



# Around the Ranch

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THE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER OF LAKEWOOD RANCH

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2024



**SPRING HAS SPRUNG IN LAKEWOOD RANCH** – One of Lakewood Ranch's favorite events, the Eggstravaganza, heralds the arrival of spring. For more pictures, see pages 10-11. Photo by the Lakewood Ranch Digital Photography Club.

## INSIDE:

**LWR'S IRISH/CELTIC  
FESTIVAL**

Page 6

**COMMUNITY  
ACTIVITIES**

Page 12

**THE UNASSUMING  
WINE BRO**

Page 18

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# Irish Eyes Smile at LWR's Irish/Celtic Festival

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

Are you Irish? I admit to not being Irish at all, as my ethnic heritage comes from central Europe. However I do have an Irish wife, who loves all thing Irish, and has been to the Emerald Isle multiple times. And, as last month was the season for St. Patrick's Day, our home had a sequined bright green shamrock on the front door, along with little leprechaun hats, also in green, etc.

If you were at the Lakewood Ranch Irish/Celtic Festival in March, you could have become Irish for the day! Everyone at the Festival instantly became Irish ... at least in spirit, if not via ethnic heritage.

And, speaking of spirit – or spirits, yes, there were spirits to be sampled – Irish and other, including a special bottle of Kentucky Owl Bourbon, labeled in green as a St. Patrick's Edition. There were quite a number of special “whiskey and whatever” baskets up for raffle, including one that included whiskey, glasses, mugs, and even a lime ... plus a special lime squeezing tool, just in case you didn't already have one of those.

There was, of course, plenty of beer available and, if beer and whiskey weren't enough, you could participate in a little wine tasting. Why not?

Now, when folks get together and are having a really good time, they get hungry, and so, just to make sure that no one left the grounds of Greenbrook's Adventure Park hungry, there were several food trucks on hand to tend to the needs of hungry festival attendees. One truck featured huge burgers, another offered smoked corned beef sandwiches. A third food truck featured Italian cuisine and had a sign advertising cannoli.

Walking around the Festival grounds, one could not help but feel that this event was definitely one for people watching. There were a number of folks wearing kilts – some in bands, and some not.

Various booths encircled the grounds, featuring everything from a taekwondo school to Drake Irish Dance School, and Bricks for Kidz (Lots of little leprechauns spent time here). Some older leprechauns took their turns at a sort of bungee-jumping contraption that hoisted them into the air and enabled them to tumble.

There were several sale booths that featured



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER



Irish and Celtic jewelry, cute barware with tiny people crowded around the bases of the glasses, and so on.

This event was billed as the “Irish/Celtic Festival and Lucky Dog Parade,” and the festival didn't disappoint – there were dogs all over the place, from the big and mighty, to the little and maximum cute, to all sorts of dogs in the middle, whether they – or their owners – were wearing a green-trimmed costume.

The Lion Rampant Pipe and Drum Band helped to bring in all of the lucky dogs, each dog being escorted by a piper while they par-

aded in front of the judges, who selected several winners, each of which got a gift basket!

Once the dogs had their turn to delight, the Celtic Conundrum band took over the entertaining, followed by the Drake Irish Dancers and the Blue Skye Pipe and Drum Band. Since the day was a bit on the warm side (This IS Florida!), as well as windy, those who had the good sense to get out of the sun and sit under the entertainment tent stayed a little cooler, while the rest of us got perhaps a little sun, but wasn't it FUN?

We'll be back next year.



# District 4 to Determine Pavilion Replacement Parameters

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

During their monthly board meeting in March, the supervisors of Lakewood Ranch Community Development District (CDD) 4 decided to continue their meeting by a week to determine exactly what the priorities were for the reconstruction of the Greenbrook Adventure Park pavilion. The structure burned down on the evening of July 4, 2023 due to a fire that was ruled accidental.

Residents Nancy Roush and Penny Kress attended the meeting and asked if a polling opportunity could be made available to the residents regarding what the priorities should be for the design and construction of the new pavilion. One of their concerns had to do with whether the District needed to provide additional restroom facilities, considering the number of events held at the park, and the increasing number of visitors.

From the standpoint of the supervisors, time is not on the side of getting the work done as quickly as possible, and polling residents would take additional time. The Board, in continuing their meeting to the following week, made that continued portion of the meeting for the purpose of deciding just what the District needed to do, and what priorities would be important going forward. The Board needs to decide what features will be required, and just how to pay for the reconstruction. One thing is certain: The Board is looking to build a new pavilion using non-combustible materials.

One stumbling block to reconstruction is the fact that the District's insurance carrier, Florida Municipal Insurance Trust, is at this time only willing to pay out a small portion (less than half) of the replacement value that the facility was insured for. They claim that because the District had not increased coverage, somehow, by their calculations, it is therefore liable for a penalty, which reduces the payout.

Is this actually legal? Supervisor Nancy Johnson asked Attorney Andrew Cohen to check to see what new Florida laws are now in place that would allow this practice.

The pavilion was insured for a replacement value of \$200,000. It is roughly estimated that reconstruction of the pavilion could cost the district between \$400,000 and \$500,000, depending on what changes to the original plans are made.

The District 4 Board did approve the re-decking contract with Custom Deck and Davit for the renovation of the Adventure Park Bridge, at a cost of \$111,300. The material to be used is called "Wear Deck," and is a com-

posite, fiberglass-based wood-free material, which carries a lifetime warranty to the original buyer.

The Greenbrook HOA has adopted a new policy regarding home rentals. A homeowner must own their home for at least two years before leasing it.

Supervisor Nancy Johnson, reporting on the formation of the new Inter-District Authority (IDA) budget, said that the IDA is estimating a budget increase of 13.2% for the 2025 fiscal year. This will affect district budgets.

## POTHoles AND CELL SERVICE

At the District 1 board meeting, much attention was given to the condition of the pavement on Lakewood Ranch Boulevard in District 1, part of which currently has the appearance of "patches over patches over patches," a situation that has residents very concerned about dodging the potholes and rough areas. It has been proven that poor road conditions cost drivers money for repairs and replacement costs for their vehicles.

Manatee County has re-paved a couple of lanes of Lakewood Ranch north of State Road 70, but this does nothing to help those who must use the road south of State Road 70. The pavement on University Parkway is also not in great shape, and the same could be said for portions of Lorraine Road.

Part of the problem may be that the roads were not constructed to withstand some of the heavy usage that they have been exposed to. Since our area continues to experience a lot of growth, there are heavy trucks using the roads, which have a tendency to "beat up" roadways over time. Maybe the county needs to look at a more heavy-duty approach to the original road construction, in order to avoid having to re-pave them sooner rather than later.

Since it has been estimated that Lakewood Ranch contributes something like 30% of Manatee County's revenue, perhaps it's time for the County to realize that our community needs a bit more attention.

Another issue that District 1 supervisors are concerned about is that of poor cell phone service. Lakewood Ranch has, for at least 20 years, had challenging cell phone service. Several years ago, after doing a study on the issue, a company agreed to construct towers in Lakewood Ranch, but the larger cell carriers refused to get on board, citing the idea that they wanted to build their own towers. A few "short" cell towers have been constructed along Lakewood Ranch Boulevard, but as they are short, their reach is not optimal.



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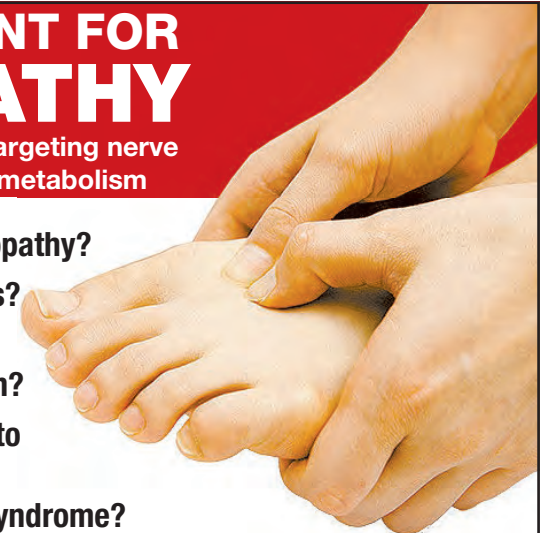
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# Gold Star Memorial Marker to be Dedicated in Lakewood Ranch

The Gardeners Out East club, together with Manatee Library Services and Veterans Services, will celebrate Gold Star Families with the dedication of a Gold Star memorial marker at 10 a.m. May 4, on the grounds of the Lakewood Ranch Library, 16410 Rangeland Parkway, Lakewood Ranch.

In May of 2015 the National Garden Clubs, with the approval of the Department of Veterans Affairs, developed a program devoted to loved ones who lost their lives in the service of the United States Armed Services. It is an adjunct program to the National Garden Clubs Blue Star marker, which is the program designated as a living tribute to men and women who served, are serving, and who will serve in the Armed Forces.

Gold Star Families, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to providing support to families who have lost a loved one in the service of the country. The mission of the Gold Star Families is to offer hope and healing through re-

membering fallen heroes and coming together for special events. They provide healing through emotional and psychological support to the families.

Representing the Gold Star Families for the Lakewood Ranch Library site is Stefenie Hernandez, whose 21-year-old son Patrick L. Lay II was killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan in 2011. He graduated from Braden River High School.

There are a total of 47 Gold Star markers in the United States, eight of which are located in Florida. This marker will be the ninth. It will join the Blue Star Memorial that was dedicated by Gardeners Out East of Lakewood Ranch at the Lakewood Ranch Town Hall in May 2017.

Gardeners Out East of Lakewood Ranch is grateful for the support of the Lakewood Ranch and Manatee Library Services staff along with Veterans Services to facilitate the installation of the marker and to help make this dedication possible. All are welcome to attend.



## Lee Wetherington Homes Selected for Shellstone at Waterside

Homebuilder Lee Wetherington Homes has been selected as a preferred home builder for the new Shellstone at Waterside community, located east of Lorraine Road and south of University Parkway in Lakewood Ranch. Developed by Homes by Towne, Shellstone will feature amenities designed specifically for modern homebuyers, all conveniently set near Waterside Place — one of Lakewood Ranch's award-winning town centers. Lee Wetherington Homes will begin building its model home, the Sand Dollar, in the second quarter of 2024 and is expected to open in early 2025 for prospective homebuyers to tour.

"We are honored to have been selected to design and build dream homes for future residents in Shellstone," said David Hunihan, CEO of Lee Wetherington Homes. "It's an exciting time for our team of designers and builders, as we continue to expand our presence in the nation's top multigenerational master-planned community."

The Sand Dollar showcases a blend of the Suncoast lifestyle and sleek modern design that highlights the natural Florida scenery found throughout this 682-home develop-

ment. Homesites nestle against pristine lakefront and preserve views, with each custom home package over \$1.5 million. Lee Wetherington Homes' design styles are complemented by the amenities found in Shellstone.

Shellstone plans to allot 30 homesites to Lee Wetherington Homes. The longtime local homebuilder's newest floor plans incorporate features its customers have come to expect, including spacious great rooms designed for casual living and entertaining, dramatic ceiling heights, kitchens with large islands, pool baths, sweeping primary suites, private guest retreats, broad closets, and three-car garages. Shellstone will be a maintenance-assisted community for all mowing and landscaping, with maintenance and irrigation taken care of by the homeowners' association.

The community's amenities are designed for recreation and relaxation. The Summit at Shellstone features a social hall, fitness center, pool and spa, firepit, poolside cabanas, poolside grill, and fitness lawn, and will have a full-time activities director. Shared with Wild Blue at Waterside, where Lee Wetherington Homes is also a builder, The Midway Sports Complex spans 13 acres and includes eight

pickleball courts, six tennis courts, a kayak launch, special events lawn, pro shop, and dog park.

"Together, we're not just building homes; we're shaping lifestyles and creating enduring legacies for families to thrive in," said John Woodman, division manager at Homes by Towne. "It's the fusion of vision, expertise, and passion that defines our commitment to crafting exceptional living spaces in Lakewood Ranch."

Shellstone is strategically situated near Lakewood Ranch's growing shopping, dining and entertainment options that have garnered national attention. The development is just minutes from Waterside Place's vibrant town center, which in March won a gold "Best of American Living" award from the National Association of Home Builders for its "Main Street-type setting." Homebuyers will also have easy access to University Town Center's shopping and dining offerings in addition to I-75.

"Lee Wetherington has been a luxury builder in Lakewood Ranch since its inception," said Laura Cole, senior vice president of Lakewood Ranch Communities. "We are excited to see them in Shellstone."



## Spring into New Connections!

By Brittany Lamont

Spring presents a great opportunity to make new connections and continue to grow your business. Joining the Alliance provides your organization with the support to gain unparalleled access to business connections, resources, and advocacy.

Join us for our April luncheon at Grove restaurant in Lakewood Ranch. The guest speaker will be Greg Steube, of Florida's 17th Congressional District. Rep. Steube will give an update on federal issues, while sharing his insights on the future of our community and his work in D.C. to support our businesses. The program is from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 24; cost is \$60 for members and \$70 for nonmembers.

You may even see these new March members there!

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CDD FROM PAGE 7

In order to get the County informed and involved in these issues, Manatee County Commissioner Ray Turner has been invited to visit the next Board meeting in April.

A resident from the Bluffs neighborhood came to the District 1 meeting to ask what could be done about people fishing in the pond in back of her home. She was concerned that these anglers could observe her lanai. The District board is looking into the possibility of perhaps putting some signs up in the area to deter fishing behind homes.

**PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

The Country Club roads, which approximate 47 miles of pavement, are open to the public, but owned and maintained by the CDDs in the Country Club environs – districts 2, 5, and 6.

There has been a lot of discussion at the districts’ board meetings lately regarding the major increases in the cost of paving, especially with a large portion of those roads getting older and, as a result, becoming more deteriorated. Our Florida heat does do a job on pavement over time, as does rain, etc.

Paving costs have risen partially from inflation, and also because there are only a couple of major paving companies currently operating in our area, which makes for less competition.

It has been proposed to have an engineering firm evaluate those roads to determine their condition, and when they might need to be re-paved,

whether there are issues with items such as underdrains, sections that may be sinking, and so on.

The result is a proposal to hire the engineering firm of Kimley-Horn to do a pavement management study to lay out just what the priorities need to be regarding the Country Club roads. This study would then be used as a priority list blueprint going forward, in order to guide the districts as to where best to put their paving dollars. District 2 Board Chairman Pete Bokach noted that this sort of report would better enable the District to “do it right and do it well,” in addition to providing a basis for checking into funding possibilities in the future.

The boards of District 2 and District 5 approved engaging Kimley-Horn to do the pavement management system study, which has been estimated to take as much as five months, since the company has a backlog of work.

However, the Board of District 6 unanimously turned down the idea, noting that they felt that this would not serve their needs all that well, since prior to doing a paving project, District 6’s practice has been to have the area checked out just prior to doing the work, and they feel that this procedure gives them a better idea as to “real-world” costs at the time they enter into a contract with a paver, rather than to rely on a study done way ahead of time.

All districts signed off on their audit engagement letters with Purvis Gray and Company for their fiscal year 2024 audits.

**Agave Bandido Holds its Long-Anticipated Grand Opening**

Waterside Place’s newest culinary offering opened March 11, at 1550 Lakefront Drive, in Lakewood Ranch. Hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Tuesday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; and 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday. For more information visit [agavebandido.com](http://agavebandido.com) or call (941)260-8866.



PHOTOS BY RYAN ANGELL

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# AROUND THE RANCH



PHOTOS BY THE LAKEWOOD RANCH DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB



## Bountiful Eggstravaganza Heralds the Start of Spring

**M**ore than 700 people showed up at Waterside Park for Lakewood Ranch Community Activities' annual egg hunt in March. Thousands of eggs found their way into the baskets of excited children, who took minutes to

pick up what had taken volunteers hours to put out. Eggstravaganza, the longest-running egg hunt in Lakewood Ranch, featured the Easter bunny (of course), face painting, food and drink vendors, and other family-friendly activities.



# LAKEWOOD RANCH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

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



By Danielle Bugel

There's been so much excitement around the Ranch lately, with a series of incredible events that have brought the community together in celebration and fun!

The Irish Celtic festival was a huge success, with perfect weather setting the stage for a day filled with traditional music, delicious food, and even an adorable Lucky Dog Parade. Hundreds of people attended, and it was heartwarming to see people of all ages coming together to enjoy the festivities. The support of our amazing sponsors was instrumental in making the event such a hit.

Families had a blast at our recent 2024 EGGstravaganza event, where upwards of 700 people enjoyed a morning filled with fun. The massive egg hunt and visits with the LWR Easter bunny were just some of the highlights. Free face painting, games, and activities made it a fun-filled day for everyone involved. It's events like these that bring the community closer together and create lasting memories for all who attend. A huge thank you to our presenting sponsor, Grace Community Church, and Kidz Korner sponsor, Tropical Thrills, for helping to make the event such a success.

We partnered with The Lakewood Ranch Anglers Club who hosted our annual Youth & Teen Fishing Seminar, which was another fantastic opportunity for kids to learn a new skill and enjoy some outdoor fun. Thanks to Fish Florida, participants received a free rod and reel! The Anglers Club taught the basics of fishing, and it was a great way for kids to connect with nature and learn about the importance of conservation and respect for the environment.

Each year, our Fishing Seminar leads up to our Youth & Teen Fishing Tournament. This year, the tournament is scheduled for October, so stay tuned for more details!

Looking ahead, we are gearing up for our annual Tribute to Heroes Parade, happening on Sunday, May 26. Presented by Veteran Air and Tommy's Express Car Wash, join us on Lakewood Main Street from 6 – 9 p.m. for this special event that honors our local veterans, active duty, and fallen heroes. Free to attend, enjoy amazing parade floats, live entertainment, food and drink vendors, and kids' activities. This event is one you don't want to miss -- so mark your calendars and meet us on Main Street Lakewood Ranch!

If you're interested in participating in the parade or becoming a vendor at our Tribute to Heroes event, be sure to email joanna@lwrca.org. Don't miss out on this unforgettable event



that gives back to our local non-profit and veterans' organizations. Join us in showing gratitude and support for our heroes!

Looking to get more involved in the community? There are so many ways to give back to our amazing community and get involved in a positive way. Visit LWRCA.org to find lots of volunteer opportunities around the Ranch! Are you a non-profit organization looking for volunteers? Email us at info@lwrca.org – we have just the solution for you on our NEW volunteer platform!

Did you know Lakewood Ranch Community Activities has over 60 groups & clubs you can join? Find your tribe today by visiting LWRCA.org. You'll find a wide range of groups and clubs to get involved in and you're sure to find something that piques your interest.

There's so much excitement happening around the Ranch this time of year! We look forward to seeing you at events, park programs, and even at a group or club!



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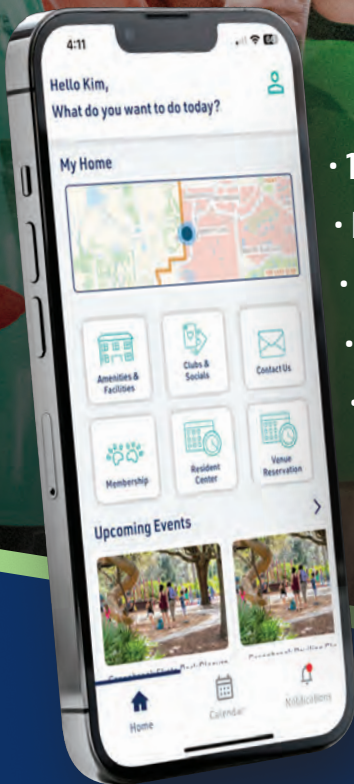


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# Fourth Degree Knights Celebrate Patriotism

By Ernie Soller  
Community Correspondent

In February, the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus of San Damiano Assembly #3192 celebrated the Country and their dedication to patriotism at their annual patriotic/military ball held at Tara Golf and Country Club. Many of the attendees were there in their military dress uniforms, as well as several representatives from the New York City Fire Department.

The Knights of Columbus organization was founded in 1882 in New Haven, Conn., by a parish priest, Fr. Michael McGivney. McGivney, like others of his generation, had grown up poor in a large northeastern industrial city.

Back then, there was no workman's comp to protect workers, and the biggest fear among the families of workers was that their breadwinner would be injured or killed in a work accident, and the family would be left with little or no income. This happened to McGivney, as after he had started his seminary studies, his father died, and he had to come back home to support his family. Fortunately, the local bishop managed to find funds to support McGivney's family so that he could return to his studies.

As a parish priest, McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus as a means of providing some security for the widows and orphans of those families.

The Knights organization grew quickly, and eventually became the largest Catholic men's fraternal organization in the world. Members of the Knights of Columbus have included men such as President John F. Kennedy, baseball great Babe Ruth, Bears' coach Mike Ditka, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Senator Joe Manchin, and Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito.

In addition to their original values of charity, unity and fraternity, in 1900 the Knights added one more: patriotism, which became the Fourth Degree of the Knights. During World War I, the Knights set up "huts" near the front lines in Europe, where they passed out snacks, coffee, etc., to weary troops, and these huts were open to all soldiers. During World War II, the Knights established a million-dollar fund to support families who had lost a member to the war.

Fourth Degree Knights make it their business to honor veterans and first responders. In our area, they have made numerous trips to Veteran's Administration hospitals in Tampa and St. Petersburg, as part of the VAVS (Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services) program,



PHOTOS BY ERNIE SOLLER



meeting and talking with hospitalized vets and giving them tokens of appreciation.

Local Fourth Degree Knights provide honor guards for funerals at the Sarasota National Cemetery, especially for veterans who may not have family or friends to attend their final honors. In addition, they have been active in building homes through Habitat for Human-

ity, and have contributed to other organizations that assist veterans, first responders, and their families. They do this through contributions to charities such as the Paws for Patriots program at Southeastern Guide Dogs, which provides service dogs for blinded, injured or PTSD-stricken veterans; and the Fisher House at Tampa's Haley Veterans Hospital, which

houses the families of veterans getting medical care there, among others. The San Damiano Fourth Degree Knights also are a backbone of the Tidewell Hospice Honoring our Veterans program.

This year, the San Damiano Assembly's patriotic honoree was Pfc. Ezequiel Rodriguez-Guadalupe, a medically retired veteran of the 82nd Airborne Division, representing the Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

He had dreams of becoming a commercial pilot, but two weeks after Sept. 11, he enlisted in the Army. During a training jump, wind turbulence created a problem with his equipment and his parachute collapsed, causing him to drop from a dangerous height to the ground, injuring his spine. He continued to do additional jumps to attain his parachutist's badge, but the damage to his spine became worse, and he was honorably medically discharged. He went to the VA, where he was treated more for the pain than the underlying cause, and eventually found himself permanently in a wheelchair.

The Tunnel to Towers Foundation was founded after 9/11 to "do good." The name Tunnel to Towers comes from the heroism of New York firefighter Stephen Siller, who having finished his shift in Brooklyn, heard about a plane hitting the North Tower at the World Trade Center. He called his wife and told her that he was headed to the scene but could not drive through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel, as it had been closed to traffic. So, he took his gear and ran through the tunnel to the World Trade Center, where he gave his life in service to his community.

The Tunnel to Towers Foundation serves by providing mortgage-free homes to Gold Star and fallen first responder families with young children, and by building special "smart" homes for catastrophically injured veterans and first responders.

Pfc. Rodriguez-Guadalupe heard about Tunnel to Towers in 2019, but at that time the foundation was set up to help only veterans who were injured in combat military action. Later, that policy was changed to accept vets who had been injured in military training. Tunnel to Towers is building a "smart" home for Pfc. Rodriguez-Guadalupe, his wife, Sol, and their children. It will feature, among other amazing things, a stovetop that can be lowered so that he can cook, which was one of his favorite things to do pre-injury. The Fourth Degree Knights of San Damiano Assembly presented Pfc. Rodriguez-Guadalupe with a plaque and a check for \$3,000 for the Tunnel to Towers Foundation.

# Inaugural Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival

## Taking place at Waterside Place on December 7th

Gulf Coast entertainment company Independent Jones, and Paul E. Benjamin, Benjamin Productions, recently announced the inaugural Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival, scheduled for Dec. 7, 2024, at Waterside Park in Waterside Place. This event will be a day filled with performances by award-winning, nationally and internationally touring blues artists, delicious food and drink, and an atmosphere filled with the rhythms of the blues along the water.

In honor of the legacy of Johnette Isham and the Bradenton Blues Festival, Independent Jones and Paul E. Benjamin, artistic director of the former Bradenton Blues Festival, joined together to continue the blues tradition with the first festival hosted at Waterside Park in Lakewood Ranch. This one-day, all-ages-welcome festival will be hosted next to Kingfisher Lake from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., with a music lineup to include national and international touring blues artists from around the world.

“We are pleased to announce that a new blues festival will take place this December,” said Benjamin. “It was important to us to keep the legacy that was created by Johnette and Realize Bradenton alive. Morgan Bettes Angell and I have teamed up to create a new festival: The Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival. After looking at a number of places we decided that Lakewood Ranch was the best place to host the event, which will draw in blues



fans from across the world.”

Bettes Angell, president of Independent Jones, said that she’s thrilled to honor Johnette Isham’s memory by continuing the blues in the area in a familiar way, but with a change of scenery, bringing it to Waterside Park at Waterside Place. “The blues are like coming home for me,” Bettes Angell said. “The Bradenton Blues Festival was the first festival I was a part of producing. Now we’re excited to bring a world-class festival to Lakewood Ranch.”

In addition to the stellar musical lineup, the festival will feature a variety of local food vendors offering delicious fare, as well as craft vendors showcasing unique goods. Attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in interactive activities and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of Waterside Place.

“We’re thrilled that the beloved Blues Festival will find its new home at Waterside Place in Lakewood Ranch,” said Laura Cole, senior vice president of Lakewood Ranch Communities.

The Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival is expected to draw music enthusiasts from across the region, making it a must-attend event for anyone looking to experience the best of the blues music in a stunning outdoor setting.

Tickets for the festival will go on sale soon. Pre-sale tickets will be \$75, day-of \$90, along with a limited number of VIP tickets that come with special perks. Tickets will be sold online at [lakewoodranchbluesfestival.com](http://lakewoodranchbluesfestival.com). Via the website, sign up to receive updates and announcements for the festival including exclusive food and drink releases, lineup announcements, and more.

Sponsorship opportunities will also be available for businesses interested in aligning themselves with the event.

For more information about the Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival, including ticket sales, lineup announcements, and sponsorship opportunities visit [lakewoodranchbluesfestival.com](http://lakewoodranchbluesfestival.com).

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## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

# Surgical Treatment for Conditions of the Gallbladder

With Dr. David Dexter

Removal of the gallbladder, or cholecystectomy, is one of the most common operations performed by a general surgeon. More than 1.2 million cholecystectomies are performed annually, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Cholecystectomy is most often recommended for patients with gallstones, but many patients have an abnormality of gallbladder function that also responds to the surgery, according to David Dexter, MD, of Lakewood Ranch Medical Group General Surgery. Dr. Dexter performs robotic laparoscopic cholecystectomies at Lakewood Ranch Medical Center.

The gallbladder is a pear-shaped organ that sits just below the liver on the upper right side of the abdomen. Its purpose is to collect and store bile, a digestive fluid made in the liver. “Most patients can live normally without their gallbladder,” said Dr. Dexter. “Additional supplements or significant changes in diet after



cholecystectomy are not usually necessary.”

## SYMPTOMS OF GALLSTONES

Gallstones are salt crystals that form within the gallbladder. They are especially common in women, but nobody is immune, according to Dr. Dexter. Gallstones and gallbladder disease can cause a sense of bloating or mild discomfort in the upper abdomen after eating.

“The pain doesn’t necessarily happen every time, but typically occurs after eating rich, fatty or greasy foods,” said Dr. Dexter. “Many may

mistake the pain for indigestion, upset stomach or reflux. Often, individuals self-treat with over-the-counter medications for years before seeing a doctor about their gallbladder. Patients should seek the advice of their healthcare provider. Recurrent discomfort after eating should never be considered normal.

“As gallbladder disease progresses over time the pain becomes more sharp or intense and can be associated with nausea and vomiting. At this point, patients usually present to the hospital ER for emergency treatment,” added Dr. Dexter.

## CHOLECYSTECTOMY OR GALLBLADDER REMOVAL

Dr. Dexter removes the gallbladder using a minimally invasive robotic approach. The operation requires only four small incisions, about ½-inch in size. Most patients are discharged home the same day.

“Patients should expect to have two to three days of moderate discomfort after the procedure, including shoulder, chest or back dis-

comfort. It is not debilitating, but may keep one from working. Most of my patients are back to normal activities five to eight days after surgery,” said Dr. Dexter. “The overwhelming majority of patients should expect to experience relief of their prior symptoms and can now eat foods previously eliminated from their diet.”

Dr. Dexter added that every one of his cholecystectomy patients receives a thorough pre-operative explanation of the procedure until they understand the surgery completely. He also helps them to navigate through any concerns postoperatively until they are back to their normal lives.

If you need a doctor, visit [doctors.lakewoodranchmedicalcenter.com](http://doctors.lakewoodranchmedicalcenter.com) or call 800-816-4145.

*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.*

## 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.

### RISE ABOVE ARTS

Friday, April 26th @ 6pm

### SARASOTA CONTEMPORARY DANCE ENSEMBLE

Friday, May 17th @ 6pm

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



**LAKEWOOD RANCH** .com



## THE (PET) DOCTOR IS IN!

By Erin Siems, DVM

April is here. We are trying to get in outdoor time while we can before the oppressive summer heat sets in. At the same time, we're getting more humidity, more rain, and more mosquitos. No wonder April is National Heartworm Awareness Month.

Heartworms are injected into dogs and (not as commonly) cats when an infected mosquito bites them and takes a meal. The mosquito deposits heartworm larva (babies) directly into the pet's blood stream. Over the next few months, the larvae grow into adult worms that live in the heart and lungs, clogging blood flow and creating damage to those organs. Heartworm disease typically goes unnoticed until significant damage has been done. At that point, there is often coughing and exercise intolerance. Left untreated, heartworm disease can be fatal.

The good news is that, given proper preventative control, heartworm disease can almost always be avoided. "Back in the day," heartworm prevention involved giving daily medication and even missing one dose would increase the risk of disease. Luckily, science



and technology has come a long way in helping our furry friends (especially those of us who sometimes forget all of our daily tasks). There are now multiple monthly chewable heartworm preventions that many animals will eat as a treat. Have a picky pet with a discerning palate? No worries, there are also monthly topical preventatives that you can apply at home. Have too much going on in life? There is also a yearly injection for heartworm prevention in dogs.

Heartworm disease can be devastating. Treatment for heartworm disease can be very harsh on the pet. Thankfully we have come a long way in being able to help our pets live healthy lives by preventing disease, rather than waiting until it is too late. If your pet is on heartworm prevention, good job and keep it up! If it is not, talk with your vet about which prevention is right for you and your pet.

*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@BigPaws-AnimalHospital.com.*

## April 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, 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.

### Passover Interactive Seder Monday, April 22, 7:45 p.m.

**At the Chabad House**

Relive the exodus, discover the eternal meaning of the Haggadah, and enjoy a community Seder complete with hand-baked matzah, wine, and a wonderful dinner spiced with unique traditional customs. Cost: adults \$85, children \$65. Sponsor the event for \$360-\$1,800. No one will be turned away for a lack of funds, RSVP required. Limited space.

### Meal of Moshiah Tuesday, April 30, 6 p.m.

**At the Chabad House**

Come and join us on the last day of Pesach to celebrate with a special meal, the Moshiah Seudah, complete with matzah, wine, and Chassidic songs, a custom established by the Baal Shem Tov. The Seuda will be led by Rabbi Mendy Bukiet. Free admission. Sponsor this event for \$180.

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



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## THE UNASSUMING WINE BRO.



# Spring into Chardonnay Season

So as flowers bloom and the beach (for Floridians) starts to look more appealing, we begin to let our red wines rest in our wine racks and choose something lighter and more suited for the sunshine. What better way to lounge in a beach chair and watch the surf go in and out than having a delicious and light chardonnay at your side?

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.

At the beginning of the year, I told you my goal is to highlight domestic wines. There has been a 20% downturn in domestic wine consumption in the U.S. since last year. Because of this, many wineries are struggling to survive. So drinking domestically is like chanting “U.S.A.” every time you take a sip. As this month's star is chardonnay, we will visit California, the king of chardonnay in the U.S.

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

## 2022 REBUTTEL CHARDONNAY, REBUTTAL WINERY, Manteca, Calif., \$6.99 U.S., 13.5% ABV

The Rebuttel 2022 Chardonnay emerges as a testament to timeless craftsmanship and a nod to modern sophistication. This wine beckons with promises of lush fruit, intricate layers, and a lingering finish, inviting enthusiasts to embark on a sensory journey through its delicate intricacies. In the



glass, the Rebuttel chardonnay presents itself with a luminous straw hue reminiscent of golden sunlight dancing through a springtime orchard. Its clarity suggests purity, hinting at the meticulous attention to detail that went into its creation. The bouquet unfolds on the nose with the first gentle swirl, releasing an enchanting aroma medley. Notes of ripe orchard fruits, such as juicy pears and succulent apples, mingle harmoniously with delicate hints of citrus zest. On the palate, the Rebuttel chardonnay reveals its true allure. A velvety texture caresses the senses, coating the palate with a symphony of flavors. Crisp green apple and tropical pineapple dance gracefully alongside nuances of vanilla and caramel, a testament to the wine's

judicious oak aging. The Rebuttel 2022 Chardonnay leaves a lasting impression with its elegant finish. Lingering notes of toasted almond and a subtle minerality linger on the palate, inviting contemplation long after the final sip. For \$6.99, this is a chardonnay worth taking a gamble on.

**Vigo's rating:** 

## 2022 HARKEN CHARDONNAY, HARKEN WINES, Parlier Calif., \$12.97 U.S., 13.5 ABV

Harken 2022 Chardonnay beckons you to embark on a journey of sun-kissed vineyards and luscious fruit. This wine encapsulates the essence of California's terroir, offering a tantalizing glimpse into the golden landscapes from which it was born. In the glass, the Harken chardonnay exudes a radiant, pale straw hue reminiscent of a sunlit afternoon. Its impeccable clarity hints at the purity and vibrancy awaiting each sip. In the glass, Harken chardonnay reveals a captivating bouquet that transports the senses to an orchard in full bloom. Ripe aromas of succulent peach and juicy pineapple intertwine with hints of citrus blossom, evoking a sense of freshness and vitality. The Harken chardonnay envelops the palate with a silky-smooth texture that glides effortlessly across the tongue. Flavors of ripe tropical fruit, including pineapple and mango, take center stage, supported by a delicate touch of creamy butterscotch. A well-balanced acidity adds brightness and liveliness, ensuring each sip is as refreshing as indulgent. The Harken 2022 Chardonnay leaves a lasting impression with its lingering finish. Notes of toasted almond and a hint of baking spice linger on the palate, inviting reflection on the wine's complex layers. At \$12.97, The Harken chardonnay is this month's most expensive selection, which says a lot for it, being under 15 dollars.

**Vigo's rating:** 

## 2022 PURPLE MOON CHARDONNAY, PURPLE MOON WINERY, Manteca, Calif., \$4 U.S., 13% ABV

The Purple Moon's 2022 Chardonnay is a wine that promises to transport you to a realm where the stars meet the Earth. With each sip, this celestial libation unveils layers of flavor that dance across the palate, inviting you to immerse yourself in its embrace. In the glass,

Purple Moon's chardonnay casts a spell with its radiant golden hue, reminiscent of moonlight cascading through a misty night sky. Its clarity sparkles like stars, promising a journey of depth and intrigue. On the nose, the Purple Moon chardonnay bouquet unfolds like a secret whispered in the breeze. Fragrant notes of ripe pear and golden apple mingle with whispers of honeysuckle and jasmine, evoking memories of a moonlit garden in full bloom. Subtle hints of toasted almond and vanilla add a touch of warmth and intrigue, inviting the senses to delve deeper into its mysteries.

On the palate, Purple Moon chardonnay unveils a tapestry of flavors that captivate the imagination. Luscious tropical fruits, such as pineapple and mango, take center stage, their sweetness balanced by a refreshing acidity that



dances like moonbeams on the tongue. The Purple Moon finish is velvety-smooth, with hints of toasted oak and a touch of minerality that speak to the wine's celestial origins. It's a finale that leaves one enchanted and yearning for another taste of the magic within the bottle. Though this is a \$4 bottle of wine, it drinks like a \$50 bottle. My advice: buy as many bottles as you can afford.

**Vigo's rating:** 

### Vigo's overall impressions:

Chardonnays are fun, light, and perfect for spring. What makes this month's selections even more appealing is the price, which gives you even more reason to drink more chardonnay!

### ATTENTION FANS AND READERS:

Like our Facebook page, “The Unassuming Wine Bros,” follow us on Instagram @theunassumingwinebros, or email me at [vigoloveswine@gmail.com](mailto:vigoloveswine@gmail.com). Let me know what you think about this article, these bottles, or suggestions for upcoming articles.

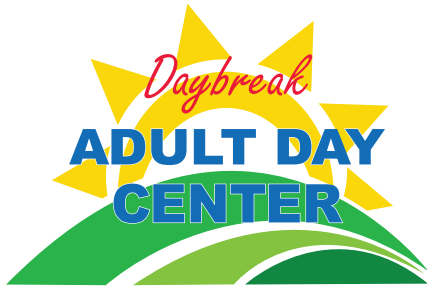
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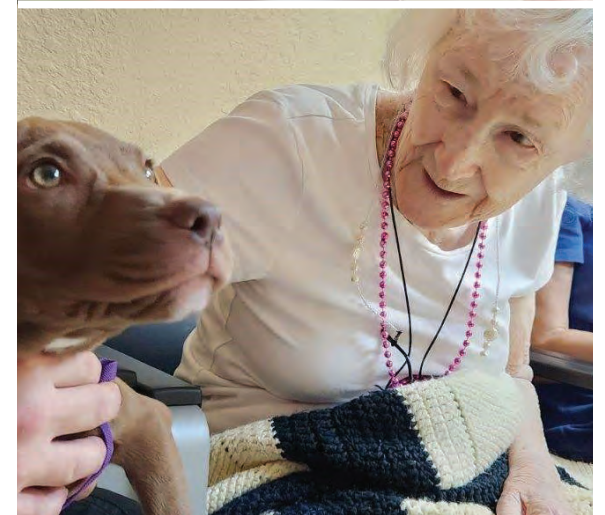
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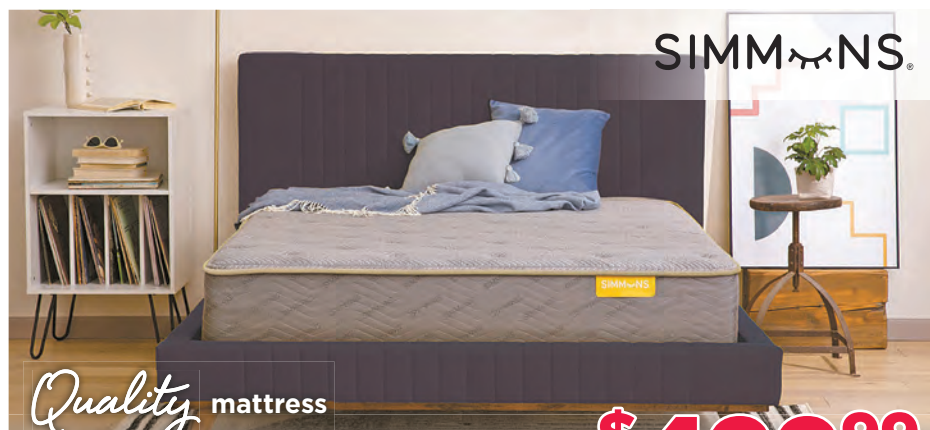
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