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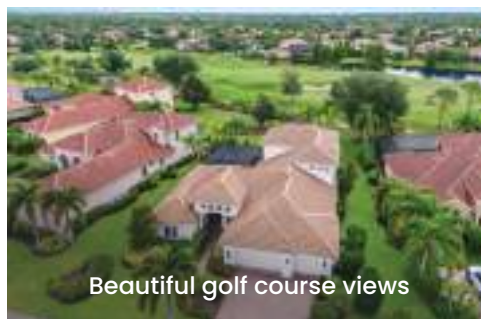
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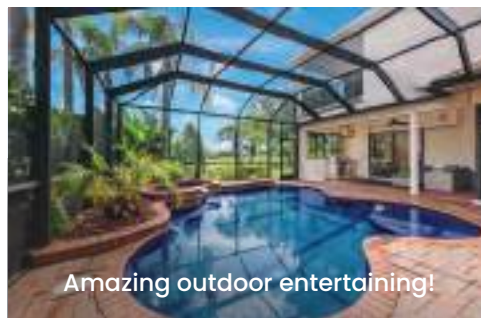
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Doctor Jeffrey Martins has changed my whole life. I’m so much more confident now and I feel better about myself. You see, I’ve always had such small teeth, and I was self-conscious about it. I didn’t like how they looked, so I never wanted to smile.

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.

When I decided to visit Paradise Dental, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I’ve always been nervous about having my teeth worked on, but everyone there was so friendly and the team really put me at ease. They took the time to listen to all of my concerns and what I hoped to accomplish, then recommended veneers for my front teeth. I liked that they took their time and helped me choose just the right color so my teeth would look more natural and not fake.

Now, everyone comments on my nice smile. I’m so happy about the results, but the best part is that I’m not afraid to smile anymore! They did a wonderful job.” - Rowena B.



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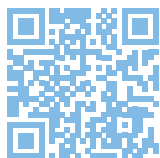
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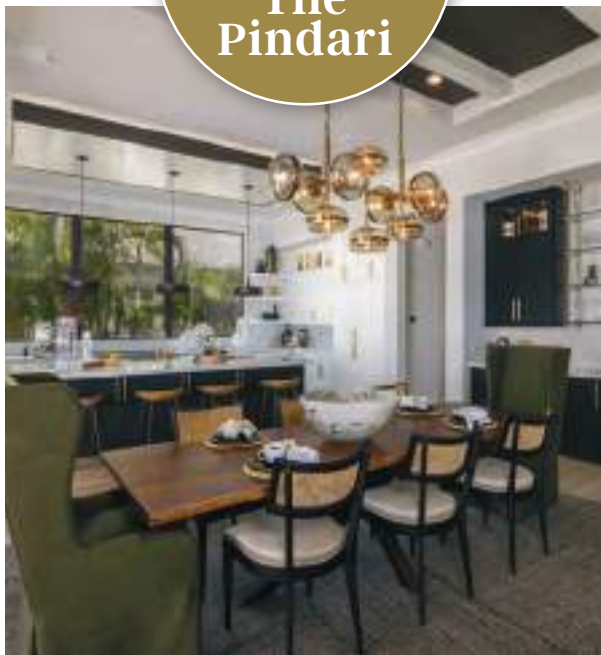
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“Finding the ER at Fruitville is like finding a gold mine.”

Nova Wallenda
Mother to ER at Fruitville Patient

PATIENTS ARE TREATED LIKE FAMILY

Nova Wallenda and her 3-year-old son Jameson of Sarasota are members of the Wallenda Circus Family, well known for their entertaining high wire stunts. Nova shares that Jameson loves playing outside with friends and performing in the circus. When, earlier this year, he became ill with a 103-degree fever, runny nose and cough, she brought him to ER at Fruitville.

“As soon as we walked in, we were in an exam room,” says Nova. Jameson was treated for an upper respiratory tract infection. “The ER staff was amazing with him. They gave him little stickers. The doctor gave him a popsicle. They asked me questions and explained everything. They were so reassuring. They genuinely cared for my son.”

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The VICC's WOW ride — Women on Wheels — is one of several events the cycling club puts on annually. This year, VICC turned 15.

When Lakewood Ranch first started in the mid-'90s, it was largely an agriculture operation. There were more cows than humans, and the land that now houses people was once home to citrus groves, sod farms, shell pits, timber stands and more.



Obviously, a lot has changed since then, and this year has some milestone anniversaries that highlight those changes and how the area has grown up — including the 30th birthday of Lakewood Ranch.

In addition to that biggie, the Mall at University Town Center celebrated its 10th anniversary in October (Page 34), and the Village Idiots Cycling Club is now in its 15th year (Page 42).

As someone who has been around to witness most of these milestones, it is incredible to think back to the way things were. To folks in Sarasota, the mall was “way out there.” I remember

having conversations with coastal dwellers who said they would never go “all the way out there” to go shopping. Boy has that changed.

Likewise with the Village Idiots — which now goes by VICC — of which, full disclosure, I’m a member. Aside from the number and roster of riders changing, the routes for the group rides have also changed, particularly the past few years with traffic increasing and new roads coming online (smooth Blue Lake Road is my current my favorite).

For those who have been here awhile, we see how much our area now attracts in terms of things to do and businesses and services available. Which, if you remember the vast fields of cows, is a good thing. Although growth is always a balancing act, gone are the days when you have to leave the Ranch area to get what you need.

On the newer developments side, on Page 68, we highlight a whole host of

services focused on our canine friends. Just browsing the variety and depth of offerings, it’s clear the Ranch has become quite the pooch-friendly place.

Also on the new side, we spotlight three new restaurants on Lakewood Ranch Main Street (Page 38) as well as a new golf simulator opening soon in the area (Page 94) for those serious aficionados of the game.

We even have a story highlighting the efforts of the Lemur Conservation Foundation (Page 82), which houses 54 of these incredible endangered creatures just a short drive away. But it’s been there a while, with its 30th anniversary coming up soon.

This blend of established entities and new up and comers is needed for a vibrant, growing community. It’s up to us to embrace and celebrate it — both the old and the new.

Kat Wingert
Executive Editor

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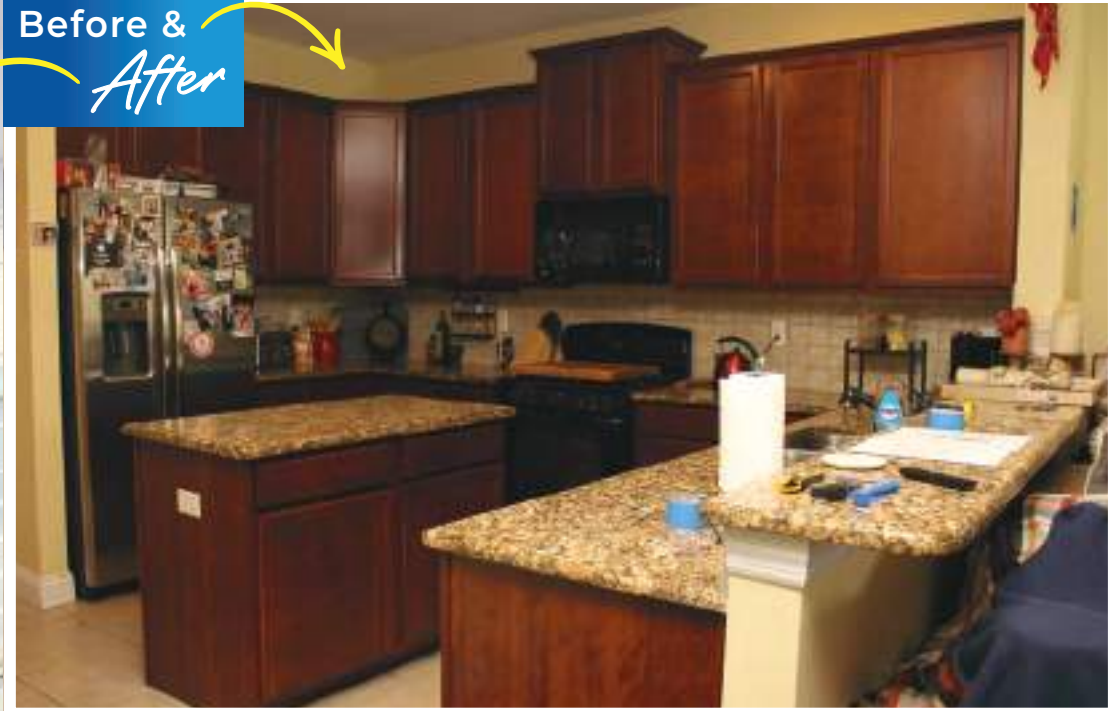


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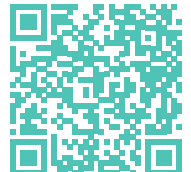
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NEWS, HAPPENINGS AND PEOPLE

Lakewood Ranch's cycling club celebrates 15 years of promoting the sport and keeping streets safe.

PAGE 42

Photo by Lori Sax
As president of the Village Idiots Cycling Club, Dawn Zielinski lobbies for efforts to make roadways safer for cyclists.



The Mall at UTC's anchors are Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy's, Dillard's, and the mall includes more than 125 specialty stores and restaurants.

One Decade Down

A mall on the Sarasota-Manatee county line once looked like a long shot to be not only successful, but even built. Now it's a landmark economic driver.

BY MARK GORDON
DEPARTMENTS EDITOR

A typical Friday night at the Mall at UTC in the early fall is a bustling scene. Families, retirees, couples and more move about, shopping, dining and both. At the main entrance valet station, between The Cheesecake Factory and Seasons 52, you might find an Instagram-photo worthy row of cars: a black Maserati, a red Porsche, maybe a blue Bentley convertible.

Ten years ago this site in North Sarasota, just west of the University Parkway exit of Interstate 75 and

south of the Manatee County line, was a patch of dirt. It's now not only the Mall at UTC — which turned 10 years old Oct. 16 — but it's also a mark of major accomplishment pitted against lingering doubts and the aftermath of a global recession.

A \$315 million project when University Park Benderson Development and partner Taubman Centers built it, the mall, beyond swanky shops and fancy cars, has spawned an economic engine around it. Since 2014, Benderson has developed nearly 1 million square feet of new retail and restaurant space within UTC. Nearby Nathan Benderson Park has become a global player

in hosting rowing championships, and coming soon is the Mote Science Education Aquarium, a 110,000-square-foot aquarium with more than 1 million gallons of marine life exhibits. The mall itself is a two-story, 880,000-square-foot structure.

The idea for a mall on that site, or near it, dates back to the early 2000s. At one point there was a fourth planned anchor, Nordstrom, in addition to potential hotels, homes and office space. The global housing bubble squashed those bigger plans. Not only was the economy in the dumps, but in-

Continued on Page 36

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Continued from Page 34

door enclosed malls were seen by some as more of a relic of the 1980s than a 2000s redevelopment strategy.

Yet the development team persevered. An official from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan-based Taubman told the Observer Media Group in 2014, two weeks after the mall opened, that “we thought Sarasota was one of the great untapped markets in America. We thought there was a gigantic retail void, and we saw an opportunity to satisfy that.”

Randy Benderson, managing director of Benderson Development, told the East County Observer that pursuing the mall project stemmed partially from his father, Nate Benderson, who “had the early vision to create a regional shopping destination here.”

To celebrate the 10-year anniversary, here are 10 facts you (probably) didn't know about the Mall at UTC.

1 When the Mall at UTC opened in October 2014, it was the first enclosed mall to open in the U.S. since 2006. (The Southdale Center in Edina, Minnesota, which opened in 1956, is considered to be the first enclosed mall.)

2 The Mall at UTC's ceremonial groundbreaking took place Oct. 16, 2012. The mall opened two years to the day later, Oct. 16, 2014.

3 There is a Mall Walker Club. The mall opens one hour early each day for the club, which is free to join and offers a climate-controlled walking route with exclusive prizes for guests as they reach their fitness goals, a mall spokesperson says.

4 There is rooftop dining — at Sophie's, on the second floor of Saks Fifth Avenue. The restaurant is named for fashion designer Sophie Gimbel, whose husband, Bernard Gimbel, is one of the founders of Saks.

5 You can recharge your car while you shop at Electrify America car charging stations, in parking lot 2 between Kona Grill and Macy's.



6 While shopping (or charging your EV) you can also watch sporting events and other big events, at the Lakewood Ranch Medical Center Seating Lounge on level 1 near H&M.

7 There's a Fab & Fit Rewards program: Present combined same-day receipts of \$250 or more from UTC athletic wear retailers to customer service and choose from a selection of fitness gear.

8 You can buy Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies at the Coinflip Bitcoin ATM, near Macy's and Pei Wei.

9 The mall's concourse glazing canopies are segmented shade devices designed to address the orientation of the sun and heat exposure. They are smaller on the east side and grow progressively larger on the west side.



10 You can experience snow every day during the holiday season, inside Santa's Flight Academy and his 22-foot-tall sleigh at the Grand Court. And if you are going to see Santa, there's a virtual Santa Line, so you can shop and dine while waiting. Go to MallatUTC.com this November and December for more information on Santa's Flight Academy.



“
We thought Sarasota was one of the great untapped markets in America. We thought there was a gigantic retail void, and we saw an opportunity to satisfy that.”

BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN-BASED TAUBMAN OFFICIAL IN 2014



The Mall at UTC held a big opening day event when it opened in 2014.

File photos

CRISTI MARTEL AT HOME



By Cristi Martel



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Evan Percoco and Zach Zeller have ambitious plans for restaurants on Lakewood Ranch Main Street.

Photo by Lori Sax

Main Street Makeover

Evan Percoco and Zach Zeller have already made a big impact on Lakewood Ranch's original downtown, with lots more good eating to come.

BY BETH LUBERECKI | CONTRIBUTOR

Evan Percoco has the perfect combination of passion and personal experience that makes him well-suited for his latest venture: a major restaurant renaissance on Main Street at Lakewood Ranch. It all started when he and business partner Zach Zeller bought the Peculiar Pub about a year ago.

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Percoco had moved to the Lakewood Ranch area about five years ago to be closer to family. Past stints as a chef and in restaurant concept development had taken him all over the

United States and beyond, but now that he had two children, he wanted to stay in one spot for a bit.

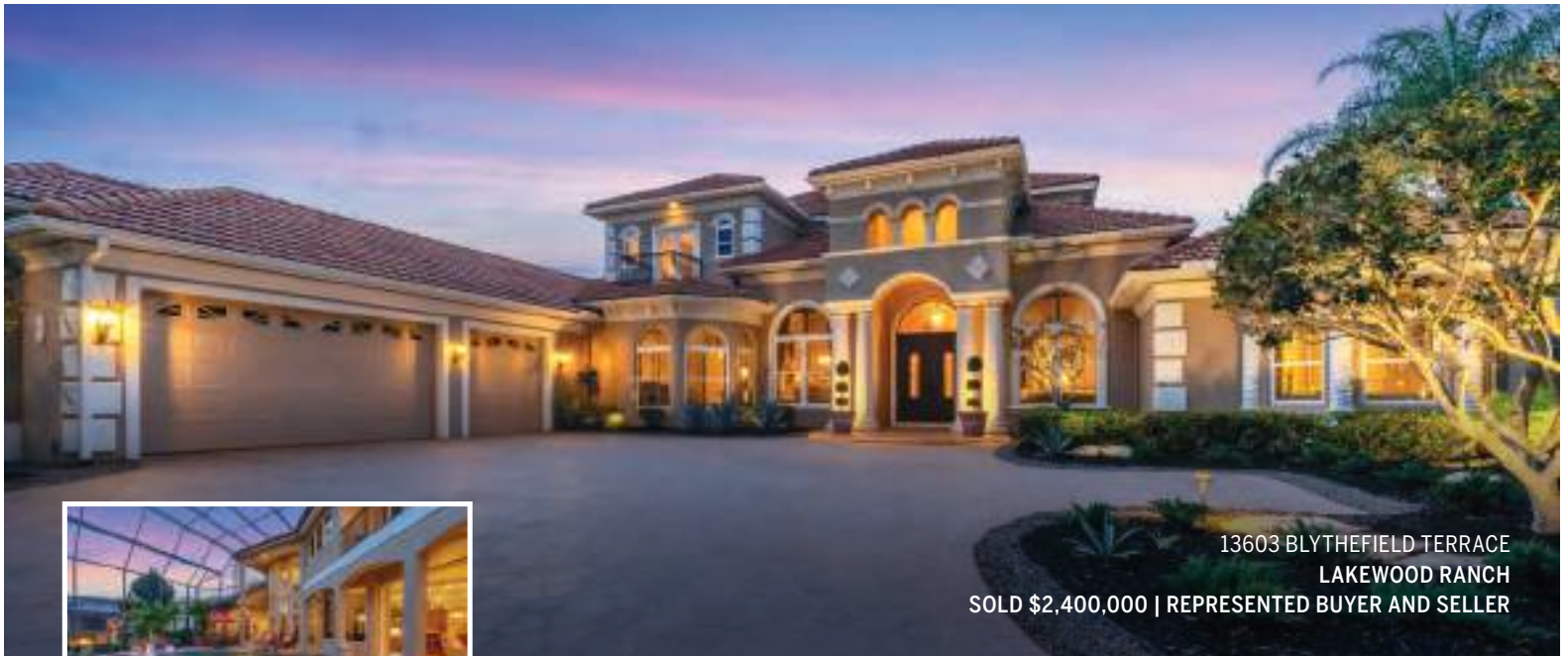
He saw untapped potential on Main Street at Lakewood Ranch — especially when it came to attracting families like his own. He and Zeller started looking around, and they were ready to go when the Peculiar Pub became available.

The craft beer spot also serves up modern takes on classic pub fare, like buffalo chicken meatballs and the “Sloppy Peculiarwich.” “We’ve made it super inviting,” says Percoco, 56. “We’re very guest friendly...We’ve been really successful there, and we have a great following.”

Percoco and Zeller began devising plans to expand on their vision for Main Street, with the goal of having three restaurants there within five years. That goal sped up a bit when the former Sophia’s space became available.

The business partners, under EZ Restaurant Group, leased that space and have a plan to bring an already proven concept there. During the pandemic, they’d done a barbecue pop-up called Atypical Kitchen at Crowder Plaza in Lakewood Ranch. It was a hit, so they’re now at work on Twisted Pit,

Continued on Page 40



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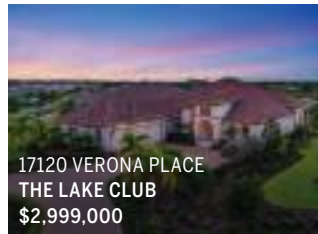
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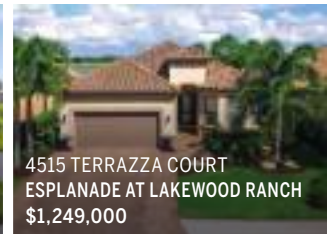
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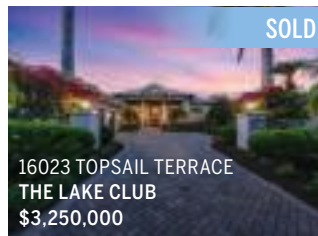
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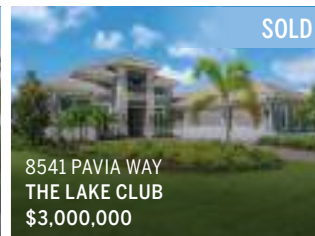
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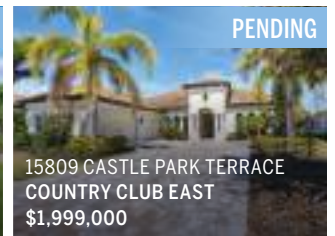
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a Texas-style walk-up barbecue spot with a backyard-inspired setting.

“We’ll have big communal tables to entice families,” says Percoco. “We don’t want to put any televisions in there because we want conversation.”

The goal is for that restaurant to be open by the end of 2024.

Then, as work on Twisted Pit was progressing, another opportunity emerged when the former Main Street Trattoria came on the market. A pizza place was a perfect fit for their vision of Main Street and had been on the partners’ wish list. So they seized the opportunity.

About a month ago they opened the doors to Percoco’s Pizza & Pasta and served about 160 customers on a Sunday night. The next night, a Monday, they had 500 customers, and things have just grown from there. Percoco admits it was a little scary to put his name on one of the restaurants, but the response has proven the risk was worth it.

He’s not only churning out pizza, but he’s making good pizza. Percoco waxes poetic about the American-made ingredients he uses, whether that’s non-bromated King Arthur flour milled in the Everglades, Grande mozzarella cheese, Sartori SarVecchio Parmesan cheese, or Corto 100% extra virgin olive oil.

“We could have used Italian products,” he says. “But we’re not Italian American; we’re American Italian. So we try to exploit that where we can.”

The two aren’t getting much sleep these days with three restaurants at various stages of growth. But that’s one of the secrets to their success. “We’re always here,” says Percoco. “We’re always in the restaurants; we’re always glad-handing. It makes a world of difference with our clientele.”

The two also work well together. Percoco brings three decades of experience working as an executive chef for Loews Hotels in Washington, D.C.; cooking with rock stars as chef at the Hard Rock Hotel Orlando; serving as chef at restaurants and hotels in Boston and Chicago; and working as a corporate chef for a Miami hotel management company.

Zeller, 40, founded a business called Your Location Lubrication in Orlando that was acquired by Spiffy in 2019.



Photos by Evan Percoco

Clockwise from top-left: margherita pizza, carbonara, grilled shrimp gremolata, and Main Street salad

“He did really well, and he’s been so cool to work with,” says Percoco. “He’s a quick study too.”

“The cool thing about Zach and me is that we can hold each other accountable,” he continues. “We act upon it, and we come in the next day and we’re ready to rock and roll and make the changes that we spoke about the night before. We’ll sit in the car for an hour or two after work and go through reviews and see if there’s anything that we need to respond to. And then we’ll talk about the dishes and what improvements we need to make. It’s always about that with us; it’s always about constant improvement. Even when we think we’re dialed in on a specific dish, we still analyze it and try to make it even better.”

And the two aren’t done yet. Their EZ Restaurant Group is also planning on opening a speakeasy in a space con-

nected with Twisted Pit and has the available space next to Peculiar Pub, where they might do an adult arcade concept. When it comes to Lakewood Ranch Main Street, they’re all in on reinvigorating the area’s original downtown, and they believe they have what it takes to make it happen.

“We’re hospitable,” says Percoco. “The concept work and the quality of the food and the constant improvement is one part of it, but it’s really about the hospitality. It’s the glad handing. It’s letting people know how happy we are seeing them as a family here. It’s really about focusing on getting more people down here.”

“I think this is my end game,” he continues. “I think I’ve got a solid 15 years left if everything’s OK, and if I can make a difference here in this community and be part of something really cool, why not?”

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It Takes a Village, Idiot!

In a place with plenty of clubs and groups, the Village Idiots Cycling Club of Lakewood Ranch stands out, both in longevity — 15 years — and its core mission of bringing people together through a common passion.

BY EMILY LEINFUSS | CONTRIBUTOR

Word on the street about the Village Idiots Cycling Club of Lakewood Ranch is its members have a serious need for speed. And competition. President Dawn Zielinski is aware of the rep. “There are people who won’t ride with us because we’re known as the fast group,” she admits.

Those observers are mostly paying attention to the club’s A Group, says Zielinski. Those riders, mostly men, ride 35 miles at 26-plus mph, and nearly all of them compete in state-wide races in either cycling, mountain biking or triathlon.

But the Village Idiots welcomes any cyclist who can start out riding in D Group at 14-16 mph for 20 miles with a no-drop rule, which means all participants stay and finish together.

That’s what attracted 25-year cycling veteran Jill Litzenberg, who participates in the club’s 7:30 a.m. Bacon Ride every Saturday morning.

Four years ago Litzenberg started living in Venice from March through May. But it wasn’t until 2024, when a fellow Wisconsinite moved to Lakewood Ranch, that she found her cycling people. “I like knowing we are going to stick together in a group; there’s camaraderie and a chance to meet new people. It’s worth the 30- to 45-minute drive to LWR,” she says.

Mutual support was at the heart



Photo by Lori Sax

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Dawn Zielinski has been part of the Village Idiots Cycling Club of Lakewood Ranch for a decade.



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of the group's inception 15 years ago, when a bunch of friends from Lakewood Ranch started casually riding together. "They'd go out as one group, and if someone didn't feel like keeping up, they'd just drop off," says Zielinski.

Proving Lakewood Ranch was truly designed with cycling in mind, the club's numbers grew quickly. When Zielinski joined in 2014, the club had amassed 65 members, a name that was partly based on their meeting place at the time (Village Bikes) and four groups (A-D) delineated by speed. She became one of only three women in the D Group, who remain her best friends. (Today the club has some 200 members, with an annual fee of \$35.)

"Together, we got very good at cycling, but we still weren't really very fast. Now, I mostly ride C+ but I'm trying to bridge myself back to B," she says. It wasn't even a full year before this "people-oriented person" became the Village Idiot's first-ever social director, and then, in 2019, she was named president.

Ideally, no matter a rider's start speed, they should aspire to become better and faster — in that order — to feel like the Village Idiots is right for them. "Better means becoming a more proficient and skilled rider. That needs to happen before moving to faster groups: with speed comes the potential of more things happening," says Zielinski.

As president, Zielinski has dedicated significant time and effort to promoting safety — starting with personally riding alongside newcomers to teach group riding protocols, and also by advocating for cyclists' rights on the road.

For instance, when a local official attempted to block cyclists from using Hidden River Trail, Zielinski and other members of the club acted quickly to stop it. "I pulled a letter from our archives that proved, in 2015, the Manatee County Commission declared that bicycles could take full use of that road," she says.

Little did she know, many more challenges awaited when, about a year later, the pandemic hit. Despite the uncertainty, the club's membership surged, driven by new residents in Lakewood Ranch and a growing interest in cycling and outdoor pursuits.

FOUR WHEELER

Four fun facts about the Village Idiots:

■ Cycling remains a mostly male-dominated activity, which is why Village Idiots' president Dawn Zielinski is excited about the club's five new women riders. She credits the rising popularity of Olympic champion Kristin Faulkner for inspiring more women to join.

■ The club hosts three major social events per year: a Start-of-Season Party and an End-of-Season Party, held on the first Wednesday after daylight saving time begins and the last Wednesday before it ends, respectively, along with a Holiday Party.

■ In 2020, the Florida Bicycle Association named The Village Idiots of Lakewood Ranch an official USA Cycling Club and awarded it "FBA Club of the Year," recognizing the club's work in improving the community for cyclists through education, safety programs and service projects.

■ After designer Richard Weinstock moved to Lakewood Ranch in 2019, he and Zielinski began modernizing the club's look. That included rebranding and a new logo. "We had a fun logo, but some people didn't want to be called an idiot, so we de-emphasized that," Zielinski says. The "VICC" label now brands the group.



Courtesy photos

The club's men have been the organizing force behind the Women On Wheels (WOW) Ride, an initiative created to encourage more women to get involved in cycling and to support women's charities.



Jill Litzenberg rallies for the Village Idiots' Saturday morning rides by posting photos.

Membership grew from 134 in March 2020 to 252 two years later. Membership is steady around 200 today, says Zielinski.

"I know people who were considering three different areas in Florida, and they chose Lakewood Ranch because of our group," she says.

"Others would come, stay for a month, ride with us, and end up moving here," she adds.

Take Shawna and Marty Stiegmann, for example. Both are nationally ranked competitive cyclists who relocated from Richmond, Virginia to Sarasota in 2020 to be closer to their mothers. Dedicated cyclists, they chose to live in Deer Creek for its proximity to the Legacy Trail, where they can get their "power and junk miles in," says Marty.

"When we first got here, we tried to get plugged in (to a group). We rode with this other club and then we heard about the Village Idiots," he says. "We went up there and man, that first ride I got shot out of a cannon backwards and loved it."

The couple decided to start at the B+ Group level, but quickly moved up to A Group. "Two times a week we go up there and bleed. It's a drop ride, and we all know what we're in for," he says, adding that he fantasizes about "breaking off the front and dropping everybody behind." After, it's all about camaraderie, he adds. "We stop and tell war stories or go have a beer together."

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THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

Lakewood Ranch charity provides beds for children — as well as a message of love. **PAGE 52**



Photo by Lori Sax
Mark and Brenda Coates have been helping run Beds for Kids for several years from their east Manatee County home.

class act

A Good Walk

Pioneering Lakewood Ranch resident finds comfort in raising funds for Alzheimer's care and research.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

A local man in his 50s was beset by early-onset Alzheimer's disease more than a year ago. Doctors began infusing him with a new medication. "He just recently posted on his Facebook page that the doctor who has been following him for a year said he's at the same point that he was," Andrea Helme says. "The disease has not progressed."

Helme's voice is effusive as she tells the story. "We're in the era of treatment," she adds with similar verve. "So it's a good time. We're always searching for a cure, and we're getting closer to that day, but to provide effective treatment gives a warm and fuzzy feeling."

Helme does not say this as a doctor. She does not say this as a researcher. She does not even say this as one of the 840,000 dementia caregivers in Florida, or as someone whose life has been affected by the disease.

A Lakewood Ranch resident for 25 years, Helme is a development director for the Alzheimer's Association, in charge of the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Sarasota and Pinellas counties. They are two of the walks held annually in more than 600 communities. "It's become the largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research," Helme says. The walks raised \$100 million in 2023. Last year's Sarasota walk, Helme's first year in charge, exceeded its goal of \$255,000. She says this year's event (scheduled for Nov. 2 at Nathan Benderson Park) was on track to surpass its goal of \$325,000.

Although the events she oversees take place on single Saturday mornings, organizing them is effectively a year-round job. "When my two are over, I'll help other teammates who have walks in November and Decem-



Photos by Lori Sax

Andrea Helme has lived in Lakewood Ranch since 1999.

Continued on Page 50



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Continued from Page 48

ber in other areas of our [Florida Gulf Coast] chapter,” she says. “Then we take a little break for the holidays and come back ready to work.”

Helme readily credits the efforts of a legion of volunteers, including a core group of about 15 people broken into committees that handle community engagement and education, recruit support from the local business community, manage logistics and other necessary tasks. More than 100 volunteers pitch in on walk days.

In addition to overseeing the walks, part of Helme’s job is to raise awareness about the Alzheimer’s Association, and the deep reservoir of services it offers. One example is the organization’s 24/7 helpline (800-272-3900). “So many times I hear people say, ‘When I was going through this with my loved one, I didn’t even know the Alzheimer’s Association existed,’” Helme says. “So we want to make sure that we’re in the community spreading that word to let everybody know that we’re here for them.”

ANSWERING THE CALL

Helme grew up in Montville, New Jersey, a suburb of New York City, then moved to Tampa with her family and finished college at USF with a marketing degree. She relocated to the southern part of Sarasota and worked in sales for many years. In 1999, Helme and her new husband moved into Summerfield, the first village to open in Lakewood Ranch. She was pregnant with the first of her two daughters. They’ve lived there ever since.

Reminiscing, she says, “It was pretty empty. There were minimal homes. But we did know that it was a master-plan community and it would grow.”

In due time, Summerfield filled out and Lakewood Ranch began to balloon. The two Helme girls had other children to play with in the neighborhood. “We loved watching our kids grow up here,” she says.

But all was not Camelot. At age 11, Helme’s oldest daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Helme, who had never been active in charity work, signed on as a volunteer for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (now Breakthrough T1D). “With an 11-year-old child having to be insulin-dependent the rest of her life, that was hard on us,”



Helme says. “So we found that community and said, ‘Wow, there are people out there going through this with us.’ That sparked my involvement.”

Helme joined teams that participated in fundraising walks. She went to Washington, D.C., to lobby lawmakers during the organization’s Government Day. She became an avid researcher, inhaling any and all information she could find on juvenile diabetes. In August 2019, Helme took a job with Breakthrough T1D organizing events. Her first and last was a gala at The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota in February 2020, a month before the pandemic hit.

She joined the Alzheimer’s Association in 2022 in a different position than she has now. Like before, she vacuumed up reams of research about the disease — not so much out of profes-

sional obligation as, “it fascinates me,” she says.

And she spreads that knowledge and enthusiasm — as well as hope — into the community. “I kind of make it my passion to let everybody know what’s available,” she says. “Every once in a while, I’ll get a call where someone got my number and they’ll share their story, letting me know their struggle, and thinking I’ll be able to help them. Sometimes their stories last a long time. How do I interrupt and tell them that I’m not the person best suited to help when they’re pouring their heart out? Their stories are heartbreaking. I never interrupt them, but when they’re done I direct them to the helpline and other resources.”

She reassures them that they’re not alone in their struggle.

“
*I kind of
make it my
passion to let
everybody
know what’s
available.*

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charity snapshot



Mark and Brenda Coates have been helping run Beds for Kids for several years from their east Manatee County home.

Photo by Lori Sax

Go to the Mattresses

Behind a stubborn surge in demand, a Lakewood Ranch nonprofit maintains a singular focus: building beds for kids.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

In 2013, Mark Coates, a longtime woodworker and former mechanic, began to build a workshop behind his home in east Manatee County, near the Braden River. A retiree, he wanted “to have a place to putz around in,” he says. “As I was designing and building it, it just got bigger and bigger. I ended up thinking that I wanted to make it big enough so that if I sold my house, someone with a motor home or big boat could store it inside. Those were my thoughts. The

Lord had different plans.”

These days, that roomy workshop is where a cadre of about 30 volunteers turn up on the first Saturday of each month to build parts for beds. Not just any beds. Twin beds and bunk beds earmarked for kids — kids who don’t have beds. Kids who sleep on couches and air mattresses. “Some are just sleeping on a pile of dirty clothes,” Coates says, “or just on the floor itself.”

On other Saturdays, Coates and a different group of volunteers deliver the bed parts to homes, where the children — usually younger than 10 —

are encouraged to help assemble the pieces into a brand new place for them to sleep. The slats have Bible verses painted on them.

Coates, 72, is co-founder and president of Beds For Kids, which provides free beds, mattresses and bedding for children in Manatee and Sarasota counties. The project started as a small mission of the First Methodist Church in Bradenton in 2017, and as word got out about the need for beds, and requests piled up, the organiza-

Continued on Page 54


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OVER 60 YEARS!

Continued from Page 52

tion, based in Lakewood Ranch, incorporated in 2021 and received its 501 (C) (3) nonprofit status.

Beds for Kids delivered 203 beds in 2022 and 383 in 2023. Coates says the nonprofit is on pace to provide more than 500 this year. That's a good news/bad news scenario. The charity has been impressively productive in its mission. But it can't quite keep up with demand. That so many children in Manatee/Sarasota need something as basic as a bed to sleep on is hard to fathom.

Coates is reticent to talk about his background — not due to privacy, but because it's "really not about me," he says emphatically. "It's about what the Lord's doing and how the Lord is providing for all of this."

Nevertheless, Coates reveals he grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana; was a diesel mechanic for several years; then ran a bar/restaurant for 28 years. He moved to Bradenton in 2007. "It was rather laid back here at the time," he says. "I guess that's what I liked about the area."

Coates's wife of 52 years, Brenda, is actively involved in Beds For Kids.

The all-volunteer organization receives requests for beds from government and nonprofit agencies, and schools. Most of the recipients are single mothers, but the organization also provides them to single fathers and some families.

And then there are the outliers. Like Tim Frost.

Frost's childhood friend died in 2015. He offered to take his late friend's three sons in for the summer of 2022. Frost was 41, divorced, and living alone in a two-bedroom condo in Bradenton. He needed beds and he needed them fast. Frost works with at-risk youngsters in the nonprofit realm, which is how he heard about Beds For Kids and made his request. "Within a week or two, the beds came," he says. "Mark came with his granddaughter and put them together. [Otherwise], I guess the boys would have slept on air mattresses. I couldn't afford three beds."

Coates says Beds For Kids does not do much active fundraising. This year's expenses amounted to \$72,000 and the charity raised that much. Regardless, he leaves the money matters to others in the organization. "I told them, 'All I



want to do is build and deliver beds," he says, then adds, "When someone donates money toward a bed, it goes to the bed."

Coates says the lumber is donated by a company that wishes to remain anonymous. He buys bedding from Walmart, although a company donated several hundred sets last year, and the nonprofit is still using them. The biggest cost incurred by Beds For Kids is mattresses. "Mattress Firm gave us a really nice price," Coates says. "I order them out of Texas at the corporate level. They'll send 50, 75, a hundred mattresses at a time."

After all the nuts and bolts of sourcing materials, running monthly build days and other tasks are completed, then comes the payoff: delivering and assembling the beds with the kids, and

setting up the bedding, which includes spreads with brightly colored designs. Women in church groups donate teddy bears, handmade quilts and prayer mats. The children are also given an age-appropriate Bible and storybooks.

"The kids are so proud when they build the beds," Coates says. The nonprofit's Facebook page (Beds for Kids Inc. Serving Manatee and Sarasota Counties) includes dozens of photos of children fitting together wood pieces, screwing in screws and smiling brightly as they lie on their new beds.

Coates sometimes detects wariness from the adults. "A lot of these homes we go into, they don't really understand the unconditional love you're bringing into their home," he says. "It sometimes takes a minute, but it overwhelms them."

Facebook

Volunteers create beds for children, who are encouraged to help assemble their new sleeping place. Each is also adorned with a message of love.

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DECEMBER

DEC. 1

THE MARKET AT LAKEWOOD RANCH

The Market at Lakewood Ranch features fresh vegetables, produce, baked goods, honey, guacamole, pastas and more, along with ready-to-eat foods like empanadas, fresh bagels, donuts, barbecue, and hot and cold coffee from local vendors. Hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the parking lot of Waterside Place, 1561 Lakefront Drive. Continues every Sunday.

■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

DEC. 3

FESTIVE PHOTOS WITH SANTA

Get your photo taken with Santa in front of the Christmas tree on Lakewood Main Street from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Throughout the month, enjoy breakfast, brunch, lunch and photos with Santa, as well as hidden elves, at various times on Main Street and at Waterside Place.

■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

DEC. 4

CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Celebrate classic cars in this show the first Wednesday of each month, from 5-8 p.m. at 8131 Lakewood Ranch Main St. Bring your car, truck or anything on wheels. Cost is \$10 to enter a vehicle, but attending as a spectator is free. Continues Jan. 1.

■ Visit CollectorCarsTV.com.

RANCH NITE WEDNESDAYS

This midweek community event features food trucks, cornhole, live music and cocktails from numerous Waterside Place restaurants and bars. Ranch Nites continues every Wednesday through May from 6-9 p.m. at Waterside Place, 1561 Lakefront Drive. Themed Wednesdays all season.

■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

RANCH NITE MARKET

Each month, Ranch Nite Wednesdays includes a night market at Gateway Park, 1590 Lakefront Drive. Browse local crafts and eats from a rotating selection of vendors from 6-9 p.m.



Photo by Liz Ramos

Continues Jan. 8 and Feb. 5.

■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

DEC. 6

MUSIC ON MAIN

This monthly event returns on Lakewood Ranch's Main Street from 6-9 p.m. Enjoy a free concert by Doug Demming & The Jewel Tones, food vendors, beer trucks and kids activities, along with the holiday tree-lighting. Proceeds will benefit Easterseals Southwest Florida.

■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

DEC. 7

LAKEWOOD RANCH BLUES FESTIVAL

Enjoy a day of local blues performers, food, drinks and vendors at Waterside Place, 7301 Island Cove Terrace. Gates open at 9 a.m., and the live music kicks off at 10 a.m. with Melody Angel and closes with Danielle Nicole Band from 6:30-7:40 p.m. General admission is \$75; admission with a reserved

cushioned seat in front of the stage is \$150.

■ Visit LakewoodRanchBluesFest.com.

ORNAMENT MAKING FOR KIDS

Bring your little ones to Lakewood Ranch Community Park, 6402 Lakewood Ranch Blvd., at 10 a.m. for a craft hour creating a keepsake ornament. Supplies and directions will be provided.

■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

JINGLE AND JOG 5K AND 1-MILE RUN/WALK

Participants have the option of a 5K or 1-mile run/walk to benefit The Haven, which supports adults and children with disabilities. The run starts at 8 a.m. at The Haven, 4405 DeSoto Road, Sarasota. Cost is \$40 for adults.

■ Visit TheHavenSRQ.org.

Isabelle Monroe showed a cow at the 2024 Manatee County Fair. This year's fair takes place Jan. 16-26. See page 60.

Continued on Page 58

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Continued from Page 56

DEC. 7-8
LAKEWOOD RANCH HOLIDAY OF THE ARTS

From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day at Main Street at Lakewood Ranch, browse fine arts and crafts from artists from across the country. Pieces include paintings, jewelry, candles, ceramics and woodworking.
■ Visit ParagonFestivals.com.

DEC. 13
JINGLE 5K

Move your feet to the jingling beat for this festive run. The annual race begins at 6 p.m. at Lakewood Ranch Main Street. All runners receive jingle bells and laces before the race. The run/walk costs \$45; the kids race costs \$20; the virtual 5K option costs \$40. The race benefits Lakewood Ranch Medical Center Foundation and Big Bill Foundation.
■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

MOVIE IN THE PARK

Enjoy "The Santa Clause" outdoors from 6-9 p.m. at Waterside Place, 7301 Island Cove Terrace.
■ Visit WatersidePlace.com.

DEC. 14
MAIN STREET MARKET

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Lakewood Ranch Main Street, more than 70 vendors will be out with food, beverages, retail and more at the boutique market, hosted by Main Street Market LWR.
■ Visit MainStreetMarketLWR.com.

HOLIDAY SHOEBOX COLLECTION

Drop in from 4-6 p.m. to donate money or decorated shoeboxes filled with items for needy seniors supported by Meals on Wheels Plus of Manatee. Collections will be taken at the Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota Elks Lodge, 4602 Lena Road, Bradenton.
■ Visit MealsOnWheelsPlus.org.

CHRISTMAS GLOW RUN 5K

Nathan Benderson Park will be decked out in holiday spirit for this glow-in-the-dark run. Race begins at 5:45 p.m. at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Registration is \$55 in advance or \$60 on race day. Parking costs \$10.
■ Visit RunEliteEvents.com.



Photo by Liz Ramos

DEC. 15
SARASOTA HALF MARATHON & 5K

Nathan Benderson Park hosts another stop on the South Florida Half Marathon Tour. Participants receive a tank or tech tee and a finish medal with entry. Both races begin at 7 a.m. at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Entry to the half-marathon costs \$139 in advance or \$150 on race day; entry to the 5K costs \$55 in advance or \$60 on race day. Parking costs \$10.
■ Visit SarasotaHalf.com.

DEC. 19
SIGHTS + SOUNDS: 'YULE LOVE THE MARIMBA'

The December event of the Sights and Sounds cultural series features Modern Marimba performing diverse holiday and seasonal winter music on marimba, vibraphone and percussion. The performance begins at 6 p.m. at Waterside Park, 1560 Lakefront Drive. Seating is limited.
■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

DEC. 21
CHRISTMAS ON MAIN

Make a new tradition at the biggest Christmas party in town. From 4-8 p.m. Grace Community Church will transform Lakewood Ranch Main Street into a winter wonderland with free games, rides and more. A candle-light service follows from 7-8 p.m.
■ Visit GraceSarasota.com.

DEC. 22
SARASOTA POLO

The Sarasota Polo Club kicks off its season with an afternoon of tailgating and polo. Gates open at 10 a.m., and matches start at 1 p.m. at the Sarasota Polo Club, 8201 Polo Club Lane. General admission tickets are available for purchase on Eventbrite; children 12 and under are free. Polo matches will be held every Sunday through April 10, 2025.
■ Visit SarasotaPolo.com.

DEC. 26
CHANUKAH ON MAIN STREET

Chabad of Bradenton and Lakewood Ranch will celebrate Chanukah starting at 6 p.m. at Main Street at Lakewood Ranch, 8100 Lakewood Main St. A menorah will be lit, and guests can enjoy kosher barbecue, falafel, latkes, face painting, donut decorating, live music and more. Admission is free.
■ Visit ChabadOfBradenton.com.

DEC. 27
MOVIES UNDER THE STARS

Every fourth Friday of the month, UTC Sarasota puts on a family-friendly movie night at the West District at UTC, 125 N. Cattlemen Road, Sarasota.
■ Visit UTCSarasota.com.

Lakewood Ranch's John Rapp and Susan Rapp drop off 249 shoeboxes that the Acts of Kindness Group at Grace Community Church made for Meals on Wheels' 2023 Holiday Shoebox Collection.

Continued on Page 60



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Continued from Page 58

**DEC. 31
NEW YEAR'S EVE**

Celebrate New Year's Eve at Waterside Place from 6 p.m. to midnight. Enjoy live music, food, drinks, a live drone show and a kids area. Free.
■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

JANUARY

**JAN. 3
MUSIC ON MAIN**

This monthly event returns on Lakewood Ranch's Main Street from 6-9 p.m. Enjoy a free concert, food vendors, beer trucks and kids activities.
■ Visit LakewoodRanch.com.

**JAN. 12
ALPHA WIN TRIATHLON SERIES**
Test your endurance with a triathlon at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Three options are available for different experience levels. Individual registration is \$159 for the Alpha Sprint, \$268 for the Alpha Olympic and \$379 for the Alpha Long Course; discounts are available for military and youth.
■ Visit Alpha.win.

**JAN. 16
MEGA CHALLAH BAKE**
Chabad of Bradenton and Lakewood Ranch hosts its annual challah-making event ages 9 and up at 7 p.m. at The Grove, 10670 Boardwalk Loop Lane, Lakewood Ranch. The event is \$36 per person, and reservations are required.
■ Visit ChabadOfBradenton.com/MegaChallahBake.

**JAN. 16-26
MANATEE COUNTY FAIR**
The Manatee County Fair offers rides, games, livestock shows, musical entertainment and more at the Manatee County Fairgrounds, 1402 14th Ave. W., Palmetto. Hours vary by day. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$6 for military and children 6-12, and free for children under 6. Parking is \$10.
■ Visit ManateeCountyFair.com.

**JAN. 18
MAIN STREET MARKET**
From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Lakewood Ranch Main Street, more than 70 ven-



Courtesy image

dors will be out with food, beverages, retail and more at the boutique market, hosted by Main Street Market LWR.
■ Visit MainStreetMarketLWR.com.

**JAN. 25-26
LAKEWOOD RANCH FINE ART FESTIVAL**
From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day on Lakewood Main Street, meet artists from across the country with handmade works of paintings, sculptures, photography, jewelry and more.
■ Visit ParagonFestivals.com.

FEBRUARY

**FEB. 8
SUPERHERO FUN RUN/5K**
Bridge a Life's annual Superhero Fun Run and 5K supports children in the local community. The kids' fun run begins at 8:30 a.m., and the 5K begins at 9 a.m. at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle,

Sarasota. Registration is \$30 for the 5K and \$15 for the fun run. Superhero costumes are encouraged.
■ Visit BridgeALife.com.

**FEB. 15
MAIN STREET MARKET**
From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Lakewood Ranch Main Street, more than 70 vendors will be out with food, beverages, retail and more at the boutique market, hosted by Main Street Market LWR.
■ Visit MainStreetMarketLWR.com.

**FEB. 15 TO MARCH 9
CIRCUS SARASOTA**
Circus Arts Conservatory presents its Circus Sarasota 2025 show. See award-winning international artists perform under an iconic red and white Big Top at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Tickets are \$32-\$75; parking is \$10.
■ Visit CircusArts.org.

Circus Sarasota 2025 begins Feb. 15.



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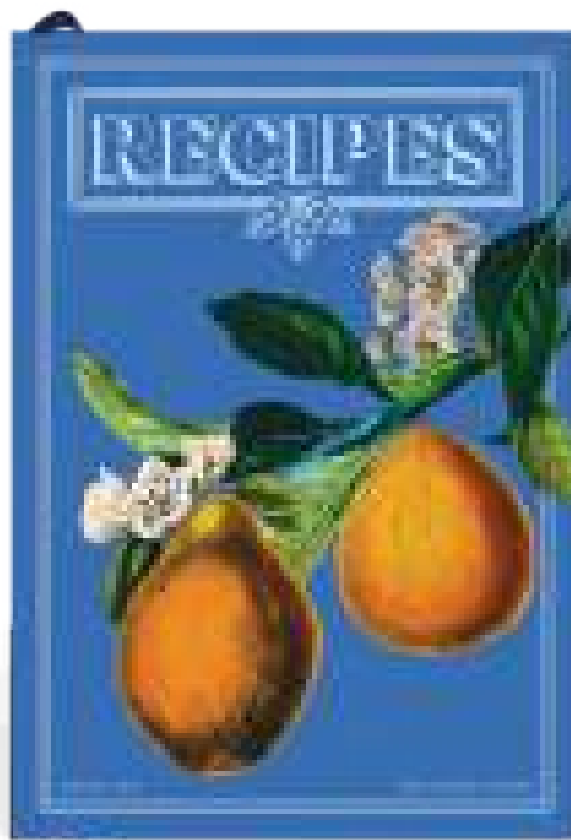
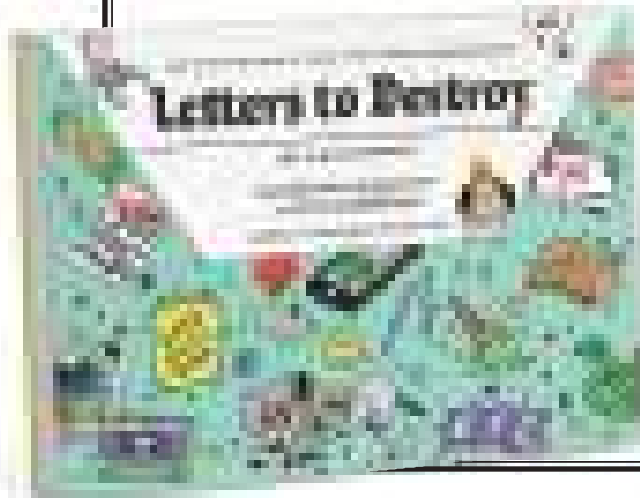
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BY KELLY FORES | CONTRIBUTOR

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Continued on Page 64

Continued from Page 63

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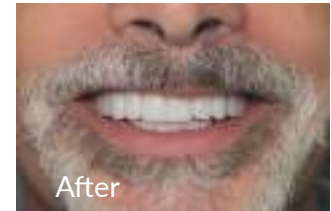
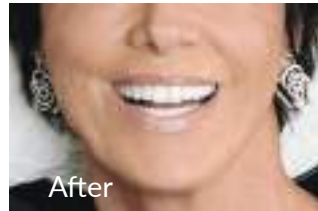
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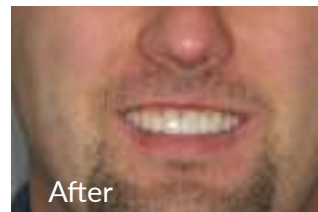
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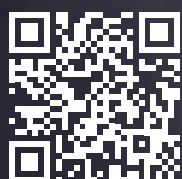
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A DOG'S LIFE

From gourmet treats to holistic care, explore the best local resources for your canine companions.

BY SU BYRON AND MARTY FUGATE
CONTRIBUTORS

Lakewood Ranch is a welcoming community of friendly neighbors. Our canine companions are some of the friendliest neighbors. The humans in their pack can pamper and care for them with a variety of locally sourced services and experiences. The Ranch's multiple options include top-notch daycare and safe boarding, specialized dog-walking and babysitting services, holistic pet stores, gourmet bakeries and stylish boutiques. Here are a few canine-friendly spots you'll find close to home. They're all locally owned and operated.

Photos by Lori Sax
Glad Wags marketing coordinator/field manager Csenge Csicsek with her dog, Uka; Glad Wags founder Chris Cooper with her dog, Ivy; and office/field manager Amanda Gunter with her dog, Bodhi.





gladwags

gladwags

Pet Supplies and Services

DOGPerfect's services include professional grooming, self-serve dog washing, dog training and an area where pups can exercise, socialize and play with each other. Its pros have a clear definition of pooch perfection: Helping you and your dog sustain a life-long relationship by providing healthy, nutritional products and nurturing services. *11605 S.R. 70, Lakewood Ranch; 941-803-4496; DogPerfect.com.*

Holistic for Pets offers a curated selection of healthy and holistic food, treats, supplements and supplies for your furry friends. Their encyclopedic expertise is free. *5770 Ranch Lake Blvd., No. 132, Bradenton; 941-753-7297; HolisticForPets.com.*

Three Dog Bakery & Grooming delights pups with freshly baked treats and specialty items. Its tasty options include celebration cakes, pastries and cookies. While pet parents can't eat them, with clever names like "Boxer Brownies" and "Let 'Em Eat Carrot Cake," they'll still make you smile. You'll also find a vast selection of unique toys, rawhides, chews, grooming essentials and the latest in four-legged fashion accessories. *Cooper Creek Blvd., University Park; 941-355-0399; ThreeDogStores.com.*

Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming serves up high-quality food, fresh-baked treats, and health and wellness supplies. Thanks to its grooming services, your canine companion can also keep up appearances. *8314 Market St., Lakewood Ranch; 941-907-9111; WoofGangBakeryLWR.com.*



SPOTLIGHT: HOLISTIC FOR PETS

Holistic for Pets keeps your furry friends thriving and satisfied with a curated selection of foods, treats, supplements and supplies. Its friendly, professional team will provide personalized nutrition advice based on your pet's breed, age, and health needs, and can assist with special orders and offers. Its mission? To empower you to make informed choices that enhance your pet's well-being and longevity. Store owners Val Clows and Jennifer Guevin, along with nutrition director and store manager Gregory Malek-Jones, recently shared their expertise with us.

Visit: HolisticForPets.com.

RAW AND REAL

According to Jennifer Guevin, a raw or gently cooked diet is the most natural and biologically suited for your dog or cat. "Whatever stage of life your pet is in, a raw diet is always a fantastic choice," she says. Holistic for Pets' food selections are AAFCO-approved and provide complete and balanced diets for all life stages.

HERBS AND MORE

The shop's spectrum of herbs and botanicals spans the traditions of

East and West. They also provide CBD, probiotics, gut health remedies, and fish oil. "We love to customize supplements to meet the specific needs of each animal, ensuring they receive the best support for their unique health conditions," says Guevin.

SNACK SMARTS

"When choosing treats, the more minimal the ingredient list is, and the least amount of filler is always ideal," offers Gregory Malek-Jones. "Freeze-dried treats are a phenomenal option."

CHEW ON THIS

Dogs and cats thrive on raw meaty bones without fillers, which promote dental health, nutrition and mental stimulation, says Guevin. "Just remember — never cook bones, as they can splinter and pose a choking hazard." She advises against rawhide, which is indigestible and often contains chemicals, and recommends digestible chews like dried sweet potatoes, yak cheese, collagen sticks, and bully sticks, which also entertain pets for hours.

Holistic for Pets' co-owner Jennifer Guevin says the store's mission is to empower pet parents to make informed choices that enhance their pet's well-being and longevity.



Guevin with nutrition director and store manager Gregory Malek-Jones.



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Woofdorf Astoria is a luxe pet resort and spa, offering doggie daycare, spacious boarding suites, indoor and outdoor play areas, group play sessions and grooming. The furry friends focus on fun; the highly trained staff keeps an eye on safety. *10615 Technology Terrace, No. 104, Bradenton; 941-203-4036; WoofdorfLakewoodRanch.com.*

Pet Paradise provides heavenly boarding, daycare, veterinary care,

training and grooming services for your furry family members. Its state-of-the-art facility includes synthetic grass play areas, auto-fill water bowls, shaded yards and misting stations. *10411 Portal Crossing, Bradenton; 941-209-1021; PetParadise.com.*

Glad Wags gets tails wagging with dependable, in-home pet care. Its services include dog-walking, cat sitting, pet-related errands and home watching. Thanks to a user-friendly mobile app, clients get photos and detailed reports of every visit. *GladWags.com.*

Csenge Csicsek wears several hats at Glad Wags. She serves as field manager, trains and introduces sitters to the pets, and is also the company's social media coordinator, blog writer and website techie.



SPOTLIGHT: GLAD WAGS

Chris Cooper, CPPS, and a PSI-certified professional pet sitter, is the passionate founder and owner of Glad Wags. Her firm caters to pets of all breeds, sizes and ages, including those with special needs. Its services include dog-walking, pet-sitting and home-watching. After each pet visit, Glad Wags provides pet owners with detailed reports and photos via a user-friendly mobile app. Cooper, who transitioned from a rewarding career in healthcare, found her true calling in this joyful endeavor, driven by her love for animals and their therapeutic energy. **Visit: GladWags.com.**



Chris Cooper is a PSI-certified professional pet sitter and the passionate owner of Glad Wags.

PAWSITIVE ENERGY: FROM PATIENTS TO PUPS

Cooper says her previous career in healthcare was fulfilling, but still left

Continued on Page 76

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Continued on Page 76

her wanting more. "I longed to be closer to my dogs and spend time with animals," she says. "I love their calm, positive energy and find it therapeutic to be around them. I named my company 'Glad Wags' because I often say those two words to my pups when they greet me at the door with wiggly butts and wagging tails. I'd say, 'Aww...look at those glad wags' because they're so glad to see me."

SAFE AND COMPASSIONATE CARE

"Ensuring the safety and well-being of the animals in our care starts with hiring genuine animal lovers who fit our company culture," says Cooper, adding that they "must absorb a lot of information and work independently. If any of these components are missing, it just doesn't work." Glad Wags thoroughly trains each employee, introducing them to its policies and pet portal and describing situations they may encounter. "Once trained, they must exhibit confidence and calm

energy. Pet visits are more than just walking a dog; dogs are intuitive, and their safety relies on a solid relationship with the sitter. As a former pet client, I keep in mind, 'What would I want/expect from a pet sitter?'"

TIPS FOR FINDING THE PERFECT SITTER

According to Cooper, choosing a professional pet-sitting company that employs staff rather than independent contractors is a must. She advises owners to look for a company with a solid reputation that can provide current liability and bonding insurance, a worker's compensation policy and background checks for each sitter. "Ask about their hiring practices and training methods," she says. "When I interview candidates, I consider, 'Would I want this person to watch my pet?' If there's any hesitation, it's a no. All our employees receive the same training, ensuring they represent Glad Wags professionally and give clients peace of mind while they're away."



Photo by Lori Sax

FUN FACT

"The paw print in the logo is an actual impression of my dog's paw, captured from a photo taken in the sand at the beach."

Amanda Gunter's many roles include office/field manager, scheduler and marketing coordinator.

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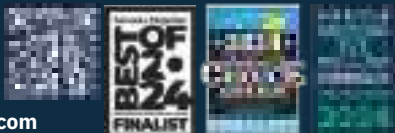


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Photo by Lori Sax

Nate's Honor Animal Rescue provides a loving sanctuary for rescued dogs and cats awaiting their forever homes.

Adoption Services



Donte's Den keeps its pups healthy and happy with essential vaccinations, spaying or neutering, in-depth health checks and plenty of love and attention. Its Joyful Dogs Adoption Program ensures that pooches and prospective parents are made for each other. Donte's also offers obedience training and lifetime care for dogs who can no longer live with their owners. *6801 283rd St. E., Myakka City; 941-219-3730; DontesDen.org.*

Humane Society at Lakewood Ranch provides a safe haven for companion animals in need. Its dedicated team offers medical care, vaccinations and microchipping. *6920 Gopher Hill Road, Myakka City; 941-361-1071, HSLWR.org.*

Nate's Honor Animal Rescue is a loving sanctuary for rescued dogs and cats. While awaiting their new forever homes, they feel right at home at this eight-acre no-kill shelter and adoption facility. *4951 Lorraine Road, Bradenton; NatesHonorAnimalRescue.org.*

SPOTLIGHT: NATE'S HONOR RESCUE

Nate's Honor Animal Rescue is a loving haven for rescued dogs and cats awaiting their forever homes. Since 2008, it's been committed to rescuing neglected, abandoned and mistreated animals in a supportive environment that nurtures bonds between pets and their future families. Located on an eight-acre no-kill shelter and adoption facility, the Nate's team has saved thousands of at-risk animals each year. Its mission is to change perceptions of animal sheltering by providing ongoing education, training and resources to ensure pets thrive in their new homes. Julie Fanning, Nate's board president, shared some tidbits about the organization's impactful work, the challenges it faces, and how the community can get involved to support these

Continued on Page 80

BY THE NUMBERS

- 1,258 total adoptions in 2023 (dogs and cats)
- 60 dogs available for adoption at time of writing
- 34 average days for harbored dogs
- 18 average days for harbored cats





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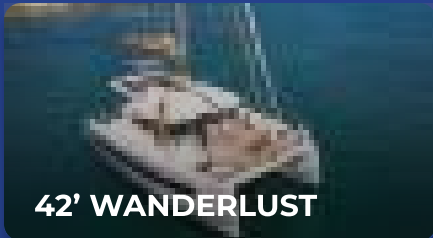
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Continued from Page 78

deserving animals. Visit: [NatesHonorAnimalRescue.org](https://www.NatesHonorAnimalRescue.org).

CANINE COTTAGE COMFORTS

“Our most unique feature is our dog cottages, which are hurricane-proof, built green, fully insulated, with solar-powered attic fans inside, and an indoor/outdoor design so the dogs can go in and out,” says Julie Fanning. “This cottage set-up allows the dogs to be housed in smaller groups, with four to six kennels in each, for a quieter, less stressful environment while at the shelter. This allows dogs to better show off their personalities to potential adopters.”

SPACE TO THRIVE

Nate’s recently completed a 4,300-square-foot behavior and training center that will serve as a resource for current pet owners in the community. It also

Nate’s recently completed a 4,300-square-foot behavior and training center for local pet owners, along with a 5,000-square-foot intake center for housing and treating sick and special needs animals. Their standout feature is its hurricane-proof dog cottages (inset), built green, fully insulated with solar-powered attic fans and designed for indoor/outdoor access.

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built a 5,000-square-foot intake center that will allow the sanctuary to house and treat sick and special needs animals.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

“Adoptions have significantly decreased this year as we feel the impact of the economy,” says Fanning. “As the cost of pet care has gone up, families have opted not to add a new furry family member to their costs. We’ve also seen an increased number of surrender applications as people lose their jobs, can’t afford animal care, and more.” As of today, Nate’s has had 954 adoptions in 2024. The shelter has been at full capacity throughout the year, with an average of 150 animals in its care.

TOP ON WISH LIST?

“Adoptions and foster parents!” says Fanning. “With animal agencies everywhere at full capacity, and recent storms devastating nearby communities, displaced animals and shelters without power are asking for help from us and other local shelters to take in their animals. In order to help, we need to continue clearing our kennels to make space. We are always looking for fosters to join our list so we can ask for help when we need it. Foster homes help us through storms, house dogs while our shelter is full, house dogs who need special attention or care and more.”

JOURNEY HOME CAMPAIGN

Nate’s is in the final stretch of its \$16 million “Journey Home” capital campaign, an expansion that will double its dog shelter capacity and create a “kitty city.” Its 23,000-square-foot welcome and adoption center is nearly complete, featuring a cat wing, more dog kennels, a community event center and a children’s education room. A key part of the final phase is completing a veterinary clinic, which will provide affordable community care and onsite services for shelter animals. Journey Home is set to wrap up in early 2025.



Courtesy photo

The final phase of Nate’s Journey Home campaign includes a veterinary clinic, enabling the facility to offer affordable care to the community and onsite services for shelter animals.

Pet Hospitals and Clinics

Animal Hospital at Lakewood Ranch is a full-service veterinary facility staffed by dedicated professionals. They’ve been committed to the health and well-being of pets since 2013. *9115 58th Dr. E., Lakewood Ranch; 941-751-0101; LakewoodRanchAH.com.*

University Animal Clinic provides first-class veterinary and urgent care for dogs, cats and pets of all descriptions, including exotic animals like reptiles and amphibians. *8239 Cooper Creek Blvd., Bradenton; 941-253-5218; TheUniversityAnimalClinic.com.*

Veterinary Medical Center at LWR delivers a full range of veterinary care at its fully equipped facility. *15205 Garnet Trail, Bradenton; 941-739-1800; LakewoodRanchVet.com.*

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The reserve provides a safe, semi-natural habitat where lemurs live in family groups and maintain social structures like in the wild.

A CONSPIRACY OF LEMURS

The Lemur Conservation Foundation has been protecting and conserving lemurs – among the most primitive of primates – for nearly 30 years.

BY EMILY LEINFUSS | CONTRIBUTOR



Photo by Emily Leinfuss
The red ruffed
lemur is one of the
most endangered
primates of
Madagascar.



Photo by Lori Sax

Deborah Robbins Millman is the executive director of the Lemur Conservation Foundation. Her loyal companion, Gryff, a Brussels Griffon, is usually by her side.

Just outside of Myakka City, about a 35-minute drive from south Lakewood Ranch, the Lemur Conservation Foundation (LCF) has been quietly protecting and conserving lemurs — among the most primitive of primates — for nearly 30 years.

Today, 54 lemurs live at this 130-acre reserve, tucked into a deep Florida forest ecosystem. They range from babies born this year to Yuengling – a 32-year-old ring-tailed lemur who has fathered 10 children, leading to 45 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

“Those babies get away with everything,” says curator Meredith Hinton, a young zoologist who’s showing me around, along with Deborah Robbins

Millman, LCF’s executive director. “They could be jumping on the dad’s head, and he just takes it.”

Hinton lives on the LCF campus in a cracker-style cabin with her rescued pit bull mix Toph. As she describes the behaviors of Furry and Fuzzy — two red ruffed lemur twins born April 20 to Zazabe and Ranomamy — it’s clear she’s intimately familiar with every



Courtesy photo

32-year-old ring-tailed lemur Yuengling

Continued on Page 86

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Photos by Lori Sax

Continued from Page 84

lemur denizen here. She knows their names, lineages, personalities and proclivities.

As we navigate a tour around LCF's southern enclosure, Hinton points to a medium-sized red ruffed lemur and explains that this "teenage" daughter is rallying to dominate her father. It's no surprise, given that two of the five lemur species at the reserve — the critically endangered red ruffed lemurs and the endangered ring-tailed lemurs — live in a matriarchal hierarchy. In some lemur social groups, often called "conspiracies," the females hold the highest rank. For those conspiracies, females are in charge, controlling access to resources such as food and the best spots in the forest enclosures they call home. Three more species of lemurs are on

There are more than 110 species of lemur and 98 percent are threatened with extinction, including the critically endangered red ruffed lemur.

“
Despite LCF's achievements, over 95% of lemur species remain at risk, making its mission to protect them more vital than ever.

Continued on Page 88

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Continued from Page 86

site: mongoose (critically endangered), collared brown (endangered) and common brown (vulnerable).

"There are more than 110 species of lemur and 98% are threatened with extinction," Millman says, explaining that some may even disappear in the next generation. "It's critical that we continue to expand our efforts to save these irreplaceable animals."

These two dedicated women, along with a small, full-time staff here and in Madagascar, keep the LCF and its primate residents alive and protected. The reserve offers a safe, semi-natural environment where the lemurs can live in family groups and maintain social structures as they would in the wild, as much as possible. One notable exception is that each has an air-conditioned space within.

FROM MADAGASCAR TO FLORIDA AND BACK

LCF was founded in 1996 by Penelope Bodry-Sanders, who recognized the urgent need to protect lemurs from extinction in their native Madagascar. From the outset, she pursued a two-fold mission: to protect endangered lemurs at the Lemur Conservation Foundation while developing programs in Madagascar aimed at preserving natural habitats, combating deforestation and improving the lives of local communities.

Today, LCF is a globally recognized leader in lemur conservation. Millman has led the organization since 2020, continuing Bodry-Sanders' legacy of education, conservation and scientific research.

"Our staff in Madagascar includes a program manager and community health and forest monitoring managers," Millman explains. "We take a holistic approach to conservation, recognizing that protecting lemurs goes hand in hand with supporting the Malagasy people," she adds.

The overall goal is to conserve and protect lemurs, both in their natural habitat, and through breeding in accordance with the Species Survival Program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). LCF is also actively involved in reforestation, planting thousands of trees and introducing fuel-efficient stoves to reduce deforestation.

INTERESTING TIDBITS

ART: The LCF strongly believes in building awareness through art. Its collection includes lemur-themed work by renowned local artists, including Jean Blackburn and Craig Rubadoux.

BOOKS: Lemur Conservation Foundation founder Penelope Bodry-Sanders' memoir, "A Conspiracy of Lemurs," explores how the author first met an orange-eyed lemur and became the species' champion, starting at age 49. Stay tuned for a new book by Bodry-Sanders.

NAMING: The LCF staff member who ends up watching over a lemur giving birth gets to name the babies. Hence, some siblings are named after beers and others, like Shiraz and Merlot, share names with varieties of red wine.

MEDICAL CARE: Dr. David Holifield, chief of staff and one of the founders of the Animal ER, in University Park, has served as staff veterinarian for the Lemur Conservation Foundation since inception.

SUPPORT: One Lakewood Ranch-based supporter collects hundreds of empty paper towel rolls to give to the LCF. They are used to make toys and puzzles that add to lemur enrichment. LCF also accepts online donations.



Photo by Lori Sax

More than 50 lemurs live at this 130-acre reserve, tucked into a deep Florida forest ecosystem.

Continued on Page 90

Millman is especially proud of LCF's Ako Conservation Education Program, which uses storytelling and art to educate and engage Malagasy children in environmental conservation. The late Dr. Alison Jolly, a key figure in lemur conservation, created the Ako program to inspire future generations to protect Madagascar's unique biodiversity.

To date, Ako has produced six children's books ("The Ako Series") written by Jolly and illustrated by Deborah Ross, plus posters, lesson plans and other materials for educators. LCF continues to support this mission, fostering a love for lemurs in both local communities and international audiences.

NEW HEIGHTS OF CONSERVATION

In 2016, LCF launched an expansion plan for the Myakka reserve. A major highlight of this initiative is the creation of the seven-acre Elizabeth Moore Lemur Forest, which allows le-

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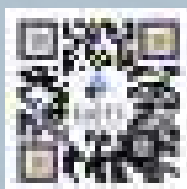
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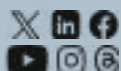
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Photo by Lori Sax

Continued from Page 89

murs more space to roam freely.

“We’re waiting for a permit to build a third lemur building, which is currently in the final review stage with the county,” says Millman, adding that strategic plans and goals are reviewed regularly to adapt to changing dynamics.

LCF is also making significant strides in lemur conservation at a broader level. “We now house 25 percent of all mongoose lemurs in AZA facilities,” she notes. This achievement underscores LCF’s role in maintaining genetic diversity for endangered species and highlights the foundation’s contribution to global conservation efforts.

WORLD LEMUR FESTIVAL

In recent years, LCF has expanded its reach, and it shows. “I’ve seen a greater awareness for the plight of lemurs since I became executive director,” says Millman. “Our online outreach, through events like the World Lemur Festival, social media, and e-blasts, has brought

Curious and captivating, this lemur shows off its iconic markings and expressive eyes—a true symbol of Madagascar’s unique wildlife.

“
Today, 54 lemurs live at this 130-acre reserve, tucked into a deep Florida forest ecosystem.

Continued on Page 91



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Continued from Page 90

international attention to our cause.”

One example of how the organization engages the global community and raises awareness and support for lemur conservation is through its annual World Lemur Festival. This year, the seventh annual event was Oct. 21-25. Nina Garza from Spring, Texas, was named the Lemur Conservation Foundation’s 2024 Artist of the Year. Her artwork, “Plea from the Shadows,” and other winners can be seen on the organization’s website.

Despite LCF’s achievements, lemurs remain one of the most endangered mammal groups in the world. More than 95 of lemur species are still at risk due to habitat loss, hunting, and the illegal pet trade, making LCF’s mission — to preserve and conserve lemurs through managed breeding, research, education and art — more important than ever.

After all, as Millman says, “It’s up to us to save lemurs from extinction.”



“Yuengling” by Jean Blackburn (above) and art by Tracey Walder (right)

WORKS FROM THE LEMUR CONSERVATION FOUNDATION’S ART COLLECTION



“Red Lemurs,” by Katharine L McKenna



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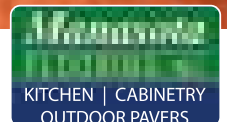


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Swinging in Style

The Golf Society redefines the game of golf by offering a high-tech, indoor golf experience where members enjoy lifelike golf play on renowned courses.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

Photos by Lori Sax
Alistair Weatherstone
and Jeremy Finney
created a high-tech,
indoor golf experience
where members enjoy
lifelike golf played on
renowned courses.



Jeremy Finney squares up his driver, looks out over the choppy hills of St. Andrews Links golf course, shakes his shoulders, takes a smooth swing and cleanly strikes the golf ball. The thwack of the club hitting the little white orb is immediately followed by a loud pop. The ball has been abruptly stopped by a screen — a 15-by-10-foot screen that covers an entire wall and projects a simulacrum of the legendary Scottish golf course.

Finney is demonstrating what it's like to hit off the tee at The Golf Society, Manatee County's newest golf simulator experience. Well, it's only a partial demo. On this afternoon in early September, the suite is short a key component — the Foresight Falcon ball tracker, a high-tech device that allows a player to watch the ball's flight path, see where it lands, and access a host of metrics such as ball speed, spin and apex, and clubhead speed. Without the tracker, we're left with thwack pop thwack pop. We have no idea where, or if, our shots have landed on one of St. Andrews' hallowed fairways. Not to say that it isn't fun.

The Golf Society is a private club that provides members 24-hour access to its three golf simulators, which are housed in separate, closed-door rooms shrouded in flat black with the exception of a big-screen TV on a side wall. The 2,000-square-foot space is located in a light industrial park just west of Lakewood Ranch Boulevard at 44th Avenue East in Bradenton. At the time of my visit in September, Finney said he expected The Golf Society to open on Dec. 1.

The Golf Society experience is meant for people wanting to play golf but who are finding it harder to get on to local courses, which are becoming



increasingly privatized and expensive. It's meant for serious golfers who want to work on the finer points of their game and walk away with useful data. It's meant for duffers who enjoy playing but aren't comfortable spraying balls all over the fairway while impatient golfers wait on carts for them to free up the hole. It's meant for couples who have been out to dinner, enjoyed a couple of adult beverages and don't want the evening to end. It's meant for people who find playing golf during the summer on Florida's Gulf Coast just

too damn hot.

Members use a smartphone app to schedule access and let themselves inside the space. They work a touch screen to choose from dozens of renowned golf courses on which to play. Each member is afforded 90 minutes of simulated golf per day. Their rounds can range from playing an entire 18 holes — there are no cart rides, no looking for balls — to repeatedly hitting a wedge onto the green from 80 yards out. The Golf Society provides the balls. Members can't use their own.



Because everything is done via technology, The Golf Society will have no employees. “The biggest pain in all of my businesses are the staff, not the customers,” says Alistair Weatherstone, the project’s primary investor who has built and sold a variety of companies over the years.

No on-site staff? What if a player shanks a few shots and decides to take it out on the walls? Not a good idea. The space is outfitted with mul-

Continued on Page 98

Jeremy Finney practices his swing on the choppy hills of St. Andrews Links golf course.



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Continued from Page 97

tiple cameras and sound sensors, and uses facial-recognition software, all of which discourages bad behavior. But the partners aren't terribly concerned about those kinds of problems. With memberships costing \$200 to \$300 a month, they're targeting an upscale crowd, most of whom will use the Golf Society as an adjunct to regular outdoor play.

Playing simulated golf is novel, fun and can be useful. But, Finney says, "granted, you can't replace being outside on a beautiful day on a beautiful course," Finney says. "You just can't do it."

A FOURSOME COMES TOGETHER

It all began with four neighbors who live within a chip shot of each other in the Reserve at Twin Rivers in Parrish. Dannehl has a golf room set up in his garage that includes a simulator. People would pop in to hit a few balls, maybe get into a friendly contest. It occurred to Dannehl, who runs his own consulting firm, that the simulator might have a commercial application.

Doug Patterson, a sales rep for Panasonic and a golf coach at Parrish High School, was a frequent visitor to the golf room. The Patterson and Dannehl families had become close. Their sons were teammates on the Parrish High golf team; they now room together at Florida Gulf Coast University and are both in the Professional Golf Management program.

Meanwhile, Finney, whose wife is from England, befriended Weatherstone, a Brit who spends most of the year overseas. He has homes in Cambridge, England and Marbella, Spain, and recently sold one in Dubai. The Finneys and Weatherstones bonded over dinners and a fondness for bourbon. All four play golf, but on a recreational basis.

Dannehl and Patterson came up with a business plan and brought it to Finney, who was between jobs at the time. He now works for Aflac in risk management. "So, I had some time, and some extra money," he says. But to create the experience they envisioned, the partners in waiting needed more capital, and they had a good idea where



to turn. "I had a relationship and a trust factor with Alistair, and we felt that I was the best one to approach him," Finney says.

Weatherstone was receptive. "There were a number of things that got me interested," he says. "They came to me with a business plan, not just an idea. They wanted a fairly significant amount of money. I was insistent that the other partners have some skin in the game. I was fairly direct about what I expected them to put in as a minimum [in dollars]."

Then, Dannehl says, "We all got together in my garage, hit some balls and put together a plan going forward. We discussed if we thought it was viable,

figured out how we can make it work, and came to an agreement."

They found the space, which is situated around the back of a large building. The location is not sexy, but it is smack in the middle of a cluster of upscale neighborhoods and a vast population of golfers. Because it's a private club, there was no need for signage other than The Golf Society logo on the door.

Rather than hire a contractor, Finney, who has "an affinity for building things," took the lead in design and construction. Starting in April, Finney, Dannehl and Patterson spent

Alistair Weatherstone is The Golf Society's primary investor.

Continued on Page 100

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Continued from Page 98

long days building out The Golf Society space. “Definitely many hot, long days,” Dannehl says. “We did much of the work prior to AC being installed so that made for some less-than-desirable conditions to work in. We did have to contract some things.”

Weatherstone appreciates their efforts. “These guys have given three or four months of blood, sweat and tears, working every day to get it ready,” he says. The foursome held weekly team meetings to discuss progress.

The Golf Society partners admit that their working relationship has hit a few bumps. “When you’re building your first business, it’s easy to think, ‘Well, you know, we’ve got all this money in the bank,’” Weatherstone says. “I know from experience that it goes very, very quickly, and you always spend more than you think you’re going to.”

Then there was the matter of the couch. Dannehl wanted to splurge on one for the lounge in the front of the Golf Society space. “Why spend five grand on a couch when a thousand will

do?” Weatherstone says. “I’d rather spend money on the best technology possible. And if in six months the place is full and we all hate the couch, you can buy whatever couch you want.”

The partners agree that these tense moments were simply part of what happens when four new partners embark on a new business. There are no hard feelings. No fractured relationships.

PLAYING THROUGH / MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

With the build-out all but complete, building a membership base is now job one. The partners say there’s been considerable interest. “One doctor called, saying, ‘Hey, are you guys open?’” Finney recounts. “We weren’t, but he liked the concept and bought a membership right then and there. Scott went down at six in the morning and showed him the space, even though we weren’t open.”

The partners invested in a portable simulator to showcase at events. They brought it out to a charity gathering held by Elite Motor Works of Lake-

wood Ranch — a high-end mechanic shop just a 7-iron shot away from The Golf Society — and set it up amid Ferraris and other European sports cars. Attendees competed in closest-to-the-pin and longest-drive challenges. “It was a smash hit,” Finney says. “A lot of business owners were there and asked about having our simulator for their events.”

Dannehl and Patterson are the golf-centric partners. Dannehl already has plans for merchandising and creating partnerships with other golf-related businesses. Weatherstone and Finney are eyeing potential expansion into Fort Myers and perhaps Tampa if the mothership takes flight.

The Golf Society foursome expects considerable membership growth to result from making personal connections. “Scott is more introverted, so from the get-go, he was like, ‘You’re gonna be the guy going to parties and rubbing elbows because it’s just not my thing,’” Finney says. “So, I was like — Yeah, that’s fine with me.”

Find out more: TheGolfSociety.com



When you're building your first business, it's easy to think, 'Well, you know, we've got all this money in the bank. I know from experience that it goes very, very quickly, and you always spend more than you think you're going to.'

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SPOTLIGHTING LIFE ON THE RANCH

A state-of-the-art model home offers a master class in contemporary design. **PAGE 106**



A soaring ceiling spans the stylish living room, with its blend of new and mid-century modern design elements.

MODEL

John Cannon's farmhouse modern model home, Pindari, is in Wild Blue at Waterside.



Photos by Jimmy White, Courtesy of John Cannon Homes and Clive Daniel Home
The home's bold exterior design, classified as "farmhouse modern," offers a mix of bold elements softened by wood accents.

BEHAVIOR

BY ROBERT PLUNKET | CONTRIBUTOR





The expansive dining area adjoins the kitchen, with its over-scaled windows that bring in the Florida greenery.

The model home plays an important role in the life of Lakewood Ranch. True, the landscaping, the walking trails and the nature preserves are great but for would-be newcomers, it's the moment they enter the such-and-such model and think "I want to live here" that seals the deal. A good model home offers the glimpse of a glorious Florida future.

To learn more about their magic, we got a tour of a model home by John Cannon called the Pindari. It's in Wild Blue at Waterside, one of the Ranch's newer — and more upscale — communities, located off Lorraine Road in Sarasota County.

The Pindari has the look of something new, what the builder describes as an "edgy energy." The technical term for its architectural style is "farmhouse modern," meaning bold geometric lines with rustic and industrial detailing. It's quite a change from the Spanish and coastal styles that have dominated in years past.

The task of making the place a showstopper was given to Quentin MacDonald (known as Q) and Kelli Smith, designers for Clive Daniel Home, the high-end furniture store and design consultants. Their work starts even before the house is built. "We do our best to pull inspiration from the plans and ideas of the builder," Q explains.

Continued on Page 110



A good model home offers the glimpse of a glorious Florida future.



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Continued from Page 108

One step inside the Pindari and you can see how well the team has succeeded. The great room is a grand, soaring space, with a ceiling that features the very farmhouse-looking “scissor trusses.” Such a dramatic effect can easily dominate a space. The trick, Q explains, is to balance the energy. “You want to make sure the energy is even across the space. You want to create a warm, enveloping feeling.”

Q and Kelli have accomplished this with a fireplace wall of charcoal grey brick and warm wood accents. Choosing furniture is another crucial task.

“Working as a team is fun,” Q explains. “Everyone gets to contribute ideas. We hash out each one to see what works best in the greater scheme.”

Everything is taken into consideration: the finishes, the fabrics, all must contribute to the total effect. Scale is also important. “Each piece must fit correctly.” It’s a time-consuming task, with many changes along the way.



Continued on Page 112 A dramatic wall of color adds drama to the home’s family room, overlooking the lake view.

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“Embrace Florida!” Q likes to tell clients moving here from up north and the Pindari model is the perfect example of what he means.



Photo by Lori Sax

Quentin MacDonald (known as Q) and Kelli Smith, designers for Clive Daniel Home

Continued from Page 110

What about the “wow factor” that many of us feel when entering a well-done model home? Q and Kelli see it a little differently. “We talk about the concept of ‘memory points,’” says Q. “After someone has walked out the front door, what aspects of the home will they remember? We want to make sure the conversation continues to be about this home after you’ve walked the whole model row.”

With the Pindari model, it may well be a lengthy conversation. There’s the drama of the modern aesthetic, of course, and the view out to the pool and beyond that, the lake. There is also a hidden door to the butler’s pantry that many visitors find intriguing, and a glass-enclosed wine room with its own temperature system. But the most intriguing feature that most will remember is the glass-enclosed office.



Continued on Page 114

A stand-alone soaking tub anchors the home’s master bath, complete with gold accents and a striking chandelier.

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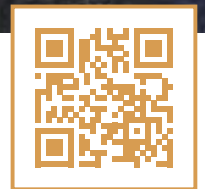
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Continued from Page 112

Situated to the left of the entry, it looks onto the living area and manages to be both public and private at the same time — part of the action but separate enough for working at home or just enjoying a book from the custom shelves. Its warm color scheme adds to the mood.

Color plays a large part in the home's design. "Color is crucial," Q explains. "It makes a space feel cohesive. We start with the main living area, then each room after that becomes a 'child' to the original colorway." Again, the goal is to make the home feel cohesive without being repetitious.

Color also plays an important part in Q's favorite space in the home, the primary bedroom. It's not the typical beachy look of pastels but rather something more natural, almost pastoral. The ceiling is soaring and vaulted, with box beams, and its color, a very subdued shade of green, helps unite the indoor space with the outside, visible



Continued on Page 116 Lofty and serene, the home's primary bedroom overlooks a shaded pergola with firepit and a view out to the lake.

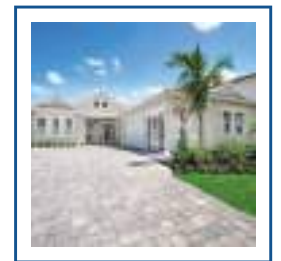
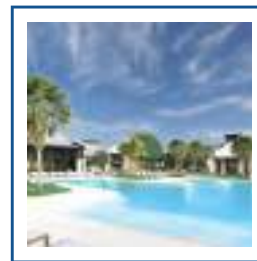
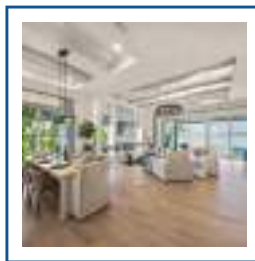


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Continued from Page 114



through the windows and sliding glass doors. Soft browns and greys are used as accent tones. “It perfectly combines privacy and intimacy,” says Q.

“Embrace Florida!” Q likes to tell clients moving here from up north, and the Pindari model is the perfect example of what he means. There’s a large outdoor living area (almost 1,000 square feet) with a dramatic, almost black-hued pool and spa. You’ll also find an outdoor kitchen and five or six different seating and dining areas. The most notable is the mini pavilion outside the primary bedroom, with its louvered roof and fire pit. “The combination of stylish indoor and functional outdoor is something we do so well here in Florida.”

The Pindari has many details, both big and small, that will spark the imagination of the visitor, but Q stresses the three most important takeaways. The first is scale. Before you buy a piece of furniture, analyze how it fits into your




Continued on Page 118 The home's expansive outdoor living area blends seamlessly with the indoor spaces, creating a perfect Florida lifestyle.



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Continued from Page 116

general scheme. The second is color. In a well-designed home, the main living area will tell a color story that will be repeated, refined, and complemented in the other areas of the home. The third? Make it personal. A model, however great, doesn't become a home until a family moves in.

"Never mind the rules or what your neighbor's house looks like," Q says. "And never mind what we put in the model! I love seeing personal items displayed. Your art should be an intimate reflection of your interests. Colors should be colors you love, colors that spark the kind of feelings you enjoy."

Whether designing a \$5 million model or working with a private client, Q says he always keeps one thing in mind. "Lots of people can make a room pretty. My goal is to make your room work for you."

The intriguing study, with its warm accents and surprising glass walls, creates a space separate from yet part of the main living area.

The Pindari has the look of something new — what the builder describes as an "edgy energy."

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art and about

Hot Tickets

Our arts and performance season has officially begun. Here's a look at five standout events.

BY SU BYRON
MANAGING EDITOR

THE PASSING PARADE

Photographer E.A. Kahane's "Come Join the Parade!" documents 25 years of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade at Art Center Sarasota. Kahane's photo series captures the mercurial magic from a unique vantage point — her third-floor window. Prancing ponies, dazzling floats and balloon incarnations of Underdog, Superman, and Snoopy — all the usual (and unusual) suspects are here. It's an intimate glimpse of this beloved New York City tradition. Kahane's work can be found in prestigious collections, international exhibitions — and Art Center Sarasota, for a brief time only. Don't let her photographic parade pass you by. *December 5-January 18. Visit ArtSarasota.org.*



E.A. Kahane's "Come Join the Parade!" documents 25 years of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade at Art Center Sarasota.

PUTTING UP "FENCES"

August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Fences" explores themes of family, racial identity and personal achievement. The protagonist, Troy Maxson, is a former Negro League baseball player, whose dreams were dashed when he became too old to play professionally in the years after Jackie Robinson integrated baseball. Now a garbage collector, Troy tries to protect his son, Co'ry, from similar disappointment — but he crushes his son's dreams of football glory instead. Troy's bottled-up bitterness ultimately drives a wedge between himself and his family but, for all his flaws, he's still an epic hero. Director Jim Weaver will reveal the tragic missteps of Troy's journey as he brings Wilson's words to life. *January 5-February 23 at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe. Visit Westcoast-BlackTheatre.org.*

AN EVENING WITH YO-YO MA

Talk about creating memorable experiences. Sarasota Concert Association's "An Evening with Yo-Yo Ma" features the legendary cellist entrancing area audiences with an evening of music and conversation. The program includes selections of Ma's favorite works, including Dvorák's Cello Concerto and Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 in G Minor. Between performances, Ma will reflect on his life in music and explore how this art form shapes our understanding of art, humanity and life. Known for fostering human connections, Ma will share insights on the power of music to foster hope and strengthen communities. *February 27, 7:30 p.m., at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall. Visit ScaSarasota.org.*



Ariel Blue and Brian Boyd star in August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Fences" at Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe.



Courtesy photos

Cellist Yo-Yo Ma will enthrall audiences this February at the Van Wezel.

Continued on Page 122



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Continued from Page 120

BAKED

“Waitress: The Musical” serves up pie, love and magic at Florida Studio Theatre. Based on Adrienne Shelly’s beloved 2007 film, the musical features compositions and lyrics by Grammy-winner Sara Bareilles and a script by Jessie Nelson. The show’s story follows Jenna, a waitress trapped in a loveless marriage. An expert pie maker, Jenna seizes the chance to reclaim her life through a baking contest, finding friendship, romance and the courage to pursue her dreams. It’s not all sweetness and light. The musical balances humor and relatable relation-



In the end, love conquers all in “Waitress: The Musical” at FST.

ships with darker notes of domestic abuse and infidelity. But, in the end, love conquers all. That’s baked into the story — and Bareilles and Nelson don’t mess with the recipe. *Through Dec. 29. Visit: FloridaStudioTheatre.org.*

BOOB TUBE TUNES

Sarasota Orchestra’s “TV Tunes and Treasures” tunes into the music of the boob tube. And, yes, you’ve probably heard it before. Most of us were imprinted with the TV show theme songs of our childhood. For those with Boomer birthdays, the tunes could be the themes from “Popeye,” “The Flintstones” or “Gilligan’s Island.” Most Gen-Xers could sing the “Animaniacs” manic musical mantra in their sleep. Whatever your age, instrumentals like the “Downton Abbey” theme burn themselves into your brain as well. Once the tune starts playing in your brain, there’s no stopping it. So why fight it? Sarasota Orchestra invites audiences to dig into this big bowl of ear candy and enjoy the sugar rush of pure nostalgia that comes with it. *January 15-19. Visit SarasotaOrchestra.org.*



Enjoy the sugar rush of TV nostalgia at Sarasota Orchestra’s “TV Tunes and Treasures” in January.”

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RANCH NITE WEDNESDAY

OCT. 16 AT WATERSIDE PLACE



Photos by Jay Heater

Morgan Bettes Angell carries donations to help those affected by Hurricane Milton to the Lakewood Ranch bus during Ranch Nite Wednesdays at Waterside Place.



Myakka City's Kent Cooper says it's good to get out for a social outing at Ranch Nite Wednesdays after Hurricane Milton.



Waterside's Eric Cade shows off his artistic talent during Ranch Nite Wednesdays at Waterside Place. Cade specializes in automotive art.



Taylor Opie's band, including bass player Andrew Glasgow in the background, provided the live entertainment at Ranch Nite Wednesdays.

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The Sarasota Ballet in Sir David Bintley's *The Spider's Feast* | Photo by Frank Atrua



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Sayaka Shoji, violin
Jan 26, 2025, 7:30 pm | Van Wezel
Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.



Czech National Symphony Orchestra
Steven Mercurio, Music Director
Maxim Lando, piano
Feb 13, 2025, 7:30 pm | Van Wezel
Dvořák's *New World Symphony*



An Evening with Yo-Yo Ma
Reflections in Words and Music
Feb 27, 2025, 7:30 pm | Van Wezel



Vivaldi Four Seasons
Les Arts Florissants
March 14, 2025
7:30 pm | Riverview
Performing Arts Center

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Beethoven's Symphony No. 5.



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LAKEWOOD RANCH BUSINESS ALLIANCE HOB NOB

OCT. 30 AT LAKEWOOD RANCH LIBRARY



Rachel Forsyth with 1-800 Pack-outs and Amplify Communications Consulting's Kristen Theisen dress for the occasion.



Photos by Liz Ramos
Lakewood Ranch Medical Center's Jacquie Weller and Millie Lacey say the Hob Nob is a great, fun night out.



Young Leaders Alliance members Janeth Gonzalez, Kristie Calandro, Jordan Sebastian and Sierra Nunn pass out popcorn to Hob Nob guests.



Jamie Kahns and Bob Kahns and Tim Estep, membership development manager for the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance, get into the western theme for the alliance's Hob Nob.



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BOOFEST

OCT. 25 AT MAIN STREET
AT LAKEWOOD RANCH



Photos by Lesley Dwyer
Lakewood Ranch's Florence and Juliette Roy are not only in costume, they're in character. Florence Roy is a creepy doll, and Juliette Roy is the Corpse Bride.

Right: Lakewood Ranch's Lakeland Dunigan, 9, and Elle Filarski, 3, arrive to BooFest early.



Colonel Sanders makes a cameo at BooFest. Braden Woods resident Dot Turpin is riding the chicken, and Blane Turpin is the colonel.



Pam Truitt is one of six photographers at BooFest for the Lakewood Ranch Photography Club.



Amazon sells everything, including this ghost buttontdown Lakewood Ranch's Kevin Goutos is wearing.



Lakewood Ranch's Olive Holmes, 7, climbs a tree while waiting for BooFest to start.



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Jennifer Allen and Dana Weppner pour wine for the Signature Wine Room.



Photos by Lesley Dwyer

Kelsey Mitchell, Gerard Sola, Audrey Scudder and Jeanine Messana enjoy the VIP tent. Mitchell is the current District Governor of Rotary, and Sola is the next in line.



Lakewood Ranch's Kelli Martinez and Adrian Tolentino recommend the tuna tartare from Post Kitchen & Bar.



Sarasota's Heather Deyrieux and Lauren Ursone sip on a Spanish red wine.



Lakewood Ranch's Carol Stephens and Jennifer Edmonson are about to sample a French rosé.



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table talk

Greg Campbell of Grove

Greg Campbell keeps everything real, fresh and original at Grove and Pier 22. Just like his grandmother taught him.

BY MARTY FUGATE | CONTRIBUTOR

Greg Campbell's French grandmother, Simone, taught him his first lessons in the magic of love-infused cooking. He puts those lessons to work today as the executive chef and director of operations at Grove in Lakewood Ranch and Pier 22 in Bradenton. According to Campbell, his culinary wizardry depends on quality ingredients, hands-on techniques and personal relationships with producers and suppliers. Campbell recently shared some of the key ingredients behind his success with us.

My culinary journey began ...

When I was a kid, growing up in Georgia. My grandmother, Simone, taught me so much. She let me join her in the kitchen. She also took me with her when she shopped — and that was definitely a learning experience. Shopping with Simone didn't mean going to the grocery store. It was an all-day affair.

I apply Simone's lessons at Grove ...

Every day! Our focus on balance, palate understanding and scratch-made recipes was her philosophy. My all-day shopping expeditions also go back to her. I buy from several different vendors, and I know them all personally. Simone is a major influence on what I do here in so many ways.

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Grove's commitment to great cuisine starts with ...

Making everything from scratch, on-site, with fresh ingredients. We're known for our unique recipes — like our Key lime pie, which has been the same for over 15 years. We bake our own bread, make our sauces and stocks and hand-make all our desserts.

The secret of Grove success is ...

Positive energy! Every restaurant has either a positive or negative vibe. You can feel it the second you walk in. We all work together to create a great experience for our guests. We foster a positive, supportive environment in the kitchen, too, that fosters tenure. Many chefs and managers have been with us for years. We involve everyone in the creative process and ensure team collaboration and consistency through long-time relationships. That's how Grove maintains consistently high standards without stifling innovation and creativity.

Grove is equally committed to ...

Community involvement. We host events like wine dinners, comedy shows, and during COVID, we turned the restaurant into a grocery store to help locals. We've also partnered with nonprofits, opening our ballroom for their events.

Grove's local and seasonal ingredients include ...

Creams and milks from Dakin Dairy and other local producers. We buy the best fish, meat and vegetables locally.



According to executive chef and director of operations, Greg Campbell, the secret of Grove's success is positive energy.



Photo by Lori Sax

That's a challenge, because Florida only produces certain crops for four to five months out of the year. In that time, we buy seasonally from North America. (I consider that local, too!)

Don't leave Grove without trying ...

Our honey-glazed Jail Island salmon is a must. It's flown in fresh from Nova Scotia. And thanks to our partnership with a wild game rancher, exciting new dishes like bison and venison are always on the way.

My top two culinary heroes are ...

Anthony Bourdain and Thomas Keller. Bourdain connected food and cultures, while Keller sets the standard for quality, with chefs trained by him excelling worldwide.

Apart from Grove and Pier 22, my favorite local restaurant is ...

I love Château 13 in downtown Bradenton. It's a small place, but the consistency and quality are incredible. Their charcuterie boards are the best I've ever had — they've ruined me for charcuterie anywhere else. The owners and the GM, Jen, do an amazing job, and their wine program is top-notch.

After a long day in the kitchen, I unwind by ...

... mowing my lawn. I've got a nice-size property. I'll go out in the yard, hang out with my four hounds, mow the grass, and cut down trees. I love being outside.

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43212-1

AGAVE BANDIDO

Agave Bandido is a South Florida inspired Mexican restaurant and tequila bar. A little rebellious, a little wild-you'll find over 100 varieties of tequila at the Agave bar, Bandido inspired art & drinks you can't find anywhere else. Perfect for dinner dates, nights out and business lunches-enjoy their tacos, their ice cold margaritas and the city vibe!

Weekly specials include All You Can Eat every Taco Tuesday for \$20, Ladies Drink Free Thursday's 8pm-10pm, weekday happy hour. Have you visited their best kept secret? Maya SpeakTiki is located upstairs, just look for the tequila bottle guarded door.

1550 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch, FL
941-260-8866 | www.agavebandido.com



418665-1

Now Serving
FIVE STAR FUN
 ★★★★★ at
 Anna Maria
OYSTER BAR

ANNA MARIA OYSTER BAR AT UTC

NOW OPEN! The newest outpost of the Anna Maria Oyster Bars at UTC boasts a 40-seat indoor-outdoor raw bar. Its crown jewel is the shucking station, where boutique oysters are cracked fresh to order, sourced from the best family-owned farms.

From the moment you sit, it'll be tough to choose which Tiki Drink, our NEW selection of tropical craft cocktails, to sample first. The NEW Wine List is full of well-known bottles you crave, plus brands yet to discover, and the dining menu is infused with fresh, bold flavors with dishes like the Tropical Chicken Bowl, Seafood Cobb Salad, or Cobia Tacos with mango pico.

The entire restaurant is eye-candy, and with Five Star Fun daily deals like Happy Hour, Wine Down Wednesday, and Weekend Brunch, we hope all of our new neighbors on the Ranch hurry in to say hey.

5405 University Pkwy #110



C'est La Vie!

Authentic French Restaurant & Fine Artisan Bakery
Locally-Owned & Operated Since 1997



436176-1

C'EST LA VIE

Locally-owned and operated by Christophe and Geraldine Coutelle, this award-winning local favorite opened in 1997. Experience an authentic Parisian café for breakfast, lunch, coffee, house-made French dessert, or glass of wine! Featuring monthly wine-pairing dinners on select evenings, C'est La Vie is also available for creating party platters and customized cakes and desserts!!

9118 Town Center Pkwy, Lakewood Ranch
941.961.0111 • Open Tues-Sun 7:30am-5pm

1553 Main St, Sarasota • 941.906.9575 • Open
Mon-Tues 7:30am-6pm, Wed 7:30am-9pm,
Thurs-Sat 7:30am-9:30pm, Sun 8:30am-9pm

cestlaviesarasota.com



416277-1

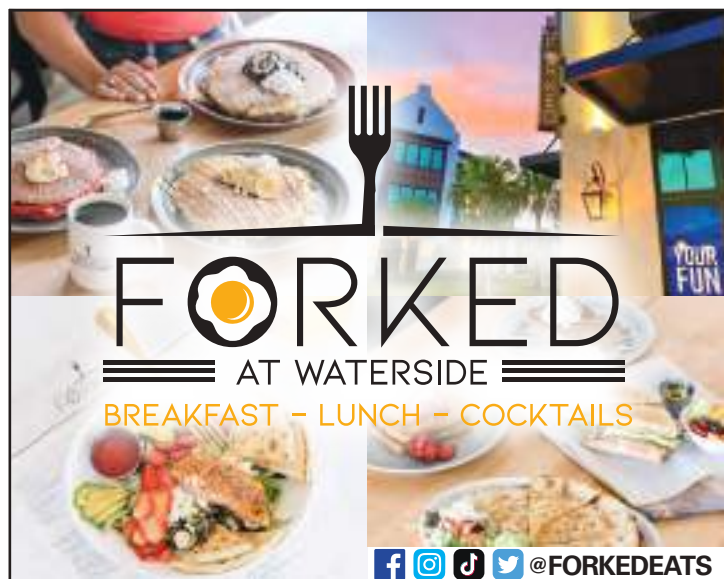
ED'S TAVERN

Lakewood Ranch's Premier Sports Bar and Restaurant with two locations! We are a perfect blend of local neighborhood sports bar and a family friendly restaurant. Both locations have a full-service bar including 26 ice cold draft selections plus over 31 flat screen TVs. Daily Events and specials. Check out the lineup at EdsTavernFL.com.

Happy Hour Every Day 4pm-7pm.
Live Music Friday + Saturday nights.
Kitchen Open Late!

New Location:
1305 108th St E, Bradenton
941-329-1010

10719 Rodeo Drive, LWR



435073-1

FORKED AT WATERSIDE

Discover the taste of Forked at Waterside in Lakewood Ranch where every bite is a forkful of flavor. Conveniently located in Waterside Place, at Forked, we have a fun neighborhood feel with an urban, upscale vibe. All of our food is prepared with the freshest and highest quality ingredients. We offer a generous menu selection consisting of traditional American, Hispanic and a French flare. Some tasty menu options include omelets, skilletts, tamales, fluffy pancakes, stuffed French toast, sweet and savory crepes, burgers, salads and of course our famous chicken and waffles. Indulge in our innovative cocktails as we have an amazing full bar selection to offer as well! Be sure to check our Social Media for information.

Mon-Thurs 8am-2pm & Fri-Sun 8am-3pm
**hours are subject to change*

7600 Island Cove Terrace #100
Sarasota, Florida 34240

(941) 355-3672 | ForkedEats.com





DINING OUT



GROVE - RESTAURANT, PATIO & BALLROOM

Discover exceptional Contemporary American cuisine at GROVE. With a personal and authentic approach, GROVE showcases a diverse selection of house-made dishes using fresh seasonal ingredients. Experience the perfect harmony of refined flavors and approachability, complemented by carefully crafted cocktails. With inviting gathering spaces including a casual patio, spacious dining room, a lively, modern bar and intimate private rooms, GROVE provides the perfect fusion of sophistication and hospitality.

10670 Boardwalk Loop, Lakewood Ranch
941.893.4321 | www.GroveLWR.com

412192-1





@Kellysroastbeef_FL
KellysRoastBeef.com

426319-1

KELLY'S

For more than 70 years, Kelly's Roast Beef has been the staple of the North Shore of Boston, renowned for its thinly sliced "melt-in-your-mouth" roast-beef sandwiches and generous platters of New England seafood. Enjoy fried whole-bellied clams, lobster rolls, scallops, homemade clam chowder along with our traditional customer favorites. 100% of our menu can be made gluten free!

Open Sun-Thu: 11am to 8pm
Fri-Sat: 11am to 9pm

5407 University Pkwy, Sarasota, FL 34201
East of CVS Pharmacy

941.263.1911 | www.kellysroastbeef.com




435025-1

LAKWOOD RANCH DELI

Crafted with Care - Fresh Daily

Indulge in our mouthwatering sandwiches, vibrant fresh salads and comforting hearty soups. Order breakfast sandwiches all day and experience the warmth of homemade goodness with every bite!

Open Monday- Friday 10am - 4pm. Take out, indoor and outdoor dining available.

8225 Nature's Way, Suite 111
San Marco Plaza
941-500-1082 | LakewoodRanchDeli.com



MCGRATH'S KITCHEN & COCKTAILS

Come see what's hot out of the oven at the ALL NEW McGrath's Kitchen & Cocktails American grill! Take a bite out of the brand new menu full of mouthwatering entrees for the entire family to enjoy at an affordable price. Try one of our \$10 and under lunch specials, indulge in bottomless mimosas and Bloody Marys at Sunday Brunch or visit our website for other daily offers. With a full bar and live music on the weekends, fun is guaranteed. Visit our website for a full menu.

Monday-Thursday 11am-10pm

Friday 11am-11pm, Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday Brunch 10am-3pm

8110 Lakewood Main Street, Lakewood Ranch
941-210-4398 | www.McGrathslwr.com

416282-1



STATION 400

Station 400 is your local family owned & operated breakfast & lunch restaurant. Offering chef inspired twists on your favorite brunch items. With the best local ingredients and always above & beyond service.

Specialty Mimosas, Seasonal Menu, GF & Vegan options.

Voted 2023 Best Local Breakfast Spot

LWR Ranch
8215 Lakewood Main St.

Downtown Sarasota
400 N. Lemon Ave

www.Station400.com

428394-1



TOASTIQUE

Toastique is a boutique gourmet toast and juice bar offering a fresh, chic experience that perfectly transitions from early on-the-go breakfast to corporate lunch to post sweat session fuel up.

Come join us in the heart of Downtown Sarasota where we are open daily from 7am-5pm.

Nourish every moment with acai bowls & smoothies blended to order, cold-pressed juices or our signature gourmet toasts.

Open Daily 7:00am-5:00pm

10 S. Lemon Avenue | Sarasota 34236
941-312-4099

435982-1

DINING OUT

PARTING GLANCE



Dakin Kruse took this photo of his son, Colton (10), on their family farm in Myakka City just before a storm rolled in.

INTEGRITY • *Tenacity* • EXPERIENCE

Stacy is honored to be ranked among the top 1.5% of all Realtors® nationwide for the third year in a row and the #1 individual agent in Lakewood Ranch in 2023, while maintaining a consistent track record as a top performer in her office.

Specializing in luxury properties in both Sarasota and Manatee counties, Stacy's award-winning service gives you the results you require and the experience you expect.

Connect with Stacy Haas today to discuss your goals. Her professionalism and commitment remain unmatched.

- #1 Individual Agent in Lakewood Ranch in 2023
- #1 Michael Saunders Agent by Units Sold in 2023
- #1 Michael Saunders Agent in Lakewood Ranch in 2023 & 2024
- Over \$90 Million in Sales Volume in 2023
- Five Star "Best in Class" Award Winner 2007-2024
- Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist
- Master Certified Negotiation Expert
- Over 20 Years' of Real Estate & Interior Design Experience



Stacy Haas
REALTOR
LUXURY HOME PURSUIT

941.587.4359

StacyHaas@michaelsaunders.com

StacyHaas.com

Sold Over \$700 Million
in Career Sales Volume 2007-2024

Michael Saunders & Company
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202





YOUR LAKEWOOD RANCH NEIGHBOR & REAL ESTATE SPECIALIST



Holly and her team have successfully matched families with their perfect home for 15 years. Her extensive knowledge & certifications in Luxury Home Sales give YOU the edge you need in today's competitive housing market.

- Lifetime Manatee-Sarasota Resident
- #1 Lakewood Ranch Agent for Coldwell Banker
- Over \$100 Million Closed & Pending Sales in 2023
- #13 Among All Coldwell Banker Agents Nationwide

HOLLY PASCARELLA, PA

941.225.3218 | Holly.Pascarella@CBRealty.com



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BANKER**