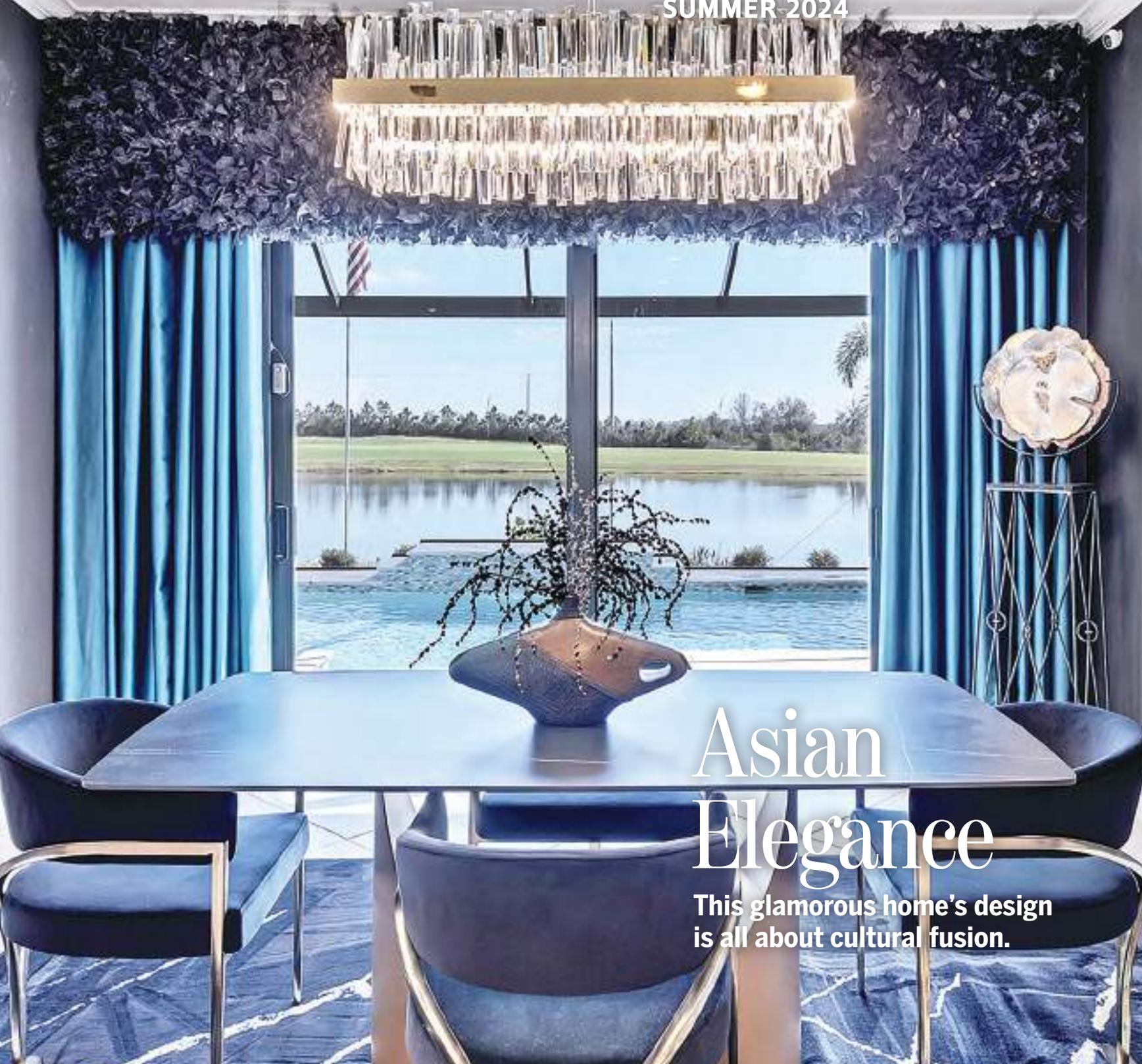


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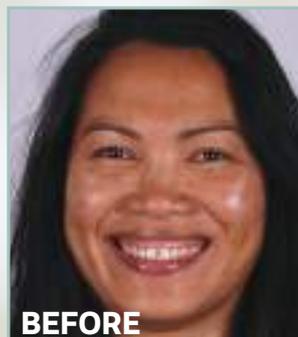
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I tried to have my teeth fixed once before. I got some dental work done at another place about five years ago and it helped the situation some, but I wasn’t happy with the results. What they did to fix my teeth didn’t look natural and although I put up with it, the work they did was really only a temporary fix. I put up with it for a long time, but I was still always self-conscious about the way my teeth looked.

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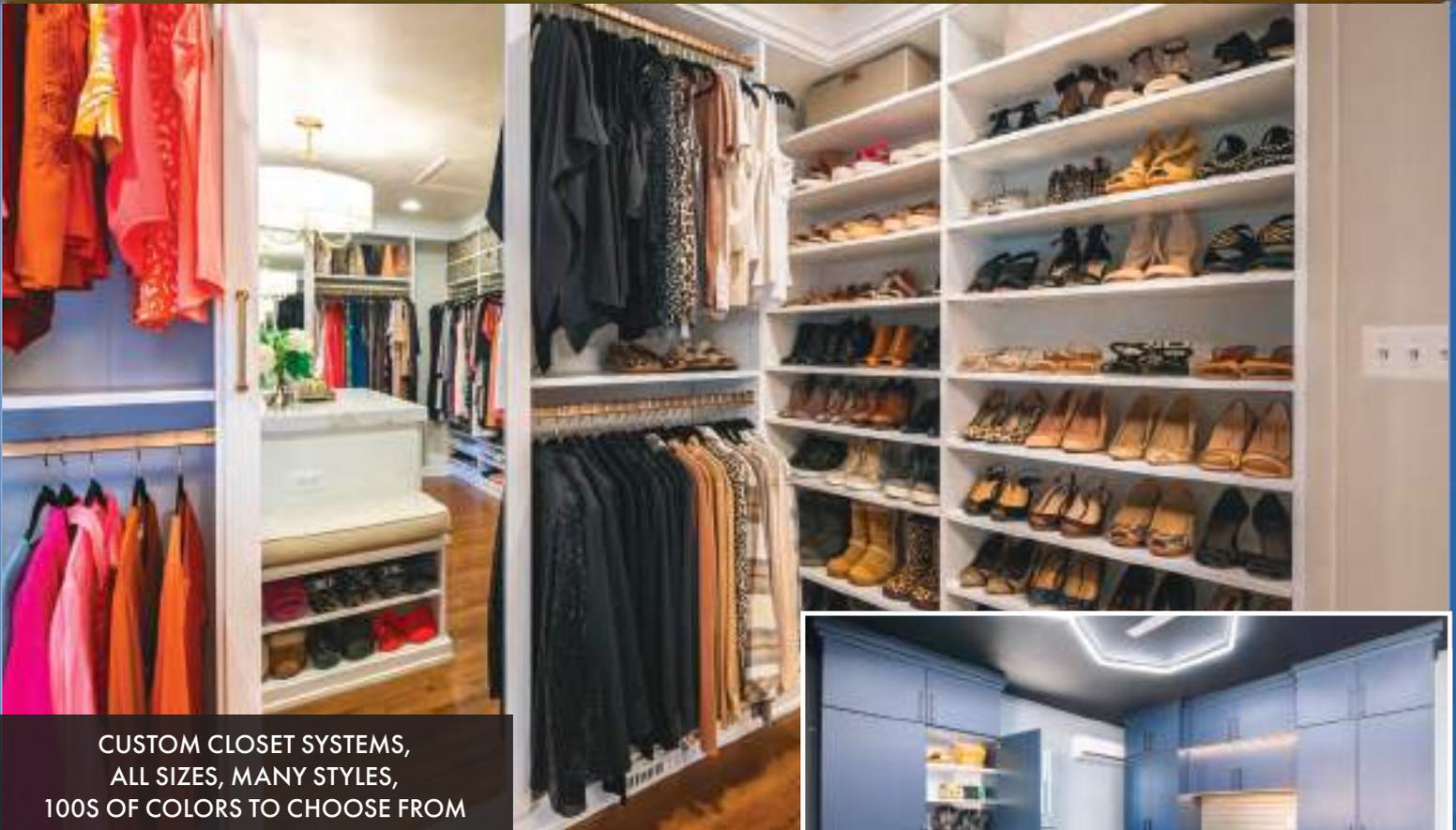


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**Brianna Mahon**  
Maternity Patient



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“Choosing Dr. Hallam and Lakewood Ranch Medical Center really helped ease my fears,” says Mahon. “The hospital’s birth designer was very reassuring. She worked closely with me to help create the birth plan I desired. The birth of my baby girl Sage felt just like a home birth. I went in with my birth plan, and they were very accommodating. It was everything I wanted,” says Mahon.

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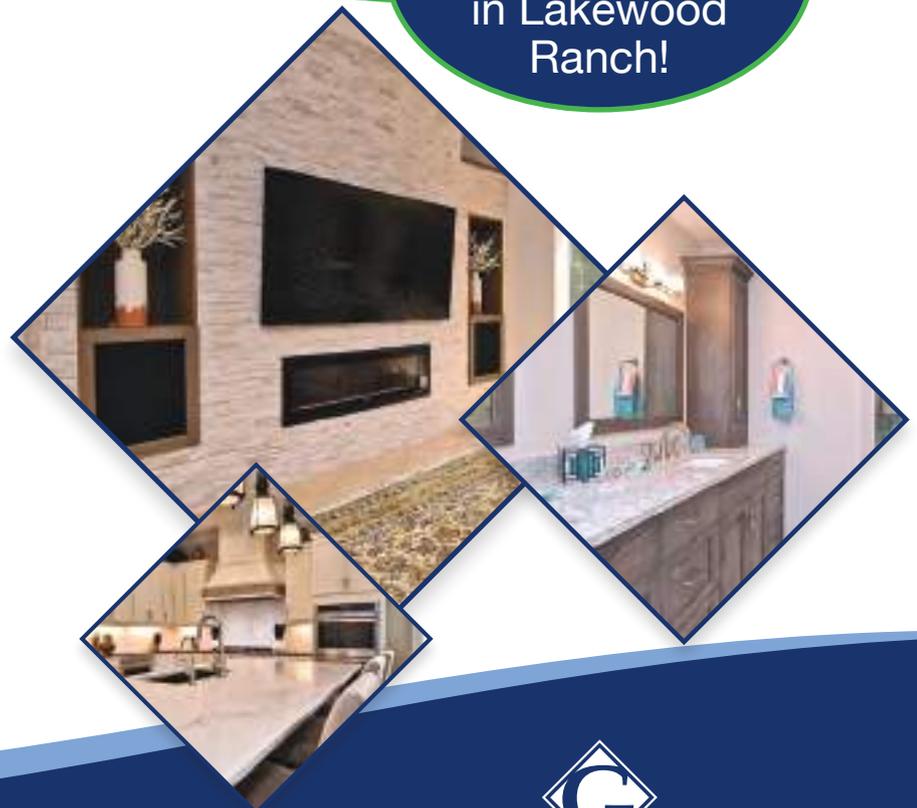
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SUMMER 2024



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Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club's new owners come with a fresh vision.

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# LWR LIFE

LAKWOOD RANCH AREA'S COMMUNITY, NATURE, STYLE

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# *The opportunity of change*



Courtesy image

The Heritage Golf Group recently purchased the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club, which includes the Royal Lakes course.



At the last two publishing conferences I attended recently, a majority of the sessions were dedicated to one topic: artificial intelligence, or AI. Whether you like it, hate it, fear it or don't know anything about it, it doesn't matter — it's coming. And it's going to bring a lot of change with it.

Which got me thinking about change, how it happens and our attitudes toward it. Since I moved here 20 years ago, our area has grown and changed a lot. If anything, it's the one thing we can count on: Change is constant.

There are several stories in this issue that reflect that theme.

One change that has been a hot topic lately is the sale of the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club to Virginia-based Heritage Golf Group.

Although some have met this change with concern — which is a natural reaction to change — others are excited about Heritage's plans to improve the club and its facilities. As you'll see on Page 84, it has a clear vision for the experience it wants to offer members, which will be interesting to watch.

Another change, a long-awaited one, is the arrival of the new Lakewood Ranch Library. Although previously we reported on the opening of the library, our story on Page 34 shows the power of collaboration in the community. The Lakewood Ranch Digital Photography Club recognized the library had no budget for art, and it saw it as an opportunity to showcase its members' work while also donating photos that would decorate the library's walls with local scenes.

The most obvious change we see taking place around us is a no-brain-

er: development. Over the past few decades, our use of land has changed rapidly in our area, region and state. Although some may see that as a bad thing, it has also increased our awareness of what we need to conserve to ensure our natural habitat is protected.

On Page 68, we tell the tale of the Florida panther. A species that was nearly extinct in the '70s has rebounded slowly since then, but our work isn't over.

As the big cats migrate to find new habitats, we will have to continue to work (and change) to protect them.

Because the thing about change is although yes, sometimes it can be scary, it always presents opportunity. And that is where the possibilities lie for improvement — if you choose to see it that way.

*Kat Wingert*  
Executive Editor

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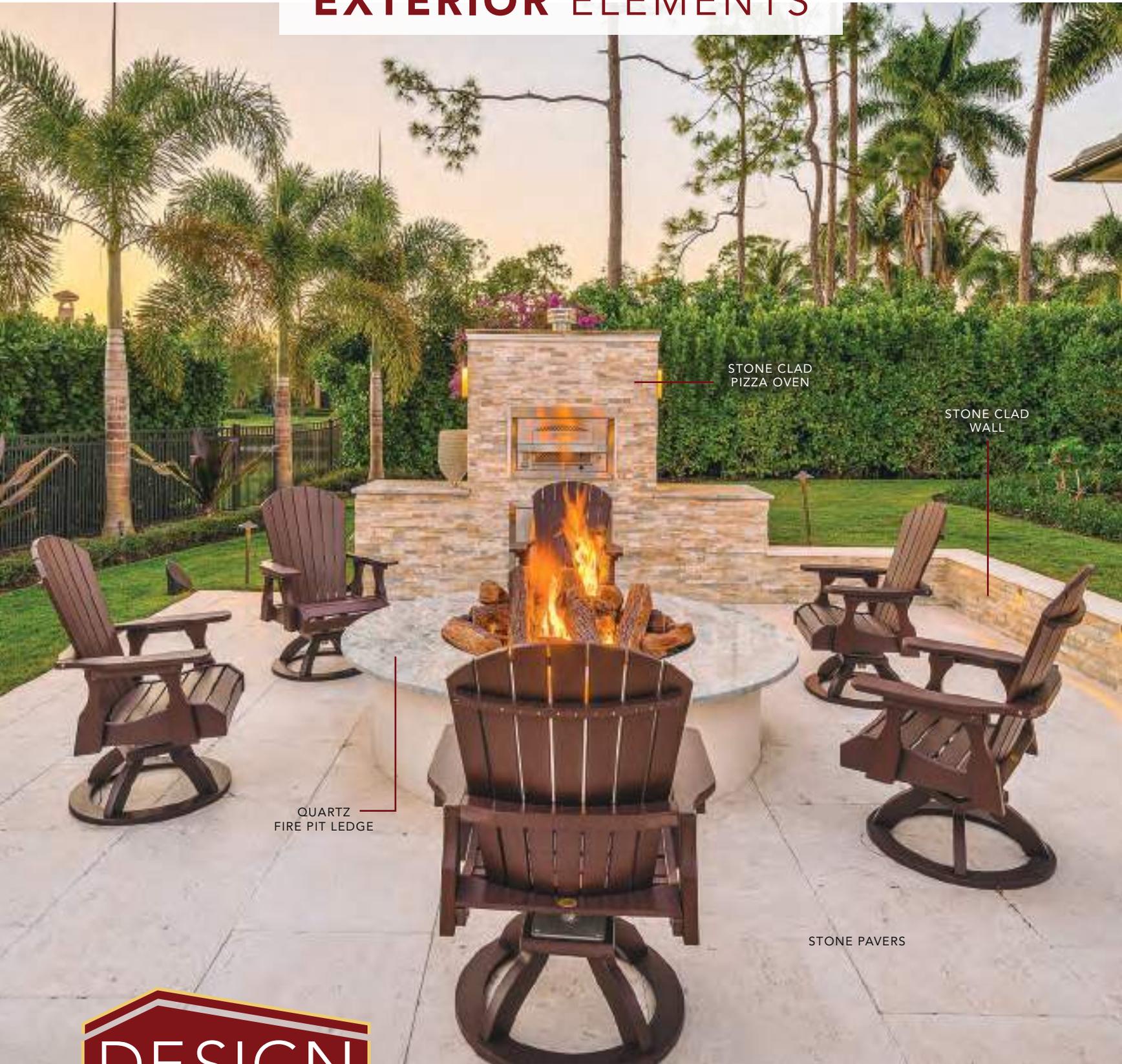
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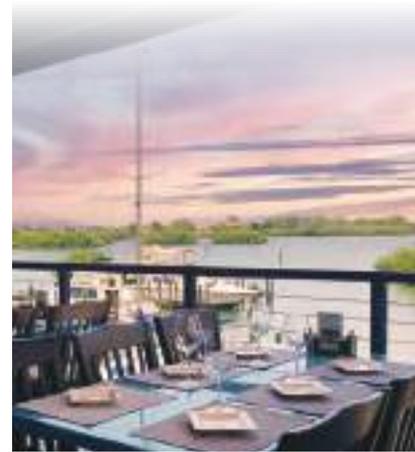
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# BUZZ

NEWS, HAPPENINGS AND PEOPLE

Digital Photography Club lends snapshots of local life to the new Lakewood Ranch Library. **PAGE 34**

"Charlie Flies" by Joe Nuzzo is one of 17 photographs selected to be on display at the new Lakewood Ranch Library



“Mom How Do I Work These Wings” by Gunilla Imshaug

# Picture Perfect

A collaborative partnership between the Lakewood Ranch Digital Photography Club and the new Lakewood Ranch Library fosters engagement, education and artistic expression.

BY EMILY LEINFUSS | CONTRIBUTOR

**A** two-year collaboration between the Lakewood Ranch Digital Photography Club and the new Lakewood Ranch Library has resulted in an exhibit of 17 large-scale digital photographs depicting area culture and activities, on display throughout the library. The partnership supports the strategic objectives of both organizations by promoting community engagement, education and local artistry.

Jim Eiken, who is a member of both the photography club and Friends of the Lakewood Ranch Library — a non-

profit that helped launch and continues to support the library — was the first to envision this win/win relationship.

“I learned early on about plans to build a library in Lakewood Ranch, and I thought it would be a great opportunity for our club to contribute to the library while also supporting our charter: educating the community about photography,” says Eiken.

The now-completed library was still in a conceptual stage when Eiken presented the idea of a collaboration to Friends president, Sue Ann Miller. She embraced the idea and put him

in touch with Lyn Begraft, assistant library services manager at the Manatee County Library, to further explore possibilities.

Eiken, former club president Bill Mills and Begraft first met in 2022. Eiken notes that Begraft was enthusiastic about the collaboration from the start because the project synced with the library’s goal of expanding its patrons’ knowledge of the region.

However, Begraft did warn that the library had no budget for artwork,

*Continued on Page 36*



“Breaking Barriers”  
by Jim Brady

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"Ready to Strike" by Dick Foster



"Homecoming" by Jane Lyons

*Continued from Page 34*

nor could the collaboration be used as just a gallery space for the work of the photography club's members, Eiken explains.

Not a problem.

Springing into action, the club created a five-member committee to spearhead the project. The committee's job was to develop criteria with which to solicit photos from club membership and, eventually, to make decisions about photo selection to present to library staff.

They knew the photos needed to line up with the project's larger purpose and vision, and also represent broad participation across the club's membership. "We decided that no more than two photos could come from one photographer. Then, if we had two fabulous water shots — say sailing and rowing — library objectives would compel us to pick the one that was taken locally at (Nathan) Benderson Park, rather than elsewhere," explains Eiken.

Complementing the space and matching context for different areas of the library were primary concerns. For example, the committee opted for black and white photography for the blue walls of the library's conference room. So, while they chose three different subjects, all the selections had architectural lines that complemented each other.

In considering different library sections, the committee wanted to use dynamic photos for teens, whimsical images for younger children and, for

general library spaces, photos that would capture the eye and depict local wildlife and area activities.

Eventually, the committee selected 50 photographs from the 200 that were collected and made a slideshow presentation of the images for library staff. The library team then chose the final 17 photos.

Eiken notes that much of the photo collection from club members happened before the library building was completed. Then, a tour of the actual building, "dramatically changed what we were thinking," says Eiken.

"We were envisioning smaller pictures in groupings on the walls. But once we saw how large, light and bright some areas were, we realized those pictures would just have gotten lost," he says.

Having club members' work displayed in such a public setting was important to get right for the club, which is why it also paid for the project.

"The funds came 100% from club members, and were separate from membership dues," says Eiken. "This is our first real push doing something for the community. We felt it was the right time and right venue because we could reach many people who were likely interested in education and learning."

Although there is no set end date for the current display, Eiken expects it to be on display for the foreseeable future. Additionally, the public will have the opportunity to view all 50 of the originally presented photos in a slideshow on the library's large digital



"Fierce Competitor" by Jennifer Walker

#### JOIN THE CLUB

The 200 or so members of the Lakewood Ranch Digital Photography Club range from beginners to professionals, and all are welcome to join — Lakewood Ranch residents or not. "More and more people are coming in armed with an iPhone and ready to go," says member Jim Eiken. It also offers numerous classes for all types and skill levels of photography and videography. The best place to find out about these classes is [LWRDPC.WildApricot.org](http://LWRDPC.WildApricot.org).

“*This wasn't about competition; it was about choosing images that complemented the library's spaces and themes.* JIM EIKEN

monitors. These photos will be showcased alongside library information, news, events and other notices.

Both organizations are open to future collaborations, says Eiken. "We expect the partnership to evolve."



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Photo by Lori Sax  
David Otterness  
has been on  
the Lakewood  
Ranch Business  
Alliance board  
since 2021.

# Platinum Purpose

As the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance readies to shed itself of its teenage years, a leader with a steady hand helps guide the organization on some big goals and aspirations.

BY MARK GORDON | CONTRIBUTOR

**T**he Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance is on the cusp of a significant milestone: it turns 20 years old in 2025.

Local construction executive David Otterness hasn't been a part of the Business Alliance since those early days, but, as its board chairman, he's positioned to play a big role in its next decade and beyond.

A board member since 2021, Otterness is the 2024 board chair of the Business Alliance. The 25-member board is a hands-on group of civic, nonprofit and for-profit business leaders and Otterness, a project executive with Willis A. Smith Construction, is

the orchestra conductor leading them all together. "I'm the type of person," Otterness says, "that if I'm going to get involved in something, I'm going to give 100% of my time and commitment."

The list of people who have been board chair of the Business Alliance is an all-star who's who of Lakewood Ranch business leaders. It includes Fawley Bryant Architecture COO and Partner Amanda Parrish and Grapevine Communications President and CEO Allison Imre. The past chair is Shutts & Bowen attorney Erik Hanson and the 2025 chair-elect is Julie Fanning, head of marketing for Benderson

*Continued on Page 40*



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Continued from Page 38

Development, the developer behind the UTC mall shopping district and many other properties in the region.

In the middle lies Otterness, who grew up in Tampa and graduated from the University of Florida. He joined Willis Smith right after leaving Gainesville, when the builder was based in Sarasota and doing some \$10 million a year in revenue. Today Willis Smith, based in Lakewood Ranch, does about \$143 million a year in revenue and is behind some of the most notable projects in the region, including multiple projects on the Lakewood Ranch campus of Out-of-Door Academy; Waterside Place in Lakewood Ranch; and the Mote Marine Science Education Aquarium at UTC. Otterness, 43, is a senior leader at the company.

“Willis Smith encourages people to be on boards, and to be part of something you’re passionate about,” says Otterness, who lives in Mill Creek with his wife and two daughters and has also served on the board of Easter Seals. “If you are part of this community, and live in this community, why wouldn’t you want to be involved?”

Otterness has multiple goals as Business Alliance board chair, all wrapped under one overarching vision: to create and foster an environment where Lakewood Ranch companies and organizations are growing and hiring people — employees who in many cases grew up in the area. Otterness cites Business Alliance CEO Brittany Lamont as a great example of someone who grew up in Sarasota-Bradenton and is now an active leader in the community.

“We want more opportunities for people born and raised here,” Otterness says. “We want to get ready for what this community will look like in five, 10 and 20 years.”

One way there, he says, is to enhance and improve the Business Alliance’s pro-business voice both in the area and Tallahassee. The organization does that through its governmental affairs committee. “We don’t advocate for a person,” says Otterness, such as in individual state house or senate races. “We advocate for agendas and ideas.”

Another big goal? Pass \$1 million in annual revenue. He says the organization, a nonprofit registered as a 501(c)(6), a federal tax code for chambers



Photo by Lori Sax

As chairman, David Otterness has several goals for the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance to achieve before the organization turns 20 in 2025.

of commerce, real estate boards and similar groups, is getting close to that milestone. If not this year, he projects it will happen in 2025. Otterness says the Business Alliance “has a great team, but we have to keep building the team, and we recognize that to do that we need to bring in more revenue.”

One final 2024 goal that aligns well with his overall vision is for the Business Alliance to make significant progress on achieving accreditation from the Florida Association of Chamber Professionals. It’s a three-year process, Lamont says, and this is the first year, sort of like a trial run. FACP accreditation, she says, will lend major credibility to the Business Alliance. “It’s a way to look inside your organi-

zation and know you are sound,” she says, “know you are at peak performance.”

Lamont says she’s sometimes asked if it’s difficult, given the organization’s structure, that she has a new boss — board chair — every year. She says it’s the opposite, that she instead gets to learn from and lean on accomplished people every year. One year she leaned on Imre for marketing, another year it was Hanson for legal procedure. She calls Otterness her ops guy.

“He’s total operations. He doesn’t feel like he has to be the smartest guy in the room, and he doesn’t speak unless he has something of value to say,” Lamont says. “I’m excited to be learning from him and his leadership style.”

“  
*If you are part of this community, and live in this community, why wouldn’t you want to be involved?*

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Photo by Lori Sax

# Sing the Blues

The thrill is far from gone for a few music lovers determined to bring a rocking blues festival to Lakewood Ranch by the end of 2024.

BY LIZ RAMOS | CONTRIBUTOR

**G**rowing up, Bradenton's Morgan Bettes Angell's only connection to music was playing classical piano and being a big fan of music.

Her father listened to old American folk. Her mom was a Janis Joplin fan. Bettes Angell's tastes, meanwhile, span a variety of genres, with some of her favorites being My Chemical Romance, Blink 182 and the band Jack's Mannequin.

Now music is more than something she jams to. It's also part of her livelihood as she and her company, Independent Jones, are responsible for booking

bands at community events like Ranch Nite Wednesdays and the Farmers' Market at Lakewood Ranch. The company, founded in 2015 and focused on showcasing live music and celebrating local artists, has booked over 500 gigs and produced some 300 events, according to its website.

Bettes Angell admires the talent of all the musicians with whom she interacts.

"The artists and how they can hear things, play things, jam together, that's nothing I could ever do," Bettes Angell

*Continued on Page 44*

Morgan Bettes Angell co-founded Independent Jones, while Antonio Hernandez is the chief events officer

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Continued from Page 42

said. “I can read music. I did play classical piano. I understand tones, pitches and sounds, things like that, but I don’t at all consider myself a musician.”

Even so, Bettles Angell is about to get even deeper into music: Independent Jones is bringing the former Bradenton Blues Festival to Waterside Park in Lakewood Ranch in December. The Bradenton Blues Festival previously ran for 12 years on the Riverwalk downtown.

The Bradenton Blues Festival is also how Bettles Angell met Paul Benjamin, who has become well-known in the world of blues as the producer of the North Atlantic Blues Festival. He has decades of experience managing and producing blues musicians and bands. Benjamin now works in concert with Bettles Angell and Independent Jones.

It was at the Bradenton Blues Festival, too, where Bettles Angell had her first taste of what it takes to host a festival for thousands of people. That was when she was working for Realize Bradenton, a nonprofit downtown advocacy group that put on the blues festival.

“I loved how big and grand the festival was, and I love all the moving pieces and components,” Bettles Angell said. “I have a mind for logistics, and it just seemed like a perfect fit to blend music with events.”

Bettes Angell and Wade Hamilton, whom she worked with at Realize Bradenton, began to see the need for more live music in the area in lockstep with the area’s population surge. Some people, they reasoned, had grown tired of the bar scene and hearing a musician in the corner.

Hamilton and Bettles Angell decided to come together to launch Independent Jones.

Since then, Bettles Angell has sought to start a festival, whether it was an Oktoberfest, a Friendly City Music Fest or something else.

She loves the music, of course. But more so, event days are like her Christmas, with chaos being her comfort food. The constant behind-the-scenes commotion to ensure an event goes off without a hitch? The high energy of the musicians and the audience? That’s fuel to Bettles Angell.

And after fine tuning and perfecting small, local events such as Ranch Nite



Photo by Lori Sax

Wednesdays, hosting a festival was the next logical step.

Not that Independent Jones hasn’t run into any challenges. For example, Bettles Angell said because Independent Jones focuses on regional talent and doesn’t focus on any specific genre, it’s been difficult to build relationships with booking and management agencies.

“When I go out to make introductions for agencies, it’s basically cold calling,” she said. “I have no record behind me. I don’t have a festival behind me. I was originally doing this in Bradenton, which is not on the map of any kind for national artists. ... There are a lot of nuances and difficulties breaking into that.”

That’s where Benjamin comes in.

Benjamin and Bettles Angell said their history working together has created the perfect partnership to bring the blues festival to Lakewood Ranch.

Bettes Angell has the local knowledge with vendors and connections in Lakewood Ranch and regionally. Benjamin has the musical connections to bring some of the best blues artists worldwide to the festival.

Benjamin said he’s built relationships with bands and musicians not only professionally, but personally as he’s invited many of them to his house in Maine. He has 15 to 20 guitars and a saxophone, among other instruments, in his music room given to him by vari-

ous artists.

His connections have already proven fruitful as he’s lined up artists including Dylan Triplett, Kat Riggins and Mitch Woods and His Rocket 88s.

“Lakewood Ranch is in for a big party,” Benjamin said.

Before the Bradenton Blues Festival, Bettles Angell said she had never experienced blues music, but the festival converted her into a fan of the genre. She hopes the Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival will do the same for anyone who attends that wasn’t previously a fan of blues.

“You just hear it and you feel it and it is just something that ignites in you that speaks to the music,” she said. “It’s not what you are anticipating it to be when you hear blues.”

Both Benjamin and Bettles Angell said variety is key to a successful festival. The fans are at the forefront of their thought process. Who do they want to see? What do they want to hear? What vendors do they want? What will the fans say and think walking away from the event?

There needs to be something for everybody.

“You lose sight of that, you’ve lost what you’re doing it for, which is the people,” Bettles Angell said. “There’s where I will go back to, I am first and foremost a fan of musicians, and I’m a fan of music. I’ll never lose sight of that being on the production side.”

Morgan Bettles Angell says when putting on music festivals, it’s key to keep in mind what the fans want.

“  
*I have a mind for logistics, and it just seemed like a perfect fit to blend music with events.*

**MORGAN BETTES ANGELL**

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# PULSE

THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

Senior-itis? Not a chance for Amy Kwakye-Amoah. She's just getting started.

**PAGE 48**

Photo by Lori Sax  
Lakewood Ranch  
Community  
Foundation named  
Amy Kwakye-  
Amoah its Youth  
Humanitarian of the  
Year in 2023.

*class act*

# This Kid is All Right

Self-motivated Lakewood Ranch teen wraps up the high school phase of her life with a big award. She has no plans to coast into college.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

**A**my Kwakye-Amoah's volunteer work started at an early age. When she was 6, her parents brought her along on a trip to their native Ghana in West Africa. After arriving, they stopped at stores and purchased large quantities of rice and bread and other perishables.

"Amy asked, 'Why are we getting all these things?'" recalled her father, Dr. Daniel Amoah, a family-medicine M.D. with a practice in Bradenton. "I said, 'You will see, you will see.'"

From there, the family drove to the Kumasi Children's Home, an orphanage near the airport, where Amy carried what she could and helped distribute the bounty to needy children.

The experience inspired the youngster to make community service a central part of her life. Now 18 and a senior at Out-of-Door Academy, she was named Youth Humanitarian of the Year by the Lakewood Ranch Community Foundation in December.

Throughout her young life she has engaged in an array of volunteer activities. Amy is one of the leaders of Active Impact, her high school's community-service club, which takes on projects such as making dog and cat



Amy Kwakye-Amoah is a senior at Out-of-Door Academy.

Photo by Lori Sax

*Continued on Page 50*

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collars for the Humane Society. But it was her work with Healthy Teens, a Bradenton-based nonprofit, that garnered her the honor.

Along with other Healthy Teens volunteers, Amy completed a six-week training course involving critical issues such as substance abuse, nutrition, mental health, relationships and more. From there she went out into the community to engage in what she calls peer-to-peer education. Amy and her cohorts give presentations at a variety of youth organizations, to groups as large as 20, opening up lines of dialogue about difficult topics.

“Sometimes it’s a little awkward at the start because we don’t know each other. So we have to work to connect and engage with them,” Amy explains. “Then we slowly start to see everyone offering their input and listening intently — because everyone can relate to these things, especially teens.”

It’s no surprise that much of the discourse in these meetings involves social media. Amy has led discussions about body image, cyberbullying and how young people tend to get too influenced by the content on various platforms. As for her personal approach to social media, she avoids the spaces where negativity reigns, saying “I really try to limit the time I spend there.”

Her parents don’t have to manage her exposure to social media. She handles that herself. Besides, this young woman is too busy getting A’s (and the rare B) in school and, of course, volunteering. “Amy has always been a very compassionate person, since she was a kid,” says her father, who volunteers for We Care Manatee, which helps provide medical care for the uninsured. “She’s also very self-motivated. We don’t have to tell her to do her homework or things like that. Everything that she decides to do, she does it wholeheartedly.”

Amy agrees. “I don’t think my parents have had to push me in any way, shape or form,” says the oldest child of three (she has two brothers).

Although she was accepted to the University of Florida, Amy recently decided on a college a little farther away: Princeton. She’s leaning toward studying global health, “whether it’s in the nonprofit sector or the business side,” she says.



Photo by Lori Sax

Amy Kwakye-Amoah has worked with fellow teens on addressing body image, cyberbullying and other common issues.

“

*Everything is not about material things. It’s about who you’re surrounding yourself with — the family, the community that you have. And that is really what determines your happiness.*

**AMY KWAKYE-AMOA**

Last summer, Amy interned at the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota. “I definitely enjoy the behind-the-scenes aspect of medicine,” she says. Although her father is a doctor and her mother, Rhoda Amoah, a registered nurse, Amy does not have much interest in “the clinical side of things.”

Amy was born in Pennsylvania, where her father did his internship and residency training. Her folks moved to Bradenton when she was 1 year old, because, Dr. Amoah says, “I realized that no matter what I did, I could not get used to the cold. I’d never been to Florida but I knew that we were coming here.”

The Sunshine State has a climate similar to Ghana’s. Amy, who’s visited there three times, carries with her the life lessons she learned in her parents’ native country. “The people there might not have a lot of things, but, for the most part, they’re happy,” she says. “And it goes to show you everything is not about material things. It’s about who you’re surrounding yourself with — the family, the community that you have. And that is really what determines your happiness.”

After a pause, she adds, “Does that make sense?”

Yes, Amy, it does.



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## charity snapshot

# He's the Inspiration

The story of Sammy's Run is similar to the race's namesake: a gritty mix of togetherness and toughness. Not to mention the unending love a determined couple has for their son.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

For 15 years, Rich Lomas has pushed his disabled son Sammy in a racing wheelchair through road races of 5,000 and 10,000 meters. During each contest, Rich gets to within 20 yards of the finish line and stops. He then lifts Sammy out of his chair and father helps son walk across the line. Susan Lomas — Rich's wife, Sammy's mother — is waiting to greet them. "Everybody's cheering and Sam just hears it all and smiles," Rich Lomas says. "He loves the attention."

Rich and Sammy Lomas will experience their ritual again — perhaps for the last time — on May 25 in the eighth Sammy's Run, a 5K that takes place near Main Street at Lakewood Ranch, followed by a social gathering there. During the post-race festivities, medals will be awarded and one challenged athlete will be presented with an \$8,000 wheelchair bike, paid for by proceeds from the event.

Sammy Lomas was born with Phelan-McDermid Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that has devastat-



Photo by Lesley Dwyer

Rich and Susan Lomas have dedicated their lives to caring for their son, Sammy.

*Continued on Page 54*

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ing effects on many critical functions in a person's body. He has never had the capacity to speak. Now 30, he has poor vision. He suffers from scoliosis and can only walk short distances with assistance. He's tube fed several times a day. Most troubling of all for his parents, Sammy developed epilepsy in his teens and it has grown worse over the years, resulting in terrifying grand mal seizures as often as once a month.

Caring for their son is a full-time job for Susan. Rich, 57, works at home as a computer programmer and spends most of his remaining hours tending to Sammy's needs. "Sleeping is not much of a thing for us," he says, because the husband-and-wife team must constantly monitor their son's condition, especially with regard to seizures.

Rich and Susan Lomas don't do date nights. Every now and then, they enlist the help of a grad-student friend, who comes over and watches the home cameras while the couple slips out for a quick bite. Otherwise, the highlight of their day is taking Sammy on a three-mile bike ride around Lake Uihlein near their home in the Edgewater neighborhood of Lakewood Ranch. Sammy rides in a wheelchair bike. "We show him his sneakers and he knows he's going," Susan said. "We can tell he loves it."

Rich and Susan Lomas, both Americans, met while working at the same company in Vienna, Austria. They had been together less than a year when Susan's mother was diagnosed with a terminal illness and the couple returned to the States to be with her. Shortly after her mother's death, Susan discovered she was pregnant. "Just by chance, I had an amniocentesis, which showed a genetic deletion," she recounts.

The missing genetic material, known clinically as Deletion 22q13, was so rare that the couple did not know what to expect when their child was born. They met with a geneticist in Miami. "She just laid it out to us straight: 'Your child will have retardation,'" Rich remembered. "I don't think I heard much after that."

The couple never discussed terminating the pregnancy, Rich says. Sammy was born two months premature, weighing two pounds, four ounces, fighting for his life. Meanwhile Susan was suffering from preeclampsia, dangerously high blood pressure. "I almost lost both of them at the same



Courtesy of Susan Lomas

Sammy Lomas was born with Phelan-McDermid Syndrome.

time," Rich says ruefully.

Sammy spent five months in the neonatal intensive care unit at Arnold Palmer Hospital For Children in Orlando, while Susan stayed in a nearby home for moms. Rich continued to travel for his job as a computer programmer, joining them on the weekends. It's been estimated that Sammy Lomas was the eighth confirmed case of Deletion 22q13, later named Phelan-McDermid Syndrome after the two scientists who discovered it.

The family settled in Venice in 1999. Three years later, Susan, who had not reentered the workforce after Sammy's birth, co-founded the Phelan-McDermid Foundation, a patient advocacy group that helped bring together families affected by the syndrome. The worldwide nonprofit has grown and is going strong. It helps spread the latest information about the disease, but its primary endeavor is the PMSF Family Conference held every other year. (This year's gathering is scheduled for July 17-20 in Bloomington, Minnesota.) Susan remains involved in the group — when time allows.

Rich Lomas was a track and cross-country star in high school in west Texas. But he stopped running when Sammy entered their lives, and fell out of shape. In the mid-2000s, he traveled to Tampa to see Dick Hoyt push his son Rick in a road race. The tandem had become celebrities in the racing

community due to heart-wrenching media coverage of their competing in triathlons. Watching the Hoyts lit a fire in Rich Lomas's belly. He started running again, lost 35 pounds, and entered his first push race with Sammy in 2007. "From the very first time, he's what makes my heart go," Rich says. "All the inspiration I need, I get from him."

Sammy attended Oak Park School for kids with special needs in Sarasota. Rich and Susan hatched the idea of starting a 5K race in their son's honor, and got together with school administrators, who jumped at it. Sammy's Run, held on and around campus, was a huge success, drawing up to 900 runners and 20 wheelchair teams. Sammy's worsening health problems caused the couple to pause the race after the 2013 event.

With encouragement from sponsors and enthusiasts, the Lomas's planned to start it up again in 2020 in their new environs of Lakewood Ranch — but Covid happened. They relaunched Sammy's Run in 2022. Rapid development and increased vehicle traffic have made finding race courses in Lakewood Ranch increasingly difficult. Sammy's Run won't be able to use this year's course again, Rich says. He's not sure where — or even if — he and Susan will move it to. So the future of Sammy's Run is very much in doubt. "But we don't want to ever say never," Rich says.

One suspects he might find that fire in his belly again.

## IF YOU GO

### Sammy's Run

**When:** Saturday, May 25, 6-9 p.m.

**Where:** Lakewood Ranch Main Street

**Includes** a 5K Run or Walk; a 5K Wheelchair Team Race; a 1-Mile Fun Run or Walk; and Kids Dashes

**A party and awards ceremony** follows at Lakewood Ranch Main Street.

The event is **free** for race registrants.

Go to **SammysRun.com** for more information, or to register.

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# calendar summer 2024

## JUNE

### JUNE 1

#### LIVE MUSIC AT THE PLAZA

Enjoy live music on The Plaza from 6-9 p.m. while taking in waterfront views of Kingfisher Lake. Continues every Friday and Saturday night at Waterside Place, 1561 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch.

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

### JUNE 2

#### YOGA IN THE PARK

Join a free yoga session at 9 a.m. at Waterside Park, 7301 Island Cove Terrace, Lakewood Ranch. Bring your own mat and water bottle. Mats must be placed 6 feet apart. Event continues every Sunday.

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

### THE MARKET

Far from the typical farmers market, The Farmers' Market at Lakewood Ranch is a curated gathering of the best flavors in the region, cooking demonstrations and more. Visitors can purchase produce, meat, seafood, breads, pasta and other prepared foods from more than 60 vendors from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Waterside Place, 1561 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch. Event runs every Sunday.

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

### JUNE 5

#### CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Enjoy classic cars from 5-8 p.m. on Lakewood Main Street. Anyone with a classic car, truck or anything with wheels is welcome. Enjoy food, music and prizes. Admission is free; participation is \$10 per vehicle.

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

### JUNE 6-9

#### USROWING YOUTH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

USRowing will host its Youth National Championship regatta from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota, where spectators can watch a top-level rowing competition.

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



Photo by Liz Ramos

### JUNE 7

#### MUSIC ON MAIN

This monthly event is on Lakewood Ranch's Main Street from 6-9 p.m. Enjoy a free concert, food vendors, beer trucks and kids' activities. Tampa Bay-based Doug Demming & the Jewel Tones will perform, and the event benefits Make-A-Wish Southern Florida.

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

### JUNE 8

#### CARS & COFFEE

Join automotive enthusiasts from 8-10 a.m. in the West District at UTC, by Ford's Garage, 295 N. Cattlemen Road, Sarasota, for a show of exotic, sports and classic cars. All makes and models are welcome. Admission is free; a suggested donation is \$10 per car. Continues July 13 and Aug. 10.

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

### JUNE 13

#### LWR 101: RESIDENT ORIENTATION

New to the area or just want to get more involved? Join this resident orientation virtually at 6 p.m. at [Facebook.com/LWRCommunityActivities](https://www.facebook.com/LWRCommunityActivities). It's a great chance to learn about the community. Continues July 11 and Aug. 8.

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

### JUNE 14

#### SIGHTS + SOUNDS: RING SARASOTA

Handbell ensemble Ring Sarasota performs "Radio Waves," featuring some of the most popular songs across genres that have hit the airwaves. The performance begins at 6 p.m. at Waterside Park, 1560 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch. Seating is limited.

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

Lakewood Ranch 6-year-old Aurlyn Esler holds on as tight as she can to see how long she can last on the bull at Music on Main in February.

*Continued on Page 58*



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Continued from Page 56

### MOVIE IN THE PARK

The family-friendly free movie night runs the second Friday of each month at Waterside Park, 7301 Island Cove Terrace, Lakewood Ranch. The movie will begin approximately at sunset and the event runs 7-10 p.m. Seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs. Face painting and inflatables will be available for the kids. Continues July 12 and Aug. 9.

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

### JUNE 20 NIGHT MARKET

Shop local vendors offering produce, handcrafted goods, cocktails and more from 6:30-9:30 p.m. on The Green in the West District at UTC. Continues July 18 and Aug. 15.

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

## JULY

### JULY 3

#### FIREWORKS 4-MILER

The Fireworks 4-Miler race begins at 7 p.m., after the kids' dash begins at 6:30 p.m. at Nathan Benderson Park. Race day registration and packet pick-up open at 5 p.m. The race will provide a race shirt, a medal and glow gear for all participants. Stay for a race after party with food and drinks. Fireworks start over the lake beginning at 9 p.m.

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

#### FIREWORKS ON THE LAKE

Take part in this fireworks show with festivities beginning at 4 p.m. at Nathan Benderson Park. The fireworks will begin over the lake when the sun goes down, around 9 p.m. Details to come.

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

### JULY 13

#### CORNHOLE & COCKTAILS FESTIVAL

From 3-7 p.m. Manatee Sunrise Kiwanis Club hosts its fifth annual Cornhole and Cocktails Festival at Palmetto Fairgrounds, 1303 17th St. W., Palmetto. Enjoy an indoor cornhole tournament; cocktail, wine and beer tastings; and food.

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

### JULY 20

#### BACK-TO-SCHOOL BASH

Florida Penguin Productions hosts a



Photo by Lesley Dwyer

Thousands of people head to Nathan Benderson Park for the 2023 fireworks display.

business expo with family services on tutoring, education and after-school programs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Ellenton Premium Outlets, 5461 Factory Shops Blvd., Ellenton.

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

### JULY 20-21

#### REPTICON

See live reptiles up close with live animal encounters and seminars on the hour every day. The reptile and exotic animal expo is 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday at Bradenton Convention Center, 1 Haben Blvd., Palmetto. Admission is \$10-\$15 for adults, \$6 for ages 5-12 and free for ages 4 and under.

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



Courtesy image

Continued on Page 60

Learn about reptiles and exotic animals at Repticon.

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Continued from Page 58

## AUGUST

### AUG. 3

#### BACK-TO-SCHOOL BASH

Prep for the new school year with Florida Penguin Productions. The expo is 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at The Mall at University Town Center, 140 University Town Drive, Sarasota.

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

### AUG. 12

#### BIG ART BLOW OUT

ArtCenter Manatee, 209 Ninth St. W., Bradenton, hosts its annual blow-out sale from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Find artwork in a variety of mediums from local artists priced at \$100 or less.

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

### AUG. 16-17

#### STATE STAND-UP

#### PADDLE COMPETITION

The 2024 Special Olympics Florida Stand-up Paddle Competition will see more than 100 athletes compete in a variety of SUP races for medals — and

for the fun of it — at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. The event is free for spectators. Details to come.

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

### AUG. 24

#### BEAT THE HEAT

Camp Gladiator's Island Challenge Series presents the Beat the Heat race at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Details to come.

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

#### BEERTOPIA

Drinking for a good cause? Where do you sign up? Enjoy a sampling of local and craft beers, liquors and seltzers; dishes from local restaurants; and a silent and live auction at Beertopia, which benefits Hernando De Soto Historical Society and Eye Center Inc. Vision Foundation. The beer and food festival is 6-9 p.m. at Veterans' Expo Hall, Manatee County Fairgrounds, 1402 14th Ave. W., Palmetto. Must be at least 21 to attend. Admission is \$65.



Photo by Liz Ramos

Lakewood Ranch 2-year-old AJ Gross has a chance to sit in a 1972 Corvette at the Classic Car Show earlier this year.

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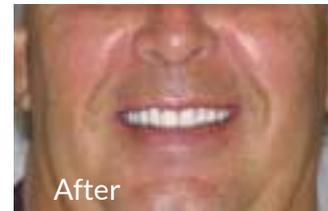
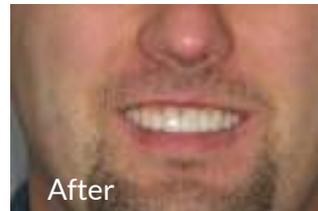
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2019 Patient Review



Actual Patient  
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BY KELLY FORES | CONTRIBUTOR

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941-870-4200, NordstromRack.com

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today. The Vortex made its debut in  
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Shed Rain clear bubble  
umbrella \$17.97

Shed Rain Vortex windproof compact  
umbrella \$24.97



*Continued on Page 66*

Continued from Page 65

### Peltz Shoes

5275 University Parkway, Bradenton  
941-355-1010, PeltzShoes.com

Comfortable and durable water-friendly shoes can be hard to find, but these by Keen fit the bill for kids and men. Little ones will happily stomp through the rain in the Seacamp sandal, which features adjustable closures. The quick-drying Hyperport for men is a rugged sandal designed for exploration that comes in two colors.

Kids' Keen Seacamp II CNX sandal \$59.95



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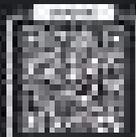


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Yuma, a captive panther, at Homosassa Springs State Park

Photo by Karen Parker; courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

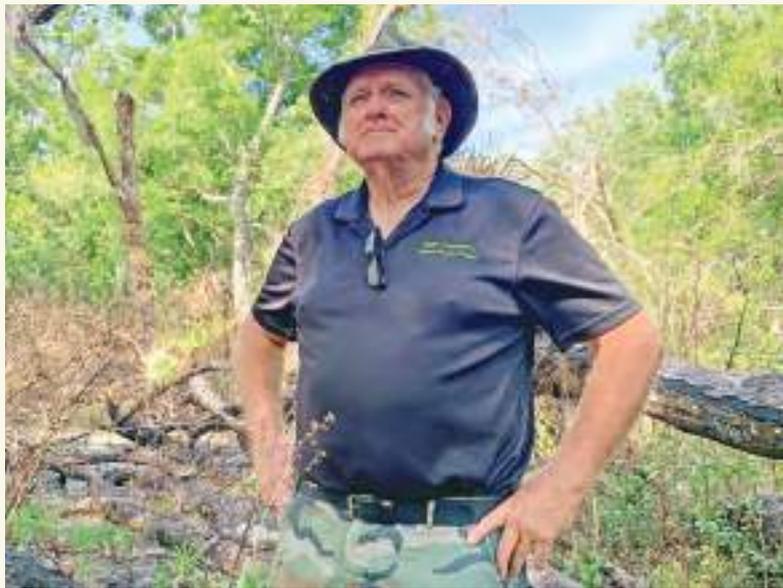


Photo by Eric Snider

# CAT MAN

As founder of the Florida Panther Project, Bill Samuels has devoted much of his adult life to the preservation of the endangered feline.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

**O**n a blustery day in late March, Bill Samuels surveys the vast, flat expanse of trees and bushes and grasslands of Duette Preserve in northeastern Manatee County. A slight smile purses his lips. He is clad in his uniform of camo pants, boots, green brimmed hat and a golf shirt with “Florida Panther Project” stitched in script on the chest. The only sound is the wind rustling the trees. Wispy clouds share the sky with brilliant sunshine. The location is significant because about a football field away a male panther had been caught on video by a hunter’s trail camera. The sighting was a big deal. It even made the nightly news.

Samuels is elated to be standing on the same ground that a Florida panther had recently trod. He has devoted much of his adult life to the preservation of the endangered feline and to raising awareness of the elusive animal. At age 69, he continues to share his encyclopedic knowledge and folksy charm in slideshow presentations at

libraries and community centers. “We’re as low-tech as it comes,” he says with a chuckle. “And it works. It works.”

Samuels is also elated by a February court ruling that prevents the state of Florida from issuing permits to disturb wetlands. The policy, in effect since 2020, essentially allowed an end run of the federal Endangered Species Act. According to Earthjustice, one of the environmental groups that brought suit, the ruling halts two large developments that would have destroyed thousands of acres of panther habitat. “The Florida panther is one of the few things that we think can actually stop bulldozers,” Samuels says. “The wood storks and bald eagles and black bears and all of the other endangered species will be helped by every acre set aside for the panther.”

Panther sightings are rare in Manatee County — about six documented ones in the last 18 months — but are becoming less so. The cats have

*Continued on Page 70*

been forced to migrate farther north as southwestern Florida becomes less hospitable. It was just eight years ago that for the first time in four decades a female panther was seen north of the Caloosahatchee River in Fort Myers — long considered the northern limit of panther country.

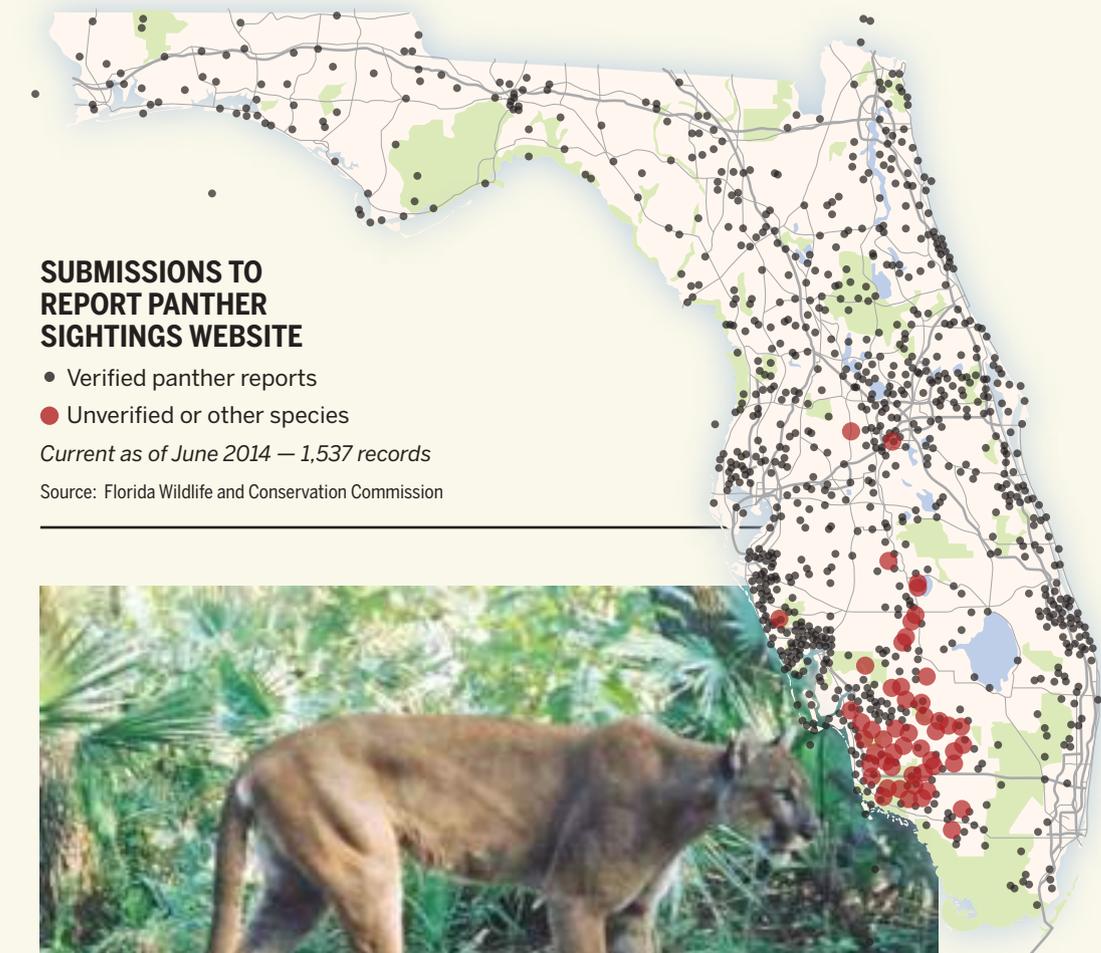
They are solitary animals. A male may carve out turf as much as 200 square miles. Young males are not welcome and may be killed for trespassing. That forces the younger ones to stake out their own territory. And suitable habitats are becoming harder to come by.

We were standing in one such enclave on that lovely day in March. Duette Preserve, at 22,000 acres the largest land preserve in the county, is a top-level panther habitat. One of the park's rangers, Jerry Miller — whose truck led our small caravan into the park — has been fortunate enough to see a panther in the Duette tract. "I was in a grove on the border of the preserve, and he was under an orange tree, just layin' there," Miller recounted. "I got pretty close to him, got a video and pictures. He just laid there until I got a little too close and he just kinda walked away. It was probably the coolest thing I'll ever see in my life."

That magical moment could have never happened 20 miles west, near Parrish, where traffic is ever increasing. Sheets of dust whip across Wauchula Road like a scene from "Dune" — but with trucks.

The biggest threat to Florida panthers is the motor vehicle. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), 47 confirmed panther deaths occurred from the beginning of 2022 until March 21 of this year. Forty-four were attributed to vehicles. As the cats roam farther and farther looking for territory, they're forced to traverse roads, often major highways with increasing traffic.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that between 120 and 230 panthers live in the wild in Florida. That's up considerably from 1973, the first year of the Endangered Species Act, when the Florida panther — the only remaining big cat in the eastern U.S. — was placed on the first endangered list. "Florida officials were kind of embarrassed because they re-



### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Weight:** 60-160lbs (Males: 130, Females: 80)
- Shoulder height:** 2 feet **Total length:** 7-8 feet
- Coloring:** Tan, lighter underside, no spots
- Back of ears and tip of tail:** black

ally didn't know if [the state] had any panthers left," Samuels explains. So, a coalition of government agencies enlisted an expert from Texas who brought in cougar-hunting dogs and determined that, yes, there were some panthers remaining.

For years, the population hovered around 30, veering toward possible extinction, with some cats suffering from genetic defects due to inbreeding. In 1995, wildlife officials imported eight female cougars from Texas to mate with males. (Panthers, cougars,

pumas and mountain lions are all the same breed.) The project was a success, and the panther population rebounded. "Female cougars," Samuels muses, smiling. "We get a lot of jokes about that."

Samuels gives government protection policies an A+ grade, but advocates for human-assisted relocation of panthers to northern Florida. "There have been studies done that have produced overwhelming evidence that there are

Courtesy of Florida Wildlife and Conservation

Florida panther tracks are easily distinguishable from other animal tracks by the three "lobes" its pads leave along the bottom of its footprint.

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areas of north Florida that could easily support panthers," he says. "They could even move into Georgia and up into the Appalachians. But politically, the will to do it is not there yet."

Why the pushback from north Florida? Samuels cites the cat's protected status as potentially curtailing development; avid hunters fearing that the panthers will decimate the deer population and, less so, an ongoing fear of panthers as large predators.

Samuels doesn't expect a relocation program to start any time soon but likes what he sees in terms of public sentiment. "The people's love for the panther has increased exponentially," he says.

## PATH TO PANTHERS

Bill Samuels didn't start out a panther guy. He grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland, just north of Washington, D.C., a typical suburban kid with a paper route and a worn baseball mitt. His uncle owned land near Winchester, Virginia, about 90 miles west of home. "We used to go up there, and I became an outdoors type of guy, fishing and hunting and all that stuff," he says.

In 1969, when Samuels was 15, his family moved to Titusville, Florida, where his father, Ken, an engineer and former Marine, worked on the Apollo 11 lunar landing. "He was one of about 20 people working shoulder to shoulder with Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins," Samuels says, referring to the astronauts on that historic mission. "If it sounds like I'm proud of him, it's because I am. He set the bar pretty high for me."

The family moved back north to Newport News, Virginia, where Samuels graduated high school. He attended Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland, for a couple of years, where "I studied playing baseball," he quips. A pitcher, he suffered an elbow injury, which ended his college career. Samuels met his wife of 48 years, Connie, at a high school basketball game. "After a while, we decided we wanted to come back down [to Florida]," Samuels says. "We've been here full time since 1985."

The transplanted outdoorsman became a volunteer with the FWC, doing wildlife identification classes. That sparked his interest in the Florida panther, and he soon homed in on the

species as the one he most wanted to champion. "I got to understand that there are panthers in Florida and there may not be any in the future," he says. Samuels filed paperwork for the Florida Panther Project to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. (As founder and president, he never paid himself or his family a penny for their efforts.)

"I thought, 'Oh, boy, here we go. We're gonna save the panther; save the land, gonna really get people behind this,'" he recalls. "Then reality set in pretty quick."

In 1994, Samuels attended a hearing on the big cat's future held by the Florida Panther Interagency Task Force. At the time, it was thought there were as few as 20 remaining in the wild. The meeting in the Lee County courthouse turned hostile as ranchers, farmers, environmentalists and bureaucrats clashed. "The Task Force basically said, 'Here's what we're gonna do to save the panther. And, by the way, we're doin' it on y'all's property,'" Sam-



Photo by Tim Donovan; courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
**Above:** A team from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission releases a female Florida panther that had been rescued as a kitten in 2011 at the Picayune Strand State Forest in Collier County. **Left:** Brother and sister panthers groom each other at the White Oak Conservation Center in Yulee.



A panther kitten peeks out from its den.



Photos courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
A panther kitten receives deworming medication during an exam.

Continued on Page 74

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uels says. “It was a public relations disaster for the government people.”

Samuels, who understood both sides of the argument, left the meeting thinking, “I have a lot to learn about the recovery of the Florida panther, and the politics behind it.”

He engaged in extensive research — all while he and Connie raised six kids in a home just south of Lakewood Ranch, and Samuels worked as a contractor doing home renovations and painting. Along with volunteers, including most of his family, Samuels traveled the state putting on presentations. He’d often bring along panthers borrowed from friends. “We’d advertise a live panther and would have to put up crowd-control devices,” he says. “We’d do fairs and a lot of schools. The kids were spellbound.”

## INSPIRING PROTECTION

In the early 2000s, new insurance rules caused schools and community centers to shy away from exhibiting live panthers, so the Florida Panther Project went the slideshow route. Samuels’ presentations, about an hour long followed by a Q&A, are not pro-environment rants or anti-development polemics. Rather, they’re relaxed, informal narratives about the cat — its history, its remarkable survival, its ongoing plight, its future prospects. The shows are meant to instill in audiences an admiration for Florida’s state animal and encourage attendees to fully embrace the idea that they must be protected.

Even the most diehard panther lover is unlikely to ever see one in its native habitat. (Samuels says that in Florida there are far more panthers in captivity than ones out in the field.) It happened for Samuels in 2018. He and Connie went down to Picayune Strand State Forest east of Naples to look into a “suspicious panther death,” when they saw two yearling cats cross the main entrance road about a half-hour before dark. Their sighting went undocumented. “We couldn’t get to a camera quick enough,” he says with a wry chuckle. “We thought the mother might come along, but she never did.”

Samuels doesn’t fret about the panther’s imminent extinction, but he still worries. “The roadkill numbers

are concerning,” he said. “They could indicate that the population is starting to decrease.”

One recent trend fortifies his hope. “I’ve never been more optimistic about land conservation efforts in the state,” he says. “We’re seeing tremendous purchases of huge amounts of land by the government and nonprofits. The will of the people to preserve land has never been better.”

Which bodes well for the Florida panther’s ongoing survival.



Photo by Eric Snider

**Above:** Park ranger Jerry Miller and Bill Samuels at Duette Preserve, the largest land preserve in the county and a top-level panther habitat.

**Left:** Yuma, a captive panther, at Homosassa Springs State Park. Photo by Karen Parker; courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

“

*I’ve never been more optimistic about land conservation efforts in the state...The will of the people to preserve land has never been better.*

**BILL SAMUELS**

### LEARN MORE

To contact the Florida Panther Project, email Bill Samuels at [billyby54@aol.com](mailto:billyby54@aol.com), or call 941-376-2357. The organization gladly accepts donations and is always looking for volunteers.



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# THINK GLOBALLY, DINE LOCALLY

Want to avoid the hassles of international travel? This globetrotting itinerary requires no passport.

BY SU BYRON AND MARTY FUGATE | CONTRIBUTORS

Lakewood Ranch is a small community with a big attitude. Despite its size, its international food scene rivals those of much larger cities. Even better? Your culinary journey is also a cultural journey. And each taste is as authentic as it gets. Embark on a gastronomic adventure within just a few miles, where each bite becomes a passport to a different corner of the globe. Here are a few hometown favorites to kickstart your culinary journey through a world of flavors...





## INKAWASI PERUVIAN RESTAURANT

Inkawasi's menu is a river of cultural crosscurrents. Like Peru itself, its cuisine is a captivating fusion of indigenous flavors, Spanish influences, and international culinary trends. This family-owned restaurant is the brainchild of chef/owner Jimmy Arias, his wife, Reina Kozlowski, and their son Kleyver Zamora, a certified sommelier. Their array of edible alchemy reflects their proud Peruvian heritage. We recommend starting with ceviche, widely regarded as one of Peru's most iconic dishes. It's basically raw fish marinated in citrus juices and spiced with chili peppers, onions, and cilantro. It's often served with sides like sweet potatoes, corn, plantains and avocados. For heartier appetites, Arias suggests lomo saltado (flamed tenderloin, from the same cut as filet mignon), which is wok-flamed with tomatoes and onions and served over fried rice. We also in-

dulged in the grouper a lo macho. The name is a take on a popular Peruvian seafood dish that features fish cooked in a spicy tomato-based sauce known as "salsa a lo macho." The term "a lo macho" roughly translates to "in the style of men" and usually indicates a dish that's bold and hearty in flavor. This dish is definitely spicy — and filling. What to sip while you sup? Sommelier Zamora has lovingly curated (and personally tasted) an array of vintages from regions around the globe. (Their zingy sangria is Zamora's secret recipe.) Arias also suggests chicha morado — a traditional Peruvian beverage made in-house from imported purple corn.

**If You Go:** 10667 Boardwalk Loop, Lakewood Ranch; 941-360-1110; [InkawasiRestaurant.com](http://InkawasiRestaurant.com)



Photos by Lori Sax

**Above:** Lomo saltado, a beloved Peruvian dish, is a tantalizing stir-fry that marries tender strips of beef with vibrant vegetables in a sizzling blend of soy sauce and spices. **Top:** Inkawasi's chef/owner Jimmy Arias with his son, Kleyver Zamora, a certified sommelier. Like Peru itself, Inkawasi's menu is a river of cultural crosscurrents.

# AGAVE BANDIDO

There are a lot of high-profile “Mexican food” franchises around the area that serve up a tired template of south-of-the-border fare. Agave Bandido’s co-owners Mathew Baum and Matthew Faul shatter that mold. Their space is clearly not your cookie-cutter Mexican restaurant. According to Baum, “you can indulge in the spirit of Mexico right here in Sarasota.” He adds that this spirit is never predictable. “Every time you come in, you should always expect the unexpected.” That applies to the décor as well as the menu. Beyond the tables and turquoise booths that fill the dining room, light fixtures, crafted from skulls and blown glass, cast an arty ambiance. Spray-painted urban pop murals created by renowned Miami street artist Ruben Ubiera adorn the walls, their vibrant colors extending to the ceiling and creating a visually stunning backdrop for your meal. Kick off your culinary journey with the daring Fuegoito, blending Patron silver tequila, berries, jalapeños, and agave. Not feeling up to the heat? For a walk on the cool side of life, try the Azteca — a tequila old-fashioned, made with Anejo tequila, agave, and orange and chocolate bitters and served up with a king ice cube. Or just sit back and choose from one of the 250 carefully curated mezcals and tequilas. If you’re bringing the whole gang, indulge in the Taquiza taco platter — a generous serving of 10 tacos. (Think of it as a Mexican taco party.) Whether you prefer sticking to a single favorite or sampling an array of flavors such as veggie, shrimp, fish, chicken, or beef, the choice is yours. Baum also recommends the super spicy and savory birria tacos, a cheesy masterpiece featuring achiote barbacoa, Oaxaca cheese, and house consommé. And don’t miss the cotija-crusted mahi-mahi, with its irresistible crispy texture. Whatever you chose, each bite at Agave promises a journey through the diverse flavors of Mexico.

**If You Go:** 1550 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch; 941-260-8866; AgaveBandido.com



The birria tacos at Agave Bandido are a crispy and cheesy showstopper.



Bet you can't just eat 10! The Taquiza taco platter offers an opportunity to taste all the tantalizing tacos at Agave Bandido.



Dig into the cotija-crusted mahi-mahi at Agave Bandido and savor the fresh, bold flavors.



Agave Bandido bartender Tiffany Spearman concocts the fiery Fuegoito, a blend of Patron silver tequila, berries, jalapeños, agave and fresh lime.

Photos by Lori Sax



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# TSUNAMI SUSHI & HIBACHI GRILL

This Asian fusion restaurant has been a downtown Sarasota destination since 2013. Co-owners Jason Klamson and Jeffrey Karasawa dreamed of opening a second Lakewood Ranch location for years. In 2024, they did. (And Ranchers rejoiced.) It's the same great cuisine with much more space and a heightened emphasis on fine wines and craft cocktails. So where to begin? For starters, Klamson suggests the lava rock appetizer — filet mignon sashimi served on a hot stone. For spicy pyrotechnics, their Hot Mama roll comes drizzled in yum-yum sauce, infused with cayenne pepper, chili powder, and a touch of sriracha. Still hungry? Tsunami's king lobster roll is an all-star combo of tempura king crab, avocado, cucumber, baked lobster, spicy mayo, eel sauce, tempura flakes, and masago (smelt roe). As for drinks, you can't go wrong with the usual suspects. Asahi or Sapporo beer. Or Bunraku sake in its signature blue bottle is one of our favorites. Tsunami's lychee martini (a mix of Mermaid vodka, lychee liqueur, grapefruit liqueur, and prosecco) makes a bubbly start to any great feast. *Irasshaimase!*

**If You Go:** 11627 State Road 70 E., Lakewood Ranch; 941-909-8288; Tsunami-Sarasota.com.



Tsunami co-owners Jason Klamson and Jeffrey Karasawa have waited years to open their popular restaurant in Lakewood Ranch.



The chicken fried rice is a delightful dish full of flavor.



Photos by Lori Sax

**Above:** Tsunami has expanded its craft cocktails and fine wine offerings. **Left:** The king lobster roll at Tsunami is a royal treat.



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Caitlin Albritton (American, born 1989), *Flamingo Float*, 2021. Sterling silver pendant with 28 pieces of gold sheen obsidian, pink opal, petrified palm root, amazonite, howlite, and jasper, 2.5 x 1.75 x 0.35 in. Courtesy of the artist. © Caitlin Albritton

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# PARIS BISTROT

For a taste of France in Lakewood Ranch, Paris Bistrot is the place. You're not in Paris, but the smells and flavors say otherwise. (Close your eyes, and you'll swear you're in a quaint bistro on the Left Bank, gazing over the Seine.) The restaurant is the creation of Chef Jean Christophe Nebra and his wife, Alexandra, and their cuisine is très authentique. Our short list of favorites? Nebra's petite bouillabaisse stands out — an aromatic fish and shellfish stew. It's brimming with firm fish, mussels, shrimp, and potatoes, and served with rouille-slathered grilled bread slices. Paris Bistrot's canard à l'orange is another five-star delight. Tracing back to a regal debut at the Queen of France's table in 1555, this dish is a timeless French classic. Chef Nebra pairs his succulent roast duck with a tantalizing sweet-and-sour bigarade sauce. Crafted through a reduction of caramelized sugar, white vinegar, orange liquor, veal broth, orange juice, and zest, the harmonious blend of bitter and sweet flawlessly complements the duck's robust flavor. C'est si bon!

**If You Go:** 8131 Lakewood Main St., Suite 103, Lakewood Ranch; 941-388-0564; ParisBistrotLWR.com.



Courtesy photos

**Above:** Paris Bistrot's canard à l'orange is a soul-satisfying dish.

**Right:** Chef Nebra's petite bouillabaisse is an aromatic stew brimming with firm fish, mussels, shrimp, and potatoes.



*Shut your eyes and you might think you're in a café overlooking the Seine.*

# KORÊ STEAKHOUSE

This Waterside steakhouse is a passion project for chef/owner Daniel Dokko (the visionary behind JPan Sushi & Grill), and his partners, chef Clark Park and Andre Putranto. Here, their edible artistry speaks with a Korean accent. Korê's menu is a tapestry of traditional Korean cuisine with an emphasis on grilled meats and seafood. Carnivores will rejoice with the selection, which includes bulgogi (thin slices of marinated ribeye), galbi (short ribs) filet mignon and pork — cooked tableside. Or order from the raw menu and dig into spicy blue crab, salmon tartar and bluefin tuna.

Complementing these dishes are quintessential Korean accompaniments like kimchi, banchan (pickled

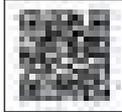
veggies), and the iconic bibimbap. Korê also offers a "Combinations" menu, which offers different curated meals. Try the "Nice 2 Meet U" (for two), which features a tantalizing array of grilled meats, accompanied by refreshing salads, or the "Seafood Lover," which tantalizes with an assortment of oceanic delights, from octopus to bluefin tuna. One thing's for sure. No matter where your culinary adventure through the flavors of Korean cuisine leads, Korê promises a dining experience that's both innovative and satisfying.

**If You Go:** 1561 Lakefront Drive #111, Lakewood Ranch; 941-928-5673; KoreSteakhouse.com.



Photo by Lori Sax

Korê's edible artistry speaks with a Korean accent.



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# *A New Round*



**Virginia golf course company believes it picked up a trophy asset in buying the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club. Significant enhancements and improvements are on the docket.** BY BETH LUBERECKI | CONTRIBUTOR



Courtesy photos  
The Royal Lakes course.

**A**s the parent company of Lakewood Ranch, Schroeder-Manatee Ranch has developed the more than 33,000-acre master-planned community into the real estate powerhouse it is today. Lakewood Ranch consistently rates as one of the nation's best-selling master-planned communities, and amenities like the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club play a big part in that.

But while SMR has proven its expertise in community and commercial development, it's not an expert golf course operator. The company is not afraid to admit there are other entities more adept at running the amenities it develops for the long term, and it's already demonstrated this through the sales of the Sarasota Polo Club and Premier Sports Campus it developed. So it knew a similar approach would be a smart move for the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club.

"SMR's long-range strategy for Lakewood Ranch always included developing and holding on to certain assets until they were ripe for new owners and operators," says Laura Cole, senior vice president for LWR Communities. "We always look at the long vision to make sure that these amenities will continue to be operated at a high level, and in fact reinvested

in. Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club is a very special amenity in our portfolio; we recognize it's a key element in our community's fabric. But with golf's popularity and the need to invest in the membership experience and enhancements and expand golf capacity, we felt it was a good time to find a new owner."

SMR found that new owner in Northern Virginia-based Heritage Golf Group, which announced its acquisition of Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club in March. Rex Jensen, president and CEO of Schroeder-Manatee Ranch Inc., laid out why Heritage proved the right choice in a letter to club membership.

"Our selection of Heritage Golf Group was the result of meticulous consideration, focusing on their exten-

*Continued on Page 88*

Herndon, Virginia-based Heritage Golf Group plans course improvements at the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club.





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Continued from Page 86

sive experience and dedication to our standards,” he wrote. “Their respect for our community and the club’s identity, culture and traditions, along with a strong emphasis on staff retention and operational efficiencies, positions them as the ideal partner.”

He pointed to Heritage’s proven track record as the owner and operator of 37 other golf clubs around the United States. And the company already has a foothold in the Sarasota-Manatee area as owner and operator of TPC Prestancia and Venetian Golf Club.

“Everything about Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club is exactly what we like,” says Mark Burnett, president and CEO of Heritage Golf Group. “One, it’s in an unbelievably great residential community with lots of growth opportunities in the community. Two, we really, really like full-service country clubs, not just golf but clubs that have amenities.”

Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club fits that bill, with its three championship golf courses — Cypress Links, King’s Dunes and Royal Lakes — and amenities that include practice facilities, two clubhouses, a 24-hour athletic facility, an aquatics center with two heated pools, 20 pickleball courts, and a tennis complex with 20 Har-Tru courts and a stadium court.

## LINK TOGETHER

Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club is Heritage’s largest acquisition to date. And it’s about to get even larger, for Heritage also acquired Lakewood Ranch’s daily fee Legacy Golf Club and plans to make the Arnold Palmer Signature golf course a fourth course at the private Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club, creating the only 72-hole private country club in the Sarasota area.

Heritage will be redoing all the turf grass at the Legacy course and will be finishing improvements already started on the Cypress Links course. Once those two projects are complete, it plans to undertake similar renovations on the other two courses.

Input from members and residents will help guide the vision for other elements of the club. “We’re going to spend a lot of time talking with members,” said Burnett. “I think there are



Courtesy photos

**Above:** The Lodge Clubhouse is one of several key amenities Heritage Golf Group acquired as part of the deal to buy the Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club.



**Left:** Aerial rear view close-up of the LWR Clubhouse. The Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club opened nearly 25 years ago.

opportunities to improve the other amenities, but we don’t have specific plans yet.”

Upgrades to the aquatics center were recently completed, and Heritage plans to assess the tennis and pickleball offerings to ensure there’s enough capacity to meet resident demand. Improvements to food and beverage offerings are a possibility.

## BIG SWING

Of course, change can be hard, especially if you’ve gotten used to and enjoy how things were. But from SMR’s standpoint, this is a change for the better. “I

am confident that under Mark’s guidance and that of his leadership team, our club is in capable hands, and exciting developments lie ahead,” SMR’s Jensen told members in his letter.

“What we always look for is somebody who really is going to be able to have the financial wherewithal and built-in capabilities to really grow these recreational amenities,” says Cole. “Whether it’s the golf or polo club, when we continue to look at the long-term benefits of those recreational amenities for the community, we try

## BY THE NUMBERS: LAKEWOOD RANCH GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB

4  
courses

18,000  
-square-foot,  
24-hour athletic  
facility and  
aquatics center

20  
pickleball courts

20  
Har-Tru courts

Source: Heritage Golf Group

Continued on Page 90

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Continued from Page 88

to put them in the hands of people who are going to wake up every morning and think about them and reinvest in them when it's necessary."

Heritage, which seeks to keep expanding its Florida presence (it now has eight clubs in the state), has the size and scale to do just that. "We've had fairly rapid growth over the last four years, and we're in the top four or five largest management companies at this point," says Burnett. "What that does is gives us credibility and the ability to capitalize all of the clubs in a very balanced way."

"Just imagine the best practices that are going to emerge from operating all of those clubs and what they can apply here," adds Cole. "We're very interested in having somebody who understands golf and is really at the leading edge of the trends."

Mike Kahn, president of St. Petersburg-based golf course business consulting firm Golfmak, hasn't tradi-



Continued on Page 92

The fifth hole at the Cypress Links course, which opened in 2002.

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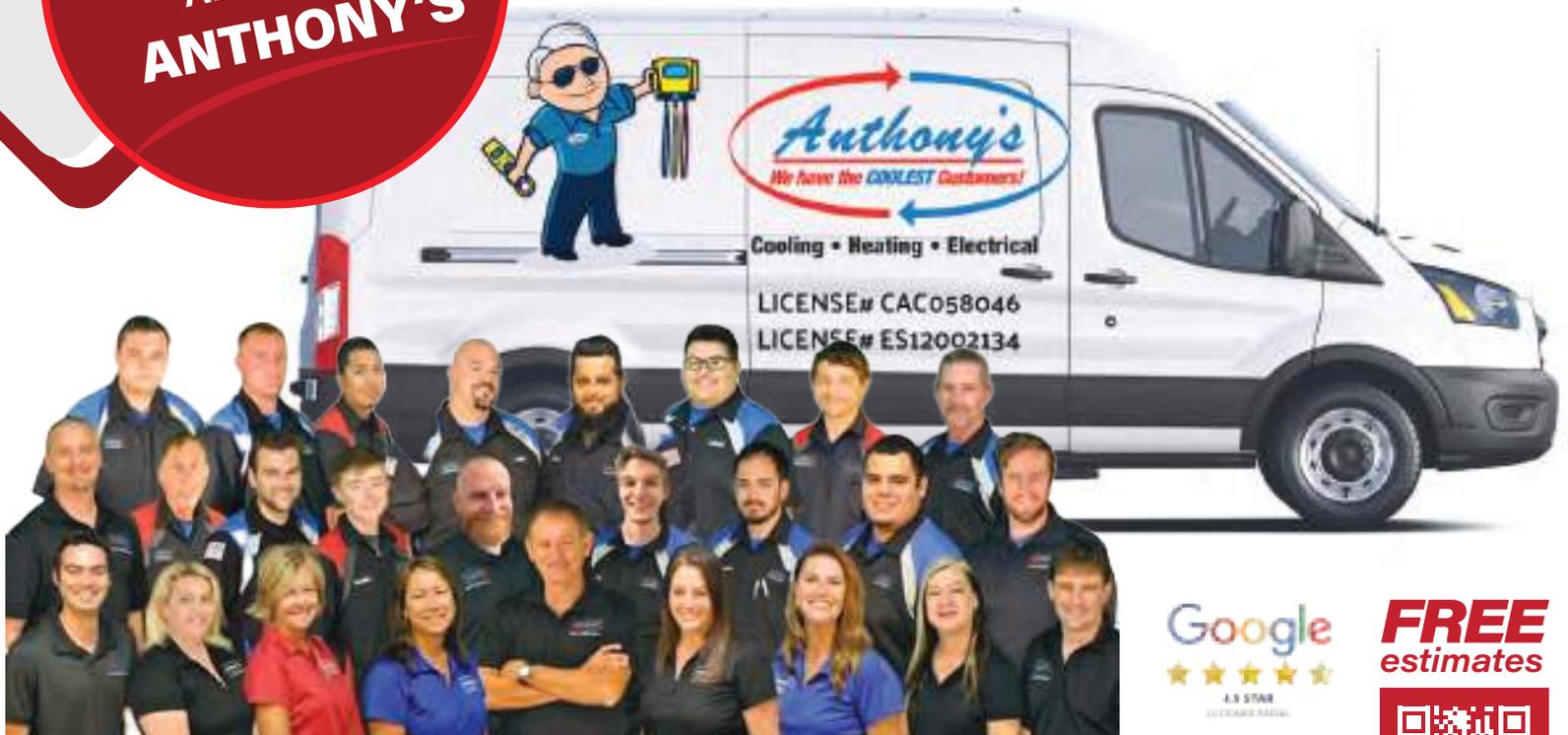
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The Legacy course was previously a daily fee course.

*Continued from Page 90*

tionally been a fan of multicourse golf management and ownership companies over the years. But in this case, it might prove a good option for the private Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club.

“Running properties like Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club has become more and more sophisticated,” he says. “Managing and maintaining a property like that needs a professional team, which Heritage has...I’d be inclined to give Heritage a chance to prove itself at Lakewood Ranch.”

Not everyone in the golfing community, however, is happy about the sale and changes. The loss of a daily fee golf course like Legacy as part of the deal is a downside for Lakewood Ranch resident Jim Govostes, who holds a golf teaching license from the U.S. Golf Teachers Federation and plays — or played — frequently at Legacy Golf Club. While Govostes could become a member of a country club, he prefers to play at a variety of courses, which is becoming increasingly hard to do as daily fee courses like Legacy get taken out of the mix and private clubs dominate the area.

“Legacy was a very interesting and difficult golf course,” he says. “I enjoyed it, and I met a lot of people that had a lot of fun there also. What I see today, unfortunately, is that golf has turned into a game of the rich, especially here in Florida. And golf should be for everyone, not just for the privi-

*Continued on Page 94*

### AT A GLANCE: LAKEWOOD RANCH COUNTRY CLUB HISTORY

2001  
Opened

2002  
Cypress Links golf course opened

2004  
King's Dunes opened

2007  
Royal Lakes opened



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*Continued from Page 92*

leged.”

In addition to the improvements and enhancements that lie ahead for Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club, Burnett points out Heritage doesn't assess its club members the way an individually owned club might. “We take all the risk and invest our own dollars into the clubs; we don't ask for assessments,” he says.

In addition, full golf members of Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club will be offered the opportunity to upgrade their membership to “LWR Plus” in the second half of this year, which extends golf playing privileges at the other Heritage private country clubs and daily fee courses nationwide.

Burnett hopes that members will get excited about what's to come at Lakewood Ranch Golf and Country Club. “SMR has done an unbelievable job carrying the torch here at the country club,” he says. “But this is our core business. Everything we do, we're going to want to make sure it correlates to the needs and wants of members. How do we add value? How can we enhance programming?”

“Experiences, I think, are really important to people these days and where they invest their dollars and time,” he continues. “Those are the pillars of a lot of our principles and what guide us in our decisions ... This is going to be one of our trophy assets, and we're just excited for what the future can be and all the things that we think we can do to allow the members to have some great experiences going forth.”

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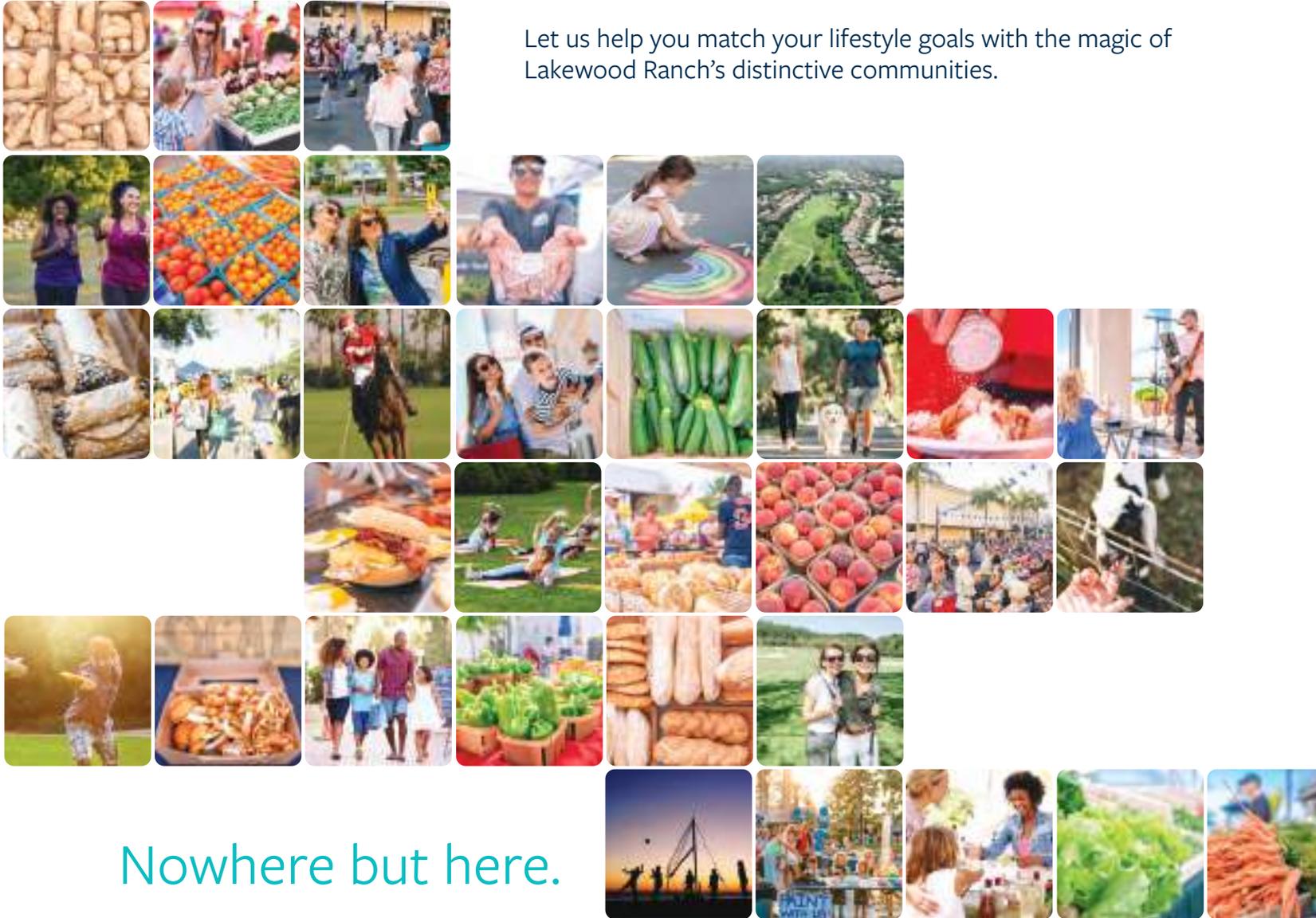
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# HAVEN

SPOTLIGHTING LIFE ON THE RANCH

The spirit of the Far East enlivens a home in Lakewood National. **PAGE 100**

Photo by Christopher Green  
A custom designed feature wall in the living room displays treasures the Clevers acquired during their six years in China.



Photos courtesy of Michael Wagner/Sunny Lens Media and Suki Scollo/Coldwell Banker Realty

A dramatic mix of colors enlivens the open concept living area, with equally dramatic views of the lake and golf course out past the swimming pool.

A photograph of a modern living and dining area. In the foreground, a dark brown leather sofa is partially visible. To the left, a light blue armchair sits on a dark, textured side table. In the center, a kitchen island with a dark countertop and white bar stools is illuminated by two gold, bowl-shaped pendant lights. The kitchen features dark grey cabinets, a stainless steel refrigerator, and a backsplash of hexagonal tiles. To the right, a small round table with a zebra print top and a decorative vase is visible. The ceiling has recessed lighting and dark wood beams.

**Bill and Cheri Clever's home in  
Lakewood National reflects the years  
they spent living in Shanghai.**

BY ROBERT PLUNKET | CONTRIBUTOR

# EAST MEETS WEST

# If Bill and Cheri Clever's home in Lakewood National seems energized by an Asian point of view, there's a reason.



Photo by Christopher Green

The owners lived there — in Shanghai — for six years as expats, with Bill running his own consulting business.

Did they like it?

“We didn’t want to come home,” says Cheri.

Luckily, they brought part of the atmosphere with them. Their home is dramatically Asian in feeling, full of unusual effects and glowing colors. The principles of Chinese design are everywhere — the harmony of curves and straight lines in the living room, the use of natural materials like wood and porcelain. But the most exotic touch of all is the wall color. Could that possibly be .... black?

It is.

“Dark colors can be intimidating to decorate with,” Cheri says. “But they can add serious drama to a space.” And rather than darken the room, the color serves to anchor it in its bright and sunny setting. Walls of glass bring in the outdoors and the colors change depending on the time of day. The palette of black, blue and grey works to create an exotic harmony — a primary goal of Eastern art.

Set into an expansive feature wall in the great room are carefully designed asymmetrical shelving and niches, plus a large TV and extended fireplace. Designed by local contractor Brandon Graber, the wall allows the Clevers to display just a small portion of the art-



**Top:** Cheri and Bill Clever relax with their canine companion, Chunk. **Above:** the Oriental motif extends to the outdoor living area, with a feature wall of black porcelain tile, complete with fireplace and TV. A vaulted wooden ceiling completes the look.

*Continued on Page 104*

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*I wanted our house to be luxuriously different and create a mood. And I love to push boundaries.*

**CHERI CLEVER**



*Continued from Page 102*

work they acquired in China. “Everything that I collected while living overseas holds special memories for me,” says Cheri. “I looked for one-of-a-kind items that were handcrafted, sculpted or painted by local artisans.”

Other pieces are sprinkled throughout the house and in the outdoor living area. Many are representations of Buddha; other pieces have classic stories and legends attached to them. The Clevers collected so much they needed their own shipping container to get it all back home.

Cheri credits Bill with ideas and support but the home is clearly her vision. She became interested in decorating when the Clevers built their first home back in Ohio. Cheri hired a decorator but found her ideas unexciting. So, she took over the job herself — and discovered a talent she has nurtured ever since.

“I’ve had no formal training,” she says. “But I study online — other designers, trends, furniture placement. I wanted our house to be luxuriously different and create a mood. And I love to push boundaries.”

Both Bill and Cheri admit to being a little apprehensive about their move to China back in 2004. Bill had just retired from General Motors and they had no idea what to expect. But the experience turned out to be positive and life-changing. “Shanghai — with a population of over 20 million people — was a modern, upscale city, beautifully landscaped and immaculately clean,” Cheri says. “We felt very safe. We could walk the streets anytime, day or night with no fear.”

*Continued on Page 106*



**Top:** The three-bedroom, three-bath home features a three-car garage. **Middle:** A talented decorator, Cheri Clever furnished the home by finding pieces online during the Covid pandemic. She carefully mixed curves and straight lines to produce a well-composed space. **Above:** The view was a major selling point for the Clevers when they purchased their lot.



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Continued from Page 104

Home was a 4,000-square-foot condo overlooking the main street in Pudong, an area popular with expats. There were parks, schools and a modern metro system. The couple led an active social life. Bill played golf at the Tianma Country Club and Cheri joined clubs as well, including the International Women's Society and the American Woman's Club. The most fun? "I shopped, shopped, shopped."

Cheri learned Mandarin and got to know many of her Chinese neighbors. "Chinese family values touched my heart," she remembers. "The work ethic was unbelievable. Many young adults, especially those who worked in expat areas, spoke eight or nine languages fluently."

But by 2010 it was time to return home. The Clevers exchanged their view of Shanghai's iconic Pearl Tower —103 stories high and the symbol of modern China — for a different kind of iconic view: a wide peaceful lake and a sunny



A smaller window was replaced with sliding glass doors to bring the magnificent view right into the dining room.

Continued on Page 108

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Continued from Page 106

golf course at Lakewood National. The home they chose was 2,500 square feet, with three bedrooms and three baths. A big part of the appeal was the open concept plan and the three-car garage.

Since they planned to spend a great deal of time outdoors, the Clevers rethought and enlarged the home's outdoor living area. They put in a custom saltwater pool with spa and sun shelf and then constructed a whole new seating and dining area complete with outdoor kitchen. Here the Far East atmosphere includes a wall of black porcelain tiles and a custom wood-vaulted ceiling.

Inside, Cheri paid particular attention to lighting her new home. "I always like to have one show-stopping light fixture. In this house I used two oversized hammered brass pendants over the kitchen island. My granddaughter Victoria calls them the "taco lights."

"Furnishing the home was a bit of a challenge," Cheri remembers. They moved in during Covid and many



Continued on Page 110

The Clevers' granddaughter Victoria refers to the dramatic kitchen lighting fixtures as the "taco lights."



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Continued from Page 108

stores were closed. So, Cheri was forced to purchase online. She was extra careful with her measurements and color choices. To her surprise, everything went off without a hitch. “I would surely do it again this way.” It helped to have son Michael involved. He’s a painting contractor and made sure that the work was done to Cheri’s specifications. And if the home has oriental touches everywhere, there is one room that remains very All-American — Bill’s den, an old-fashioned “man cave” with an 86-inch television and his collection of sports memorabilia on display.

Their home in Lakewood National has been the perfect retirement residence for the Clevers. But they have decided to downsize and have just put the place on the market. They’re currently looking at condos in the Ranch. It’s a bittersweet moment, but Cheri is looking forward to another decorating adventure, another chance to mix East and West into the perfect combination of comfortable and gracious living.



In the master bedroom there is a subdued color palette and more objects from China showcased in a display cabinet.

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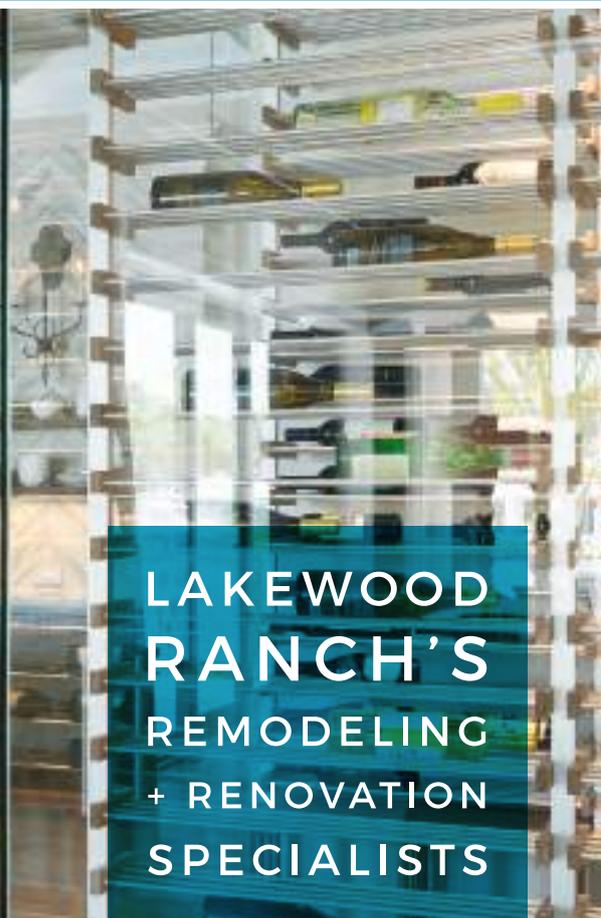
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art and about

# Set Your Child's Inner Artist Free!



**Above:** Participants learn to brave new worlds at the Asolo Rep's summer camps.

The creative benefits of summer art camps for kids can last a lifetime.

BY SU BYRON  
MANAGING EDITOR

School's out for summer! For kids, the season's balmy weeks outside the classroom are pure paradise. Here's a thought: Instead of spending weeks focused on mobile devices, kids can exercise their creative muscles at a host of area arts and performance camps. These often-unforgettable experiences will last for many summers to come. Kids might not grow up to be artists, but they may tend to better appreciate the art of others. Here's a peek at just some of summertime fun that awaits.

## PERFORMING ARTS FLORIDA STUDIO THEATRE

FST's camp experiences offer creative workouts for young people with a flair for comedy, drama (or both). These one-week and three-week sessions target three age groups from 5 to 17. Little Theatre Intro Week (5 and 6) immerses campers in storytelling, acting, song and dance. At the grand finale, participants put on a show for friends and family. Children's Performing Arts Camp (7-12) builds skills in acting, voice, improvisation and dance. (It builds self confidence, too!) Teen Improv (13-17) is a crash course in unscripted hilarity. As a bonus, improv campers learn to trust their creative instincts and work together. This culminates in a revue of the students' original sketch comedy. 941-366-1350; [FloridaStudioTheatre.org](http://FloridaStudioTheatre.org).

## ASOLO REP

Asolo Rep's creative camps are an important stage in young people's

theatrical development. The Rep's Summer Sessions offer a well-stocked toolbox for young budding performers. Weekly themes include: "Got Rhythm?" "Clown On!" "Miniature Worlds: Mind Machine," "Quest: Mythical Creatures," and "Drama Detective," and groups are categorized as Artistic Adventures (ages 6-7) and Courageous Creating (ages 8-10). The Theatremakers Summer Camps (11-14) empower kids to tell amazing stories and create brave new worlds with their new dramatic arts skills. Weekly themes include: "Making Myths," "Inside Out: Scenic Design," and "Escape Room Challenge." 941-351-8000; [AsoloRep.org](http://AsoloRep.org).

## SARASOTA YOUTH OPERA

Opera literally means "the works." Sarasota Youth Opera's summer camp sessions give talented kids and teens the works when it comes to fulfilling their artistic potential. Sarasota Opera's creative professionals give campers hands-on experience in the arts of singing, acting, physical comedy, sets, props, wigs, make-up and costumes. Participants learn what it takes to bring the magic of opera to life, both on stage and behind the stage. Sessions are available for every skill level, along with scholarships. These target two different age groups: Kids (8-10); and pre-teens and teens (11-18). Campers may not grow up to be operatic artists. But they'll appreciate the work that goes into the art form. 941-366-8450; Ext. 249; [SarasotaOpera.org](http://SarasotaOpera.org).



Courtesy photos  
**Above:** Kids discover the magic of being both on stage and behind the scenes at Florida Studio Theatre's summer camps. **Left:** At the Sarasota Youth Opera, kids and teens learn what it takes to bring the magic of opera to life.

*Continued on Page 114*



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Courtesy photos

*Continued from Page 112*

## **VISUAL ARTS** **ART CENTER SARASOTA**

Children's author MaryAnn F. Kohl shares that, "Art is a place for children to learn to trust their ideas, themselves, and to explore what is possible." That's all happening at Art Center Sarasota this summer. Kids and teens can set their inner artists free with a variety of programs. Creative Kids (6-9) lays a foundation for artistic expression. Emerging Artists (10-14) builds on that foundation. Offerings include: "Food and Clay Days" (create mouth-watering masterpieces!); "Wild Florida: Dolphins, Flamingos, and Palms, Oh My!" (campers take inspiration from the Sunshine State's great outdoors); "Listen to the Music: Get into the Groove!" (campers will ignite their creativity from music and translate into visual works); and "Crazy Creatures: Clay Days!" (From animals that live in the wild to creatures that live in fantasy worlds, campers will create art inspired by all beings — in the sea, in the sky, on land, real and imagined.) 941-365-2032; [ArtSarasota.org](http://ArtSarasota.org).

Kids and teens can set their inner artists free at Art Center Sarasota this summer.



## **SARASOTA ART MUSEUM**

Sarasota Art Museum's Summer Camp offers young people a rare opportunity to experiment with new materials and try new techniques with the entire museum as their classroom. Skilled teaching artists conduct these magical mystery tours and each week offers new creative explorations for campers from 7 to 13. These adventures range from the aquatic artistry of "Under the Sea" to the cosmic creations of "Outer Space" to "Fantastic Imaginary Creatures." Wherever the journey takes them, campers get to play with new materials, sharpen their skills, and set their imaginations free. At the end of their odysseys, campers get to curate their own art show and reveal their creations to those they love. [SarasotaArtMuseum.org](http://SarasotaArtMuseum.org).

Sarasota Art Museum's Summer Camp offers young people a rare opportunity to experiment with new materials and try new techniques with the entire museum as their classroom.

“  
*Art is a place for children to learn to trust their ideas, themselves, and to explore what is possible.*

**CHILDREN'S AUTHOR**  
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*table talk*

# Paul Caragiulo of Owen's Fish Camp

Who says lightning doesn't strike twice? Paul Caragiulo shares how he and his brothers brought one of Sarasota's favorite restaurants to Lakewood Ranch.

BY MARTY FUGATE | CONTRIBUTOR

As restaurateurs, Paul, Mark and Rob Caragiulo are like a rock band that keeps pumping out the hits. One of their hits, Owen's Fish Camp, launched in 2010 in downtown Sarasota and quickly shot up to the top of the charts. They did it again when they opened a second Fish Camp last year in Lakewood Ranch. This version fosters an Adirondack-style lake house vibe, a large outdoor entertainment area and a menu filled with flopping fresh fish, Creole gumbo, fried soft-shell crabs, shrimp and grits and a myriad of other Southern country-style chow. And, just like its Sarasota sibling, be prepared to wait a while for a table, especially during season. (Trust us; it's worth the wait.) Paul Caragiulo recently shared what it was like launching a new hit for new fans.

## **The secret of our success...**

Is pretty simple. We give people a reason to want to be here. We created the kind of restaurant where you want to hang out. We've succeeded in keeping customers happy because we have very, very excellent people working with us.

## **The core concept behind our Lakewood Ranch location is . . .**

Location, location, location. It's an outdoorsy picnic spot — a beautiful, oak hammock location. And our amazing



Photo by Lori Sax

outdoor area wasn't an afterthought; it's a principal component of our Lakewood Ranch concept. That wasn't part of our Sarasota concept, but that's what works here. There's more going on here than at our original location, and that really reflects our connection to nature. That's evolved over time. When we first got here, there wasn't

a tree on the property. We planted every mature oak you can see — all nine of them. We knew we couldn't just replicate the culture of our first location. Lakewood Ranch is a new canvas — and the culture we've created here reflects that.

Paul Caragiulo is part of the winning team that reinvented Owen's Fish Camp for Lakewood Ranch.

*Continued on Page 118*



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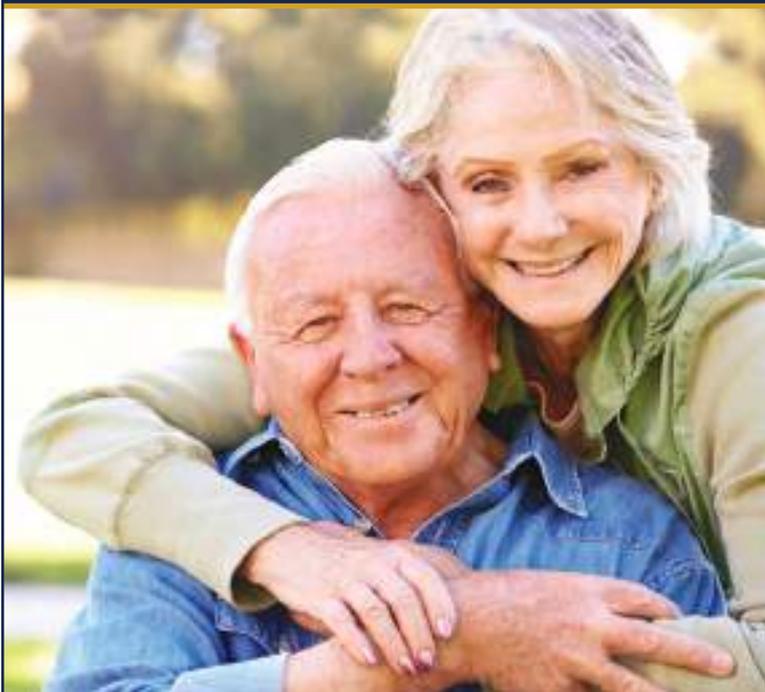


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Jennifer Hackbarth and Maximiliano Iglesias | Photography by Matthew Holler



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Photo by Lori Sax

*Continued from Page 116*

**There are no formal titles or roles; we all do whatever needs to be done.**

We don't have a very corporate atmosphere. In my role, I balance large logistical challenges and daily details. The hospitality industry is like staging a set and putting on a production. That's my favorite analogy. It's show business.

**I balance owning three restaurants ...**

Very carefully. (laughs) Seriously, we're a large family, and that helps. Everybody's willing to do exactly what needs to be done. That's what it all comes down to. (The Caragiulos also own Caragiulos, an iconic downtown Sarasota restaurant.)

**My favorite dish at Owen's is ...**

Catfish. I eat that every time I eat here.

**Don't leave Owen's without trying ...**

Oh, that's easy — the fish spread. And you've got to try our pickles.

**Aside from our restaurants, my favorite go-to places are ...**

... FushiPoke, Apollonia Grill, and La Mucca Ballerina.

**If I could hop on a plane and go anyplace on earth for a meal, the restaurant I'd choose is ...**

Trattoria La Buca di Zibello, a great place just outside of Parma.

**My chef heroes are ...**

Marcella Hazan, Jamie Oliver, and my mother and my grandmother. The restaurant business is a family affair for a lot of people. That's definitely true in our family.

**When I'm not working, I'm ...**

Well, this morning I went turkey hunting. I love to do that. I spend most of my free time outside.

Owen's Fish Camp fosters an Adirondack-style lake house vibe.

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# *PARTING GLANCE*



Shawna Tillberg took this photo of a sandhill crane and its newly hatched colt.

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