



# Around the Ranch

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THE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER OF LAKEWOOD RANCH

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024



**THE ART OF PEACE** – An artist exhibiting at the Lakewood Ranch Fine Art Festival created this timely and inspiring message from hundreds of small, intricately cut pieces of old music scores from the 1930s. For more on the artists' works and upcoming show dates, see pages 12-13. Photo by Ernie Soller

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Advertising Sales/Circulation: Around the Ranch is published by Lakewood Ranch Media which is solely responsible for its content. The Herald-Tribune is responsible for the printing, distribution and sales production of this newspaper. The articles and editorial viewpoints contained in this publication are written solely by Lakewood Ranch Media with the assistance of the Community Services Office and other offices in Lakewood Ranch, none of which are associated with the Herald-Tribune.

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PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER

# Kids Enjoy “Safety Town” at LWR Town Hall

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

What makes little boys and little girls want to be firefighters? What sort of fascination is there with fire trucks and all the various pieces of equipment that firefighters haul around in those brightly painted trucks?

All that equipment is the stuff of dreams. Big trucks, huge hoses, lots of ladders, and all sorts of specialized equipment. The kids who showed up at the Lakewood Ranch “Safety Town” event at Town Hall had a great time.

Upon their arrival at Safety Town, they were presented with a big orange bag that included goodies as well as handouts on various home and community safety items, including a coloring/activity book featuring police, firefighters, EMS personnel, and medical responders. Each child also got a big red plastic “fire chief” hat. Most of the kids showed up with parents, although some came with grandparents.

As for the adults manning the various dis-

plays and booths, they were wearing capes – like all good superheroes.

Kids got to climb up into the cab of big fire trucks – not only the East Manatee Fire/Rescue truck, but the Manatee County Search and Rescue truck – a monster truck that can go off-road in a big way on its huge wheels and tires. The first responders had the lights on their trucks flashing, and what kid could resist checking them out?

But hands-on experiences are what can make an event like this truly memorable for a kid. The firefighters from East Manatee Fire/Rescue had all sorts of specialized equipment on their truck. I was definitely impressed by the pair of “Jaws of Life” tools carried on their truck. To think that these tools can enable first responders to literally cut a person out of a damaged car (think: giant can opener!) is amazing.

For the little guys and girls, the firefighters had a special treat; you might call it a test of strength. As the kids watched, the firefighter pulled down from its place on the side panel of their truck an axe, and passed it to the kids



to see if they could handle it. Note that this axe was pretty much as tall as the kids, and there was no way that any of them could muster the strength to swing it. They could barely hold on to it! But think about it. These kids will remember the opportunity to hold that fire axe for the rest of their lives.

The firefighters may have been the stars of the show, but there were other agencies and



opportunities to check out. If the firefighters were allowing kids to play with THEIR toys, the Manatee County Sheriff’s Office Crime Prevention deputy not only talked about safety, but they gave out toys – fidget spinners. Their vehicle had signs stating things like “See Something ... Say Something” and it also had a big sign on it warning adults to lock their cars so as

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



to prevent things inside from getting stolen. Safety when out and about in our region is important. We live in an area with lots of water, and the folks at the Goldfish Swim School were there to promote learning how to swim – and how to stay safe in the water. They even brought their mascot – a big orange walking fish!

The Florida Department of Health office in Manatee County came by with hints for parents about eating well and avoiding food-borne diseases. The kids had fun playing with the plastic food.

Urgent Care was there to give out water bottles and information on their services; and Nate's Honor Rescue came with an adoptable dog, of course, and information on the shelter, as well as on emergency procedures for our pets.

HOPE Family Services was there to inform the public of their 24-hour crisis help line. They provide counseling, legal services, contacts for community resources, and shelter for the abused. One of their flyers read: "Is Someone You Love Hurting You?" with their crisis line phone number: (941)755-6805.



Yes, the kids who came to Safety Town had a good time, but it was also an event to inform the community at large. The first Lakewood Ranch Safety Town event was held pre-COVID, and was a big success.

Once again, the event was spearheaded by Lakewood Ranch Community Development District One supervisor Laura Fox, and her merry band of volunteers. Thank you, Ms. Fox!

Maybe next time I'll get to sit in the driver's seat of that fire truck!



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# The Magic of Lakewood Ranch Women's Club Holiday Dinner Theatre Raises Over \$20,000 for Charity



From left: Cyndy Scott, event co-chair; Mark Hiser, CEO, SMART Riding Therapy; Char Young, CEO, HOPE Family Services; Svetlana Ivashchenko, CEO, Children's Guardian Fund; and Monika Templeman, LWRWC publicity chair & event co-chair.

In December, more than 200 people attended "The Magic of Lakewood Ranch Women's Club (LWRWC)" holiday dinner theatre charity fundraiser at the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club. Attendees enjoyed a gourmet dinner, music and dancing provided by JB Baxter from More than Music, and a magic show performed by Universal Studios headliner illusionist, Peter Michael. A live auction, silent auction, and giving tree contributed to the fundraising success. All proceeds

will benefit Lakewood Ranch Women's Club's four adopted 501(c)(3) charities - HOPE Family Services, helping victims of domestic violence; SMART (Sarasota Manatee Association of Riding Therapy), dedicated to enhancing the physical, emotional, and cognitive growth of children and adults with special needs; Solve Maternity Homes, helping pregnant women in need with unplanned pregnancies and their babies for over 48 years; and Children's Guardian Fund, dedicated to providing funding for

the immediate and ongoing needs of children removed from abusive or neglectful homes in Florida's 12th Judicial Circuit.

"The Magic of LWRWC" charity fundraiser represents the fun, friendship and community service that epitomizes LWRWC and the Lakewood Ranch Community, because supporting charity and celebrating together is what great communities do! This has been a banner year for the Lakewood Ranch Women's Club that not only put the fun into fundraising, but also

earned the prestigious Community Spirit of Manatee Award in March 2023.

The Lakewood Ranch Women's Club sincerely appreciates all its sponsors and 90 donors for helping to make "The Magic of LWRWC" event a huge success. The event raised over \$20,000 to help its adopted charities with their most critical needs.

To learn more about the LWRWC, their fundraising events, and adopted charities visit [www.lwrwc.org](http://www.lwrwc.org).



# 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](http://lwrfund.org)



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& STAR FARMS



# Sapphire Point's Resort-inspired Amenities Complete

Residents of Sapphire Point were able to enjoy holiday get-togethers in their new clubhouse, hot chocolate by the outdoor firepit, and a little down time on their favorite chaise next to the resort-style pool. With all amenities now open in Pulte Home's 472 single-family home neighborhood in Lakewood Ranch, residents are experiencing a vibrant new social lifestyle focused on friendships, health and wellness.

"The amenities at Sapphire Point attract homebuyers who not only want a beautiful, well-designed Pulte home, but value a true sense of community and time spent with others," said Danielle Calamela, vice president of sales for PulteGroup's Southwest Florida Division. "Amenities are the heart of the community, the place where mothers or fathers with small children meet for swim dates, the spirit of competition can be witnessed on the basketball court, and residents of all ages enjoy a resort-inspired ambiance and the best Florida lifestyle has to offer."

Sapphire Point's vacation-style amenities include a clubhouse featuring a fitness center equipped with state-of-the-art cardio and strength-training equipment and a social room with a gathering area and catering kitchen for events and activities. Colorful landscaping and palm trees fringe the large pool deck, with lounge chairs and umbrella-shaded tables around the contemporary pool.

Additional outdoor amenities include a poolside firepit lounge area, shaded playground, basketball court, open-air picnic pavilion and a dog park.

Nestled within 60 acres of nature preserves and 35 acres of lakes, Sapphire Point offers 16 single-family home designs with consumer-inspired features and flexible open-concept floor plans, blending living and dining areas with versatile outdoor living spaces for year-round entertaining. Offering two to seven bedrooms, up to six-and-a-half bathrooms, and 1,433 to over 5,360 square feet of living space, the one- and two-story homes appeal to families of all sizes and empty nesters alike, providing infinite possibilities to upsize, downsize or right size.

Four decorated model homes are open daily for viewing. Sapphire Point also features limited quick move-in homes, providing immediate and near-immediate occupancy.

New homes at Sapphire Point feature flexi-



ble designs with options for custom pools and spas, extended outdoor living areas and garages, and plan-specific opportunities for sunrooms, multigenerational suites, second floors with lofts, and additional bedrooms and bathrooms. Home prices start from the \$390,000s to \$840,000s.

Sapphire Point offers an ideal location in Lakewood Ranch, close to top-rated elementary, middle, and high schools, post-secondary education campuses, shopping, golf and tennis facilities, and the famed white-sand beaches of Sarasota and Anna Maria Island. The community is also convenient to Lakewood Ranch's entertainment and dining destinations, 150 miles of biking and walking trails, and adjacent to The Premier Sports Campus, which hosts year-round sports and recreation activities.

For more information about Sapphire Point at Lakewood Ranch, visit the sales center at 16411 Sapphire Point Drive, Monday through Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Sunday noon to 5 p.m., or call/text 941-213-1179 to arrange an appointment. Additional information is also available at [www.Pulte.com/SapphirePoint](http://www.Pulte.com/SapphirePoint).



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# LAKEWOOD RANCH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

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



By Danielle Bugel

The beginning of 2024 has already brought such incredible energy and positivity to the Lakewood Ranch community! Our New Year’s Eve Celebration and “New Year, New You” Health & Wellness Expo were both unforgettable events filled with excitement and great experiences.

The highlight of our NYE celebration was an astonishing live drone show that left everyone in awe! This captivating performance truly lived up to its promise to be the showstopper of the night and the perfect way to ring in the New Year! Delicious food and refreshing drinks from our fantastic vendors added to the festivities. The games and entertainment kept everyone amused throughout the evening, creating a truly memorable experience.

We want to express our gratitude to our presenting sponsors, Capstan Financial Consulting Group and Waterside Place at Lakewood Ranch, for their generous support. We also want to thank Tropical Trills and Oh What Fun! Party Co. for making the Kidz Zone a blast!

The Health & Wellness Expo that followed our New Year’s Celebration was a highly anticipated event that attracted a diverse range of attendees. Held at the UTC Mall, the vibrant atmosphere of the venue perfectly com-



plemented the positive energy surrounding the event. This event featured a variety of health and wellness experts who provided valuable information and advice for a healthier lifestyle.

We are thankful to our presenting sponsor, Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, and to Lakewood Ranch Massage for their support as the stage sponsor!

In addition to these amazing events, we are thrilled to introduce new groups and clubs for 2024! Whether you’re interested in gaming, yoga, or music, Lakewood Ranch Community Activities truly has something for everyone! Or join one of our existing groups and clubs from 2023, such as Lakewood Ranch Women’s Club Bunco, Bumble Bee Yoga, Pro-Jam (for experienced musicians), and more. They are all waiting for you to join and connect with like-minded individuals. Explore all the opportunities at [lwrca.org](http://lwrca.org) to find your tribe!



Did you know that LWRCA offers more than 100 chances every year to volunteer? There are various ways to contribute, such as working on a committee, organizing events, and more. If you’re interested in giving back, simply email us at [info@lwrca.org](mailto:info@lwrca.org).

If you’re interested in sponsoring our events or becoming a vendor, please reach out to [Joanna@lwrca.org](mailto:Joanna@lwrca.org). By partnering with us, you not only increase your brand visibility but also become an important part of the enriching experiences we bring to the Lakewood Ranch community!

With such a fantastic start to the year, Lakewood Ranch Community Activities promises more exciting events and initiatives in 2024. Stay connected and be a part of the excitement that awaits you by visiting our website at [lwrca.org](http://lwrca.org). Together, we will continue to build a lively and inclusive community filled with positivity and togetherness!

## Thank you to our sponsors!

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# AROUND THE RANCH



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER



## Lakewood Ranch Main Street Art Fair Brings Varied Offerings

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

Have you ever considered acquiring a herd of elephants? Well, you could have at the Lakewood Ranch Fine Art Festival in December. OK, they would be something smaller than life-size, but the sculptures were really cool!

One artist had produced every sort of creation made from acrylic, from figures to Chanukah menorahs to wine bottle holders. There was a woman who sculpted animals – including elephants – from palm fronds! Quite unique. There were sculpted horse heads that reminded me of the horse of Troy. One booth offered hand-painted silk scarves. Another displayed very colorful pictures, some of sea creatures, crafted from ceramic tiles. A number of pieces by one artist reminded me of rural stop signs which had been repeatedly shot-up – kind of “painting with an Uzi.” And, how about a wooden pinna for the wall of your den?

One Zimbabwean sculptor displayed a stylized head titled “Covid 19.” The head wore a mask and had a knife blade protruding from the skull. Different, but perhaps appropriate to the subject. Another artist had created a large “peace dove” presentation, made from hundreds of small, intricately cut pieces of old music scores from the 1930s.

Jewelers were out there in force, with many unique creations – some very modernistic, some very colorful, and some very traditional. Prices varied widely, largely based on the materials used.

The art fair included several different photographic booths,



some specializing in wildlife, and some offering skillful shots of domestic and foreign landscapes.

Other than art, there were several booths selling commercial items, from Murphy beds to windows to cutlery to outdoor furniture. I really liked the red-handled cutlery block set – just the right thing to give a little color to a drab kitchen.

One of the more “Florida centric” pictures I saw was a depiction of a guy driving an old red pickup truck down a beach, with several different colored flamingoes in the bed, and on the side of the truck was a sign advertising snow removal.

Lots of fun, lots of art, in Lakewood Ranch, of course.

Don’t worry if you missed it; the art event will be on Main Street again from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Jan. 20-21, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. March 9-10.



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

# The Crucial Role of Electrolytes

With Dr. Rushiv Patel, DO

*Dr. Rushiv Patel of Lakewood Ranch Medical Center answers the most common questions regarding the minerals that may be a mystery to most. He provides his insight as to what they are, what they do and why you need them.*



## WE HEAR ABOUT THEM ALL THE TIME, BUT WHAT ARE ELECTROLYTES, REALLY?

Electrolyte is a simpler term for ions that carry an electric charge and can conduct electricity. The major electrolytes in the human body include sodium, potassium, chloride and phosphate. They're minerals, and they're essential to our bodies to ensure proper functioning, which includes maintaining fluid balance, supporting nerve function and facilitating muscle contractions.

## WHAT IS AN ELECTROLYTE IMBALANCE? IS IT A COMMON ISSUE?

An electrolyte imbalance occurs when there is an excess or deficiency of one or more electrolytes. This may result from dehydration, certain medical conditions/illnesses, or an inadequate diet. Electrolyte imbalances are relatively common but are only a cause for concern if and when they become severe, which would require medical attention.

Electrolyte imbalances may present in ways like muscle cramping, weakness and fatigue, irregular heartbeats, dizziness, confusion and changes in blood pressure. If a person is experiencing these symptoms, it's crucial to contact and discuss this with their physician. A healthcare provider can conduct screenings and tests to help diagnose the imbalance and compose a treatment plan. Treatment may involve dietary changes, supplements or hydration therapy.

## CAN AN ELECTROLYTE IMBALANCE LEAD TO FURTHER COMPLICATIONS?

If severe, an imbalance can absolutely lead to serious complications. This includes cardiac arrhythmia, muscle spasms, kidney problems, and, in extreme cases, life-threatening conditions like seizures or coma. This is why prompt treatment is necessary, and avoiding an imbalance at all is more than helpful.



## WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO MAINTAIN HEALTHY ELECTROLYTE LEVELS?

Steering clear of an electrolyte imbalance can be as simple as staying hydrated and eating a balanced diet full of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. You should also pay special attention to healthy habits in times of electrolyte loss during exercise or illness. An easy and quick way to replenish electrolytes is

through sports drinks.

Being mindful of electrolyte levels can be beneficial for anyone and everyone, especially those with certain medical conditions. High blood pressure, kidney disorders or those taking diuretics should consult with a healthcare professional to help regularly monitor their electrolytes – it's crucial for overall well-being and takes everyday effort.

*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. To schedule an appointment, call 800-816-4145 or visit [doctors.lakewoodranch-medicalcenter.com](https://doctors.lakewoodranch-medicalcenter.com).*



By Brittany Lamont

As Lakewood Ranch continues to grow, so does the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance. We are excited to welcome the new members who joined at the end of last year. These businesses will join our over 700 members and our mission for success of our members through unparalleled access to business connections, resources, and advocacy.



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For more information on how you can join the Alliance and grow your business this year, please visit our website at [www.LWRBA.org](http://www.LWRBA.org).

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Florida Plastic Surgery and Medspa  
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## January 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](http://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, 6:30 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

**Tuesdays, Jan. 16, 23, and 30, 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 Torah learning. The class topics will be "The Heart of the Matter," finding personal meaning in eight powerful prayers. Admission is free. Sponsor a class in someone's memory or honor for \$36.

### Chabad Hebrew School of the Arts

**Sundays, Jan. 21 and 28, 9:30 a.m. to noon**

#### 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.

### RCS: Rachel: Mother of Devotion

**Thursday, Jan. 18, 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 third of a seven-class course. Lunch will be served. Course fee: \$85, JWC members \$80 textbooks included, or \$20 per class.

### Men's Club Steak & Scotch

**Wednesday, Jan. 24, 7:30 p.m.**

#### At the home of Steve Weinshel

Enjoy delicious grilled steak (fish option available), cigars, whiskey, bourbon, and scotch, for the ultimate grilling and chilling experience. Cost: \$30 per person.

### JLI - Advice for Life

**Wednesdays, beginning Jan. 31, 7:30 p.m.**

#### At the Chabad House and on Zoom

The Rebbe's spiritual leadership is the force behind the modern Chabad movement. Join us for a multimedia journey, with a six-week course, through the Rebbe's practical wisdom on work, family, health, and well-being. Discover how the Rebbe applied Jewish values to serve as a guide for finding deeper meaning in everyday life. Fee: \$90 (textbook included).

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

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# Lakewood Ranch Ranks No. 1 In The Nation For Sixth Consecutive Year

Lakewood Ranch has maintained its ranking as the number one best-selling, master-planned multi-generational community in the nation for an impressive six consecutive years, as recognized by RCLCO, an independent real estate consulting firm. “Lakewood Ranch’s stellar performance this past year is a testament to its dynamic market segmentation strategy, superior marketing, appealing lifestyle, great execution, and the professionalism of the development team,” said Gregg Logan, managing director at RCLCO.

In 2023, despite spiking interest rates, the community achieved 2,257 sales (22% above 2022), marking it as the second-highest sales year in its history. This was partly attributed to builders’ strategic initiatives to draw potential resale buyers into the new home market. Laura Cole, senior vice president of Lakewood Ranch, commended the builders for their efforts in leveraging mortgage buy-downs, accelerated build cycles, and move-in ready homes, while also highlighting the financial benefits of lower insurance and maintenance expenses associated with new construction.

Emphasizing the commitment to enhancing the quality of life, Cole reiterated Lakewood Ranch’s dedication to fostering a vibrant, multi-generational community that caters to diverse life stages and budgets. The community’s recognition in the Urban Land Institute’s new master-planned community



publication underscored its segmentation and varied product offerings, acknowledging its broad appeal. Furthermore, Rex Jensen, president and CEO of Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, the developer of Lakewood Ranch, was honored with Zonda’s 2023 Legend Award, recognizing outstanding contributions to the planned-community sector.

The sales landscape in Lakewood Ranch witnessed a significant shift in 2023, with a notable 37% of new home sales originating from within The Ranch and Sarasota and Manatee counties. “Many of these sales were attributed to renters seeking perma-

nent residency after experiencing limited choices during the pandemic,” Cole said. “Other local sales came from buyers who experienced a life change, precipitating the desire or need for a new home in our community.”

Expanding beyond Florida, markets such as New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and Boston contributed significantly to sales, with Tampa and Miami making the top five feeder markets for the first time. Anticipating an increase in in-state moves due to equity growth, Lakewood Ranch foresees more buyers relocating from within Florida.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2024, Lakewood Ranch plans to introduce nine new villages and neighborhoods while launching a newly incorporated section in the northeast comprised of three communities that will have great appeal based on recent successes: Saddlestone (multi-gen), Del Webb Catalina (age-restricted), and Calusa National Golf (bundled golf). The Ranch is also introducing two new homebuilders to its portfolio, Homes by WestBay and Dream Finders, and Erickson Senior Living will break ground on Emerson Lakes, a 1,200-unit continued care retirement community located north of SR-70. New schools, a county library, enhanced amenities at the Premier Sports Campus, updated town centers, and various other developments are also in the pipeline.

## JOIN US AT OUR NEXT SHOW!

Every month at Lakewood Ranch, we host the best of local music, visual and performance art the Sarasota region offers.

### RANCH REFLECTIONS: AN ART AND LIGHT EXHIBITION!

January 14-20th from 6:30pm-10pm

### THE OUT-OF-DOOR ACADEMY: JAZZ UNDER THE STARS

Tuesday, February 27th @ 6pm

*Check out all of the events  
happening around The Ranch!*



**LAKEWOOD RANCH** *.com*



A photograph of two young women walking outdoors, smiling and carrying shopping bags. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and jeans, holding a brown paper bag. The woman on the right is wearing a dark blue top and jeans, holding a bright pink shopping bag. They are walking in front of a building with large windows.

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PHOTOS BY RYAN ANGELL

## Lakewood Ranch's Mindful Triathlon at Waterside Place

Lakewood Ranch's annual Mindful Triathlon was held in November at Waterside Place. The event, unlike most triathlons, featured a 5K walk/run, followed by yoga and meditation sessions conducted by SHACK Yoga + Fitness. The Mindful Triathlon, in conjunction with Fit2Run, gave participants an

opportunity to practice mindfulness in motion. People participated both solo and with friends and family. From its inception, the Mindful Triathlon was planned to offer an experience that allows people to connect with their minds, bodies, and community.

*More photos next page*





# Your LWR Story

By Maggie Milne

Meet Karen McDowell, Lakewood Ranch resident and business owner.

Karen moved to Lakewood Ranch from New York; she was born and raised in The Bronx, spending time in City Island, a warm and friendly neighborhood on the Long Island Sound.

Karen's career has afforded her the opportunity to work from home, as an attorney with the Federal Government ensuring civil rights in education. She has always been committed to serving the community in a variety of ways, and still seeks to volunteer to help people. When she decided it was time for a new locale, Karen considered several warm places throughout the United States, including both coasts of Florida. Through her travels to and via her research for the best location, Karen discovered Lakewood Ranch and began planning for her 2022 move.

Karen selected Lakewood Ranch for its lifestyle offerings and the excitement of a developing community. Being a lover of beaches and boating, Karen chose this location for its proximity to both, as well as the activities and appeal of an all-ages community. She read about Lakewood Ranch in a 2016 publication which highlighted growth throughout the Tampa Bay region, including cultural events, civic groups, and specific areas of interest that appealed to her. While visiting and exploring Lakewood Ranch, she said she met kind and friendly people, through whom she found her church. Karen decided to make Lakewood Ranch her forever home, choosing to build a new home within a multi-gen village that offers extensive amenities, a restaurant and poolside bar, as well as resort-style pools.

Karen moved to her new home in Lakewood Ranch in the fall of 2022, bringing her avian Rosey Bourkes parakeets named Bella and Flora. When not working, Karen serves her community in a volunteer capacity with Masala Giving Circle (a diverse group of African American women with a common passion for giving back, helping others and creating positive in the African American communities of Sarasota and Manatee counties), her church, and as guardian ad litem. She has launched her own business, "Luxe and Thyme," selling all types of jewelry, including vintage and resale turquoise, pearl, and designer costume. You can find Karen at her boutique booth, located in Bradenton at one of the favored vintage thrift shops. She attends her church, Light of the World International Church, for encouraging faith-based messages, and service through weekly community events. She is grateful for the diversity Lakewood Ranch embraces – all ages, a mix of cultures, and a variety of com-



munity events and celebrations. With such an array of lifestyle offerings, Karen feels at home.

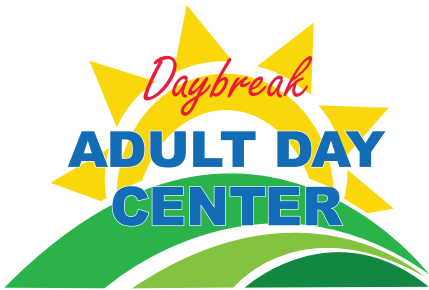
For recreation and fun, Karen loves to exercise, and goes to the beach, with Lido Key and Siesta Key being her favorites. She loves boating and looks forward to joining one of the many nearby boating clubs. Since her arrival in Lakewood Ranch, she has created terrific friendships, and formed beautiful lifetime relationships. Karen embraces Lakewood Ranch as one piece of her authentic calling – contributing to her community through service, growing her "Luxe and Thyme" boutique, and valued relationships.

To contact Karen email: [karencollette@hotmail.com](mailto:karencollette@hotmail.com).

*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).*



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## THE (PET) DOCTOR IS IN!

By Erin Siems, DVM

**W**ow! Just like that, another year has flown by!

What are you hoping to improve in the new year? Many of us hope to live a healthier life through good diet and exercise this year. Most of our pets could use this too, but they need our help (and motivation) to do so.

Most American pets are overweight or obese (almost 60%) from a mixture of too many calories and too little exercise. Just like us, many dogs and cats that are simply put on a diet don't lose weight or they regain the weight that they do lose shortly after that goal is met. That's why they need a lifestyle change that includes diet and exercise.

There are so many foods out there, it can be confusing to decide which one is the right one for your pet. For pets who are already a little pudgy, it is a good idea to switch to a light or diet food that is going to have more fiber and less calories per cup. These foods are not going to taste as good and you may notice a decrease in appetite, which is ok as long as they are still eating it. Any food change should be done gradually, over 1-2 weeks, to avoid upsetting their stomach. Of course, if your pet is on a special diet for medical reasons, you should consult your veterinarian prior to switching foods. Also, consider how many snacks and treats your pet gets. There can be a surprising amount of calories in all those little



goodies. Did you know that a large milk bone has 125 calories in it? That's  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total daily calories for an average 30-pound dog. Try healthy treats like baby carrots or green beans so that they can keep snacking with you but in a healthy way.

The key to a truly healthy lifestyle is exercise. Just like us, it is a good idea for pets to get a checkup from their doctor before starting any exercise program, to make sure their bodies are able to handle it and there are not underlying medical reasons for the excess weight. For our couch potato pets, we need to start slow and build up stamina over time. While taking a walk or playing fetch are good dog activities, cats are a bit harder to convince to get moving. Many cats can be enticed with a laser pointer or interactive feather toys. Even if you have to hide low calorie treats around the house to entice them to "hunt," at least they are working for their calories.

The most important part is to recognize small gains as successes and do not solely focus on setbacks. This is a journey that will take time, but you can do it 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).

## JOIN THE LAKEWOOD RANCH CHARGERS SOCCER CLUB

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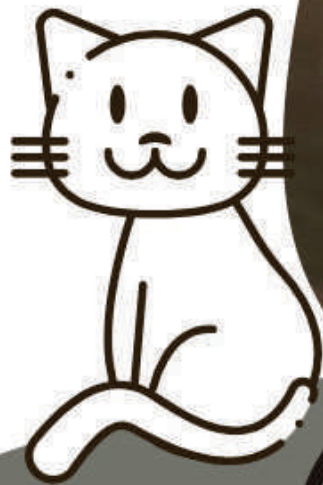
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