Club/Edgewater Village Association is working on preparing replies to apparent concerns from FEMA regarding compensation for expenses related to damage and cleanup from Hurricane Ian.

The IDA board will be reviewing these replies prior to submission to FEMA.

## MEETING CANCELLATIONS

Districts 1, 2, 4, and 5 have elected to cancel their December board meetings. The IDA and District 6 will hold the usual meetings in December.

## PAVING

The paving of the eastern section of Masters Avenue is being delayed. The contractor has apparently experienced some equipment-related issues.

The repaving of the Town Hall parking lot is complete.

## ADVENTURE PARK PAVILION

District 4 has scheduled meetings with the architect regarding the plans for the reconstruction of the Adventure Park Pavilion, which was destroyed in an accidental fire in July. One concern is that of making sure that the structural components of the new pavil-

ion are made of non-combustible material.

There is also a concern about the availability of good water pressure, in order to be able to fight another fire at the structure, should such a fire happen.

## ADVENTURE PARK BRIDGE

The District 4 board is continuing to review possible materials for the re-decking of the Adventure Park bridge. The structure itself is sound, but the Board wants to make sure that whatever material is used to re-deck the bridge has a long lifespan – ideally as much as 20 years.

## BUDGET MEETINGS

The various Lakewood Ranch CDD boards have reviewed the schedules for the upcoming fiscal year 2025 budget meetings, which will start soon after the first of the new year.



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# Rotary Club of Lakewood Ranch Raises Money - And Fun

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

What do you think of when someone mentions the Rotary Club? Perhaps a bunch of older business types gathered for lunch and a ho-hum program? Do you think of a few dollars donated to local non-profits? Do you ever think of the Rotary Club as a great place to have fun?

In Lakewood Ranch, Rotary Club meetings are not only fun, but they are based on a program of active service to others.

The Rotary Club of Lakewood Ranch has involved itself with many local and international programs, from providing meals for the homebound and seniors who don't have transportation through Meals on Wheels PLUS, to providing shelter for victims of disasters through their Shelter Box program, and from providing self-sustaining clean water systems for villages in Peru to donating books to school age children to help them hone their reading skills through Books for Kids.

The Books for Kids program has been especially successful in our community. Many of the books that Rotarians read to kids and then give them, go to students who may live in a home where English is not the first language. The Rotarians read the books to the kids, those kids take their books home and then read to their siblings. The aim is to raise literacy and reading at grade level.

It should be mentioned that Ted Lindenberg, director of the Rotary Books for Kids program has just been named the Lakewood Ranch Community Fund Humanitarian of the Year.

How do our Rotarians pay for all these initiatives?

The main source of income for Rotary of Lakewood Ranch is their annual Food and Wine Fest, which took place in November at the Premier Sports Campus. A ticket to the Food and Wine Fest has become one of the most coveted in town every year, and for good reason. You get a ticket, get together with your friends, and make an afternoon of sharing fantastic food bites from the area's top restaurants and savoring many varieties of fine wines from every well-known wine region ... all the while being serenaded by a live band.

The Fest also provides chef-taught cooking demonstrations, just like the culinary shows on TV. This year's demo chefs were executive chef Chris Covelli and executive sous chef Brett Wagner, of Sarasota's Sage restaurant.

VIP ticket holders enjoyed Maryland-style



lump crab salad from Seasons 52, along with their champagne. They also got to enter the party an hour earlier than non-VIP guests.

Food tent offerings included bulgogi beef from Kore Steak House, oysters from the Anna Maria Oyster Bar, shrimp and grits from Mean Dean's, and multiple desserts items from The Breakfast Company.

A Sprig of Thyme provided grilled gulf shrimp on a pineapple tropical salsa. Pinchers offered its famous blue crab cheese dip – and gave out coupons for a freebee if you dined at their restaurant. Glory Days came up with lots of pulled pork.

Perhaps the largest and most varied number of food offerings came from the culinary pro-

gram at Manatee Tech. Their display and food smorgasbord took up an entire end of a food tent and offered "tiramisu martinis"!

If you couldn't find enough dessert, all you had to do was to visit the Nothing Bundt Cakes display for a nice selection of cake samples.

Event Chairman Steve Kelle and his crew of dedicated Rotarians could not have pulled off a well-run event like this without the help of sponsors, including Audi of Sarasota, Sunset Porsche, Lakewood Ranch Communities, and J.P. Morgan Chase.

Rotary of Lakewood Ranch has contributed over \$2 million to its charities and projects since the beginning of the Food and Wine Fest. Let's wish them continued success!



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER





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# Manatee County Fair tickets now available online

Livestock shows, midway rides, Kiwanis Corndogs and live entertainment, oh my! The Manatee County Fair returns Jan. 11 - 21, 2024, and for the first time in the Fair's 108-year history, fair lovers can purchase admission tickets online.

Daily admission and parking prices remain unchanged from recent years with adults 13 and older, \$10; active-duty military, \$6; and children ages 6-12, \$6. Children 5 and under are admitted free. Parking near the Fair is available in several locations for \$10.

Adult tickets can be purchased at a \$1.50 discount per person online at [www.manateecountyfair.com](http://www.manateecountyfair.com) and clicking on the "buy tickets" button at the top of the page. (An individual ticket price is \$8 and a 50-cent-per-ticket fee is added at checkout.)

"Online ticket sales to avoid lines and save time is something people have asked for, and now we're happy to deliver that service," said Danny Alfonso, fair manager. "A lot of other attractions around Florida have raised ticket prices to the point that they're unaffordable for families to attend. We're proud to have kept ticket prices steady for many years, and now if you purchase online you can actually save money on admission."

The Fair begins Thursday, Jan. 11 when gates open at 5 p.m. Daily hours are listed on the Fair's website. This year's Fair theme is "Fun is in the Air at the Manatee County Fair."

Each year more than 100,000 people attend the County Fair, making it one of Manatee County's most popular annual events. The 2024 Fair is packed with fun activities for families of all ages including livestock shows, a petting zoo, camel rides, a one-man band, circus performers, pig racing, blacksmith demonstrations and more.

The main stage entertainment lineup is as follows:

- Jan. 11: hometown bluegrass band Highway 41 South, 7 & 9 p.m.
- Jan. 12 at 7 & 9 p.m. and Jan. 13 at 3, 6 & 8 p.m.: country and gospel's Carolina the Band
- Jan. 14: Bayside Worship opens at 6:30 p.m., before contemporary Christian artist Micah Tyler at 7:30 p.m.
- Jan. 15 at 3, 5 & 9 p.m. and Jan. 17 at 3, 5 & 7 p.m.: The 301 Travelers bring their rocking country sound
- Jan. 18: Tom Petty tribute band The Petty Hearts play at 7:30 p.m.
- Jan. 19 at 7 & 9 p.m. and on Jan. 20 at 3, 6 & 9 p.m.: Nashville's Rockland Road



To learn more about the 2024 Manatee County Fair, visit [manateecountyfair.com](http://manateecountyfair.com) and follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/manateecountyfair](https://facebook.com/manateecountyfair).



As we all prepare for the holidays and get those last-minute gifts for our loved ones, we hope you will consider supporting many of our local small businesses in the Lakewood Ranch area. At the Alliance, we see first-hand the blood, sweat and tears small businesses put into opening their stores and restaurants, serving their customers and impacting our community. The Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance represents over 650 member busi-



Brittany Lamont

nesses, and they have a wide variety of products and services.

So, when you are shopping this holiday season, consider checking out [LWRBA.ORG](http://LWRBA.ORG) to view our membership directory and discover some amazing companies ready to serve you.

Lakewood Ranch is a beautiful community in which we are all so lucky to live, work and play in. It is our privilege to support and represent the businesses of Lakewood Ranch.

- From the LWRBA Board of Directors, its staff, and members

## December Programs at Chabad of Bradenton & Lakewood Ranch

Please note that all events will take place at the Chabad House at 5712 Lorraine Road, or at the virtual Chabad House at [chabadofbradenton.com/zoom](https://chabadofbradenton.com/zoom), unless otherwise noted.

### Talmud Classes

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

*At the Chabad House and on Zoom*

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, 6 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.

### Ladies Torah & Tea

**Tuesday, Dec. 26, 11 a.m. to noon**

*At the home of Chanie Bukiet and on Zoom*

Join Chanie Bukiet for a weekly dose of delicious tea and refreshments, and discussion on the 12 principles of energized living that have empowered thousands of women to activate transformational goodness in their lives. Admission is free. Sponsor a class in someone's memory or honor for \$36.

### RCS: Rebecca – Desirable Duplicity Thursday, Dec. 21, at noon

*At the Chabad House and on Zoom*

One Wow Moment is not an overview of these ancient lives; rather, it analyzes the components of their fateful decisions and weighs the stakes involved. Each of its seven classes challenges participants to consider how they might have reacted under similar circumstances, harvests the life lessons inherent within each biblical narrative, and reframes ancient dilemmas into practical and empowering guidance for personal moments of decision in modern life. This is the second of a seven-class course and is entitled "Rebecca: Desirable Duplicity." Lunch will be served. Course fee: \$85, JWC members \$80 textbooks included, or \$20 per class.

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



# Chanukah Promises Light in the Darkness

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

The celebration of the first night of Chanukah at Lakewood Ranch Main Street on the evening of Dec. 7 was part of a worldwide celebration involving the lighting of 15,000 public menorahs, in celebration of the Festival of Lights.

Rabbi Mendy Bukiet, of the Chabad of Bradenton/Lakewood Ranch, in his comments to the audience of several hundred people who came to Main Street for this celebration, mentioned the darkness that the light of Chanukah can help to destroy.

He added the idea that those present should perform a mitzvah, or good deed, and then light a candle to mark that deed, providing additional Chanukah light.

This year, the Chabad's giant Chanukah menorah was created using transparent boxes of Orbeez – colorful plastic spheres that plump up when exposed to water.

The Chabad has garnered a reputation for creating Chanukah menorahs out of very different materials. One year, there was a “sock menorah,” another year there was a menorah made of cans of food to be donated to the poor.

Several local dignitaries came to offer holiday greetings, including a representative from the Sarasota Jewish Federation of Sarasota-Manatee, Tony Chiofalo, executive vice president and chief financial officer of Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, and Manatee County Commissioner Ray Turner.

Music included traditional Chanukah songs, and later the crowd was entertained by Dr. Laz, the “Rappin Rabbi,” who wore a Buffalo Sabres jersey and put on quite a show, even including audience participants.

A big part of the annual Chabad of Bradenton/Lakewood Ranch celebration of Chanukah has always been food. There were latkes (potato pancakes), falafel, hot dogs, hamburgers, and donuts – which kids could cover with frosting – and a Kona Ice truck. If you went away hungry, you had only yourself to blame!

In addition, the kids were treated to a big Dreidel Moon bounce house, as well as bubbles galore, produced by Spheres Bubble Show.

And of course, one of the main features of a good Chanukah celebration was the “gelt drop” – pieces of chocolate wrapped to look like coins. This time they were dropped to the waiting kids from the extension ladder of an East Manatee Fire truck, along with some folding money, just in case the coins weren't enough!

All through the event, security was provided by the Manatee County Sheriff's Department, as well as private security.

Chanukah is called the Festival of Lights because after Alexander the Great conquered the Middle East, he allowed Jews to practice their faith, but one of his successors, Antiochus IV, had other ideas, persecuting the Jews, and desecrating the temple in Jerusalem. A man named Judah Maccabee led an uprising against this tyrant and in the process of afterward re-sanctifying the temple, found that there was only enough good oil to keep the temple menorah lit for one day. However, this small amount of oil burned for eight days – a miracle – and this miracle is commemorated to this day as Chanukah, the Festival of Lights.

Rabbi Mendy noted an old saying: “a little light expels a lot of darkness.” There was a lot of Chanukah light on Main Street.



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER





# Lakewood Ranch High placed on prestigious AP Honor Roll

Lakewood Ranch High School added another prominent accolade to its growing list of academic accomplishments when it was recently placed on the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) Honor Roll for the 2022-2023 school year.

The AP Honor Roll is designed to celebrate high schools who do an exceptional job of encouraging students to take AP courses and pass AP exams. High schools eligible for this honor cover the United States (including U.S. territories) and Canada.

"This honor is a reward and recognition for the incredible efforts of our students and teachers," said Principal Dustin Dahlquist. "It demonstrates that Lakewood Ranch ranks and competes with the best high schools in the country."

AP Honor Roll schools come in four different categories: Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Lakewood Ranch achieved Silver status, by having 56 percent of its graduating class take at least one AP exam during high school and 18 percent take five or more AP exams. The school also received the AP Access Award for achieving a level of diversity

in AP exam participants that mirrors the school's overall demographics.

"It's nice to get this recognition specifically for AP because it is something we really focus on and encourage our students to participate in," said school support specialist Sammy Biggs, who has played an instrumental role in the growth of AP at LRHS, along with Assistant Principal Jeanne Galindo. "It proves our teachers are getting our students across the finish line and ready for their next endeavors."

An important element to the success of AP at Lakewood Ranch has been the addition of the AP Capstone Program. AP Capstone is a diploma program based on two yearlong AP courses that helps students attain highly-refined research, writing and other skills that are tremendously valued by elite colleges and universities.

In recent years, Lakewood Ranch High has received other prestigious academic recognitions like being named a Cognia School of Distinction, a Florida School of Excellence, and being ranked among the Best High Schools in America by U.S. News and World Report.



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## THE (PET) DOCTOR IS IN!

By Erin Siems, DVM

**H**ave you heard about the new dog respiratory disease that is going around the country? Well, by the time this article comes out, it may no longer be new. It may no longer be mysterious or even present but this seems like a good time to look at disease outbreak.



Right now the media – and social media – are all abuzz about a new respiratory disease that is sickening dogs, sometimes fatally, and is not responsive to traditional treatment. As veterinarians, we are getting a lot of frantic calls and emails about what to do. At this point, in the medical community, we do not yet know how widespread and dangerous this is, or if all of these illnesses are actually caused by the same pathogen or not.

In Florida, and especially in Lakewood Ranch, we have a very social dog community, with amenities like dog parks, doggie socials, doggie day care, boarding, grooming, etc. Sometimes our dogs are more sociable than we are. Sometimes our dogs are the reason we are sociable. In a high contact society, there is bound to be some level of disease present, just like human colds and flus. So far, we have not seen an increase in respiratory cases in dogs in our area. When we do see cases of respiratory disease, we carefully evaluate what diagnostics and treatments are in our patients' best interest. We explain why it is important to keep them



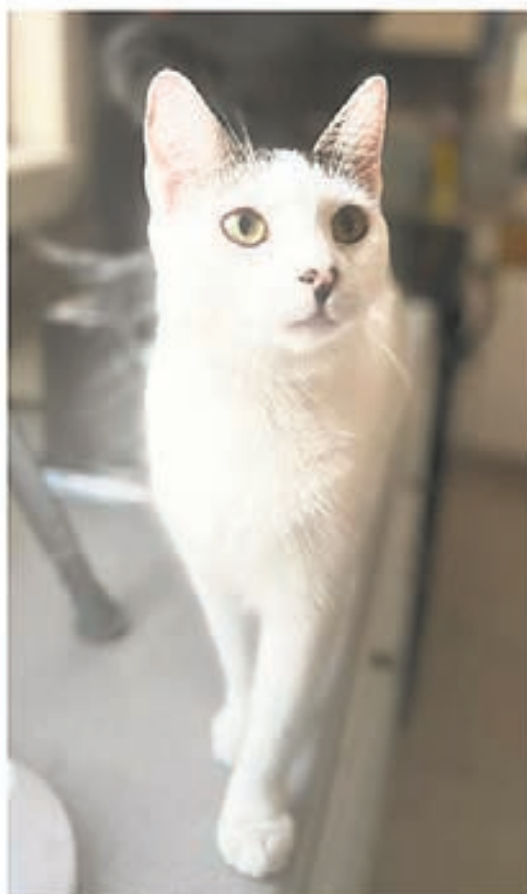
isolated even if it doesn't seem that bad. Because we already have high standards of care, we are in a better position to deal with an outbreak should it become prevalent in our area.

However, we need you to do your part too! If your dog is sick, even if it's just the sniffles or a little cough, keep them home and isolated. Be proactive in bringing them to the vet, especially any dogs that are immunocompromised, so that we can catch disease early before it becomes a big problem. If you notice a sick dog in a public setting, take your pet home, even if they are healthy. There is no need for unnecessary exposure. If you have a social dog, talk with your vet about lifestyle appropriate vaccines

so we are protecting against everything possible. We can suppress outbreaks of disease if we all be smart and work together.

*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](mailto:reception@BigPawsAnimalHospital.com).*

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# HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

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And while we are hopeful, we also know the challenges in our community this year have been considerable. With the high cost of living impacting rent and groceries, it has been hard for many families and seniors on fixed incomes to make ends meet.

No matter the challenges, the holidays tend to inspire hope and remind us that we are stronger together. Let us carry that spirit of hope with us into the New Year knowing that together, #WeFeedManatee!

**All donations, up to \$100,000, postmarked before December 31st will be matched \$1 for \$1 by the Steve and Natalee Herrig Family Foundation! Gifts postmarked by 12/31 are tax-deductible in the year they are made.**



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