

# LWR LIFE

LAKEWOOD RANCH AREA'S COMMUNITY, NATURE, STYLE  
WINTER 2026



## Table Ready

New restaurants serve up fresh  
culinary offerings for every taste.



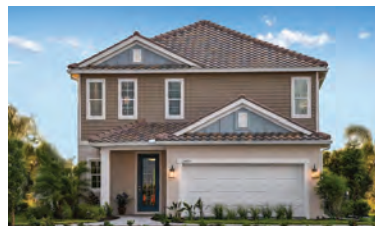
# A LIFESTYLE FOR *Everyone* IN LAKEWOOD RANCH



## PALM GROVE

Palm Grove offers a variety of new construction homes, from stylish townhomes and charming villas to spacious single-family residences. Nestled near the serene Lake Manatee State Park, this community provides a tranquil setting in Lakewood Ranch.

Residents of Palm Grove will enjoy exclusive access to a community clubhouse and pool, perfect for relaxation and socializing. Beyond the community, Lakewood Ranch boasts over 200 shops and restaurants, a bustling arts and cultural scene, and a calendar brimming with year-round events.

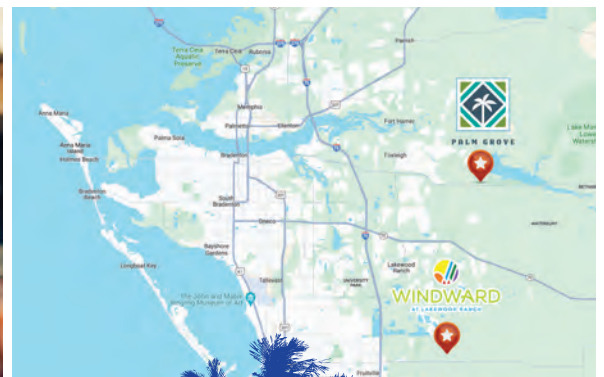


## WINDWARD AT LAKEWOOD RANCH

This picturesque community is centered around a British West Indies design theme along with colonial Dutch enhancements. Island palm trees, lush landscaping and scenic sunrises are present at Windward. Outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy gathering at either resort-style swimming pools, on pickleball or tennis courts, and walking furry friends at the dog park. The residents-only Clubhouse features additional ways to have fun, including a state-of-the-art fitness center and on-site activities director. Everyone will enjoy the beach entry splash pool, playground and sports fields. Notable schools, including the Out of Door Academy, Cardinal Mooney and Tatum Ridge Elementary are just minutes from Windward.



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12411 Highfield Circle	Country Club	\$4,000,000
<b>7011 Belmont Court</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>Country Club</b>	<b>\$3,499,000</b>
7104 Teal Creek Glen	Country Club	\$2,650,000
7218 Teal Creek Glen	Country Club	\$2,394,000
8059 Royal Birkdale Circle	Country Club	\$1,775,000
12806 Forsgate Place	Country Club	\$1,649,000
6540 The Masters Avenue	Country Club	\$1,450,000
5569 Mulligan Way	Lakewood National	\$1,370,000
7443 Riviera Cove	Country Club	\$655,000
7275 Lismore Court	Country Club	\$625,000
6927 Dorset Court	Del Webb	\$415,000

<sup>1</sup> Record sold price of \$742 sq. ft. for Country Club - July 2025

## BUYER'S AGENT

15904 Baycross Drive <sup>*</sup>	Lake Club	\$3,750,000
8520 Pavia Way <sup>*</sup>	Lake Club	\$3,100,000
998 Blue Shell Loop <sup>*</sup>	Wild Blue	\$2,093,000
7320 Donnybrook Lane	Waterside	\$649,990
12327 Thornhill Court	Country Club	\$425,000
7131 Boca Grove Place 202	Boca Grove	\$258,000

<sup>\*</sup>  
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*Holiday  
Surprise*



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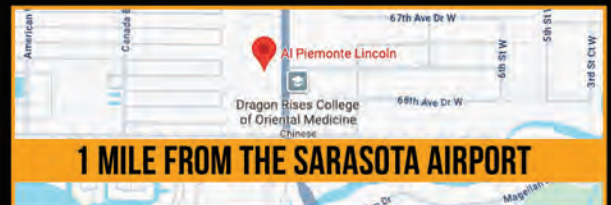


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# LWR LIFE

LAKEWOOD RANCH AREA'S COMMUNITY, NATURE, STYLE

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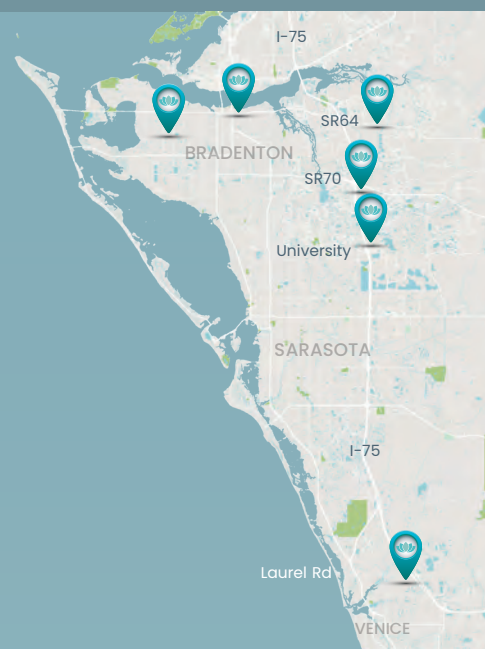
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# Main Street: 20 years later



File image

Getting your photo taken with Santa in front of the Christmas tree on Main Street has become an annual holiday tradition in Lakewood Ranch.

In a place like Lakewood Ranch, by design, there's no "downtown" or urban core to speak of. Aside from it simply not making sense zoning-wise, it would be out of character with the soul of a master-planned community.

But, being humans, we still need a hub. A gathering place. A central spot that acts as the heart of a community.

Officially, it's called a town center, but the street name denotes exactly what it is: Main Street at Lakewood Ranch.

Twenty years ago, Lakewood Ranch Main Street opened.

Since then, it has seen a lot of change in some ways ... and not a lot in others. Like, did you know there used to be a Morton's Gourmet Market at the northeast corner of Main Street and Boardwalk Loop? Yep, Main Street had a grocery store. And Polo Grill & Bar was where Grove is today. Several businesses have come and gone through the years

(although, as you'll see in our story on Page 34, Vanessa Fine Jewelry, an original, remains). But the vibe has always remained the same, as the place where events happen, neighbors gather and celebrations occur.

Although it's not an old history by any means, when we think about Lakewood Ranch's greatest community moments, Main Street is the stage for most of them. Music on Main still takes over the street the first Friday of the month. The Tribute to Heroes parade recently marched down the street honoring our veterans in November. From classic car shows to 5k races to Santa and his sleigh in front of the Christmas tree, Main Street has been at the center of so many memories for so many families. It is the backdrop of countless photos, and the site of even more celebrations through the years. Just look at all the events on our calendar (Page 54) that still list Main Street as their place.

When Waterside Place opened a few years ago, it was a natural progression of activating the neighborhoods to the south with their own space. Lakewood Ranch had grown to the point where it now needed two gathering spots, two centers.

Some may have worried about what would happen to Main Street with the bright and shiny new town center now hosting a whole slate of its own events.

But to those folks, I invite you to take a stroll down Main Street any first Friday of the month, or any Saturday morning for that manner. You'll see sidewalks packed with people walking with their dogs, riding bikes, getting breakfast or coffee, chatting with their neighbors, enjoying their surroundings.

That's the thing about hearts — as long as they're alive, they just keep beating.

*Kat Wingert*  
Executive Editor







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# BUZZ

NEWS, HAPPENINGS AND PEOPLE

Lakewood Ranch Main Street motors past a milestone. **PAGE 32**



Lesley Dwyer  
The monthly, seasonal car show is one of the more popular ones in the area.



# Platinum Play

Some tenants have left. Others have been there for 10, or even 20, years. Amid the changes, Lakewood Ranch Main Street maintains its original calling: a go-to gathering spot.



BY LESLEY DWYER AND MARK GORDON | CONTRIBUTORS

**L**akewood Ranch has a lot of stuff in its 33,000 acres. But what it doesn't have is a downtown. Or does it?

It might not be a traditional downtown, like Sarasota has to the south or Bradenton has to the north. But Lakewood Ranch Main Street is certainly a focal point of the master-planned community. Just off Lakewood Ranch Boulevard and across the street from Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, it includes both big and small restaurants, a global chain (hello Starbucks) and independently owned shops, a six-screen movie theater and condos and apartments. There are also offices, a mini-golf spot and a walking path along Lake Uihlein.

Lakewood Ranch Main Street is also celebrating a big milestone in 2025: its 20-year anniversary. And through the years it's consistently remained a gathering place for many, both Lake-

wood Ranch residents and people from across the region. A sampling of life on Lakewood Ranch Main Street includes:

## MUSIC BINGO NIGHT AT THE PECULIAR PUB

*Every Tuesday, 5-8 p.m.*

**Highlights:** Multiple rounds of music bingo, craft beer and elevated pub grub

Earlier this year, the owners of Peculiar Pub sought to spice up what is traditionally a slow night: Tuesday.

First came an open mic night for stand up comedy. It launched in May, and, while it drew a small, albeit devoted crowd, by October the pub had squashed the comedy nights. Some of the acts, says a co-owner, Zach Zeller, had gotten a bit raunchy. "It didn't really fit our family-friendly brand," he says.

Next up: The pub moved music bingo from Sunday to Tuesday nights. Music bingo is pretty much what it sounds

like: a game of bingo where the squares are filled with songs, not numbers. Zeller says the tunes are a mix from the 1970s through today. One late October night, he adds, the theme was one-hit wonders. Prizes are a combination of gift cards and small cash awards. "You don't need any music skills" to play, Zeller says. "It's just a neat way for families to come out, listen to music and have a good time."

Zeller says Peculiar Pub has live music on Friday and Saturday nights, and other restaurants, like Remy's on Main, also bring out live music. The goal: Make Main Street a lively, happening scene. "We're trying to do something every night," he says of the entire strip. "We want to bring people out and we want them to have a good time here."



Photos by Lesley Dwyer  
Husband dropoff is a perk offered at Peculiar Pub.

**Top:** An average of 4,500 people attend Music on Main each month.

*Continued on Page 34*



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Continued from Page 32

## CLASSIC CAR SHOW AT ED'S TAVERN

First Wednesday of the month from  
5–8 p.m. (in-season)

**Highlights:** Over 100 cars, food, music, door prizes and awards.

During the winter, Parrish's Billy Gallagher drives his cherry red 2004 Ford Thunderbird to about six car shows a month.

A staple on Gallagher's tour is the Classic Car Show on Lakewood Ranch Main Street, sponsored by Ed's Tavern. The foot traffic provided by the businesses on Main Street makes it stand out as one of his favorites.

"When you go to some car shows, it's all car show guys," he says. "I like to see people who have never seen these cars."

The show doesn't start until 5 p.m., but Gallagher usually rolls in about 3:30 p.m. to secure a good spot near The Fish Hole Miniature Golf.

Main Street and Rodeo Drive are closed to moving vehicles from the roundabout to The Fish Hole for the shows. Cars park on both sides of the streets, and the area often becomes shoulder to shoulder with people.

While it's called the Classic Car Show, "anything on wheels" can be displayed for a \$10 entry fee. "It's so cool because we love talking about our cars," Gallagher says. "It makes me happy when somebody loves my car as much as I do."

## MUSIC ON MAIN

First Friday of the month from 6–9 p.m.

**Highlights:** Live music, food trucks and a kids' zone

If it's the first Friday of the month, Bradenton's Kim Harris and Jan Altenbach are on Main Street at Lakewood Ranch.

They each bring a chair because that's all they need, outside a parking spot. The friends carpool and arrive well before 6 p.m. to ensure the latter.

If you're late, plan to circle the lot a few times because the event, which started just a year after Main Street opened, has grown to an average attendance of 4,500 people, according to Nicole Hackel, events and resident experience manager for Lakewood Ranch.



Kim Harris and Jan Altenbach are big fans of Music on Main.



Billy Gallagher brings his beloved cherry red 2004 Ford Thunderbird to the Classic Car Show.

Harris and Altenbach don't need anything more than chairs because in addition to all the brick and mortar bars and restaurants on Main Street, the event brings in beer and food trucks.

The massive block party is anchored by a band on one side, near Grove, and a kids' zone on the other, near Ed's Tavern. While it varies from month to month, as do the bands, Grace Community Church brings in everything from facepainting to mechanical bull-riding to keep the kids entertained.

People might be drinking in the street, but Music on Main is a family and community-oriented event. Local businesses advertise and sell their goods, and nonprofits promote their causes.

“  
It makes me  
happy when  
somebody  
loves my  
car as much  
as I do.”

BILLY GALLAGHER

## RETAIL PIONEERS

The best move ever for Don and Vanessa Baugh's jewelry business — being one of the first tenants to open on Lakewood Ranch Main Street in December 2005 — nearly never happened.

The hesitation didn't come from Main Street itself. Instead, in January 2005, the store, Vanessa Fine Jewelry, then in the Southgate Mall in Sarasota, was robbed at gunpoint. One of the robbers put a gun, says Vanessa, to "the back of Donnie's head" and the thieves made off with thousands of dollars of merchandise. (The robbers were eventually caught.) "I told Donnie to forget it. We're just going to close the store and not move to Lakewood Ranch."

But after the trauma subsided a bit, Vanessa rekindled the Main Street idea. Speaking in early October, a few months before the 20th anniversary of Lakewood Main Street, Vanessa marveled at all the progress over the past two decades. She especially recognized Schroeder-Manatee Ranch, developer Casto and SMR President and CEO Rex Jensen and their ability to navigate the 2008-09 housing recession and other issues over the past two decades.

Even without the robbery fresh on the couple's mind, moving to Lakewood Ranch, after being in Southgate for four years and the Sarasota Square Mall for two years before that, was a sizeable risk. Malls, back then, were a strong source of foot traffic, and Lakewood Ranch had yet to hit its population surge.

But Vanessa says the business has grown just about every year. The Baughs moved to the area in 1999 from Virginia, and in addition to the business, became politically active. Vanessa Baugh, a Republican, was elected to three terms on the Manatee County commission, serving from 2012 through July 2023. Vanessa Fine Jewelry, meanwhile, is thriving, and the couple says they are glad they had the foresight to make the move to Lakewood Ranch.

"I can tell you it was not an easy decision at first," Vanessa says. "Main Street wasn't as great back then as what it has turned out to be today."

— Mark Gordon





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# Home Coming

The new head of the Manatee School District brings a local flavor to the job.

BY MARK GORDON  
DEPARTMENTS EDITOR

Laurie Breslin didn't want to reject her first teaching job opportunity in Manatee County back in the early 2000s. Her mom and two siblings were in education, and she graduated from Manatee High in 1995. Also, having not majored in education in college — her degree from the University of Florida in 1999 was in public relations — Breslin wanted to get going on her career and gain some experience.

The problem? The offer that came Breslin's way was to be a long-term sub for the year in ... physical education at Southeast High School. "That was really funny," says Breslin, looking back at the role some 25 years later, "because I have not a single athletic bone in my body."

So Breslin initially told the principal, "I'm not your person. I don't know how to play sports.' And he said, 'You're dependable. You're good with the students. I think you are my person.'"

She took the job. And that kicked off a fast-moving, high-achieving career in education, leading to multiple roles in the classroom and in administration, in both Sarasota and Manatee counties. Along the way she earned advanced degrees in education, finishing with a doctorate in teaching and learning from Argosy University. She even co-authored a book on online learning and student achievement — nine years before it became a reality in the pandemic.

That varied experience culminated in a career highlight Aug. 26, when



Mark Wemple

Laurie Breslin was named superintendent of the School District of Manatee County in August.

*Continued on Page 38*





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the School District of Manatee County named Breslin superintendent of schools. She replaces Jason Wysong, let go earlier in the year, in the post that oversees a budget of \$1.6 billion, more than 53,000 students and 5,800 employees. Breslin recently talked with *LWR Life* about her career, goals, challenges and more in the new role. Edited excerpts:

*How did you handle that first teaching job, having no sports experience?*

The best part was, you work in a team. So I worked with my colleagues who were PE teachers on the campus, and they would tell me, 'here's what you need to do. Here are the rules. And then the internet. I would sit down and Google 'rules to tennis' and then go teach the children the lesson. It was a great lesson in relying on your colleagues and building positive relationships with your students, so that when you are giving them instruction, they're able to listen and follow.

*What was your favorite class or subject as a student at Manatee High?*

One of my favorite memories as a student was art class. I took art for all four years when I was a student. It's not anything I was exceptionally good at, but the teachers were very encouraging and supportive, and it just allowed me to have a class you look forward to every day. I, of course, took rigorous coursework as well — though nothing compared to what students take now. But I really looked forward to the art class, because it gave you time to socialize with your peers, work on your creativity and just connect to the campus.

*You initially were going to pursue a career outside education. Why?*

I thought, 'well, I'm not going into education if (my mom and siblings) are teachers.' So I went into communications and I found I was just bored at what I was doing. I wasn't fulfilled. And so when I came back and started subbing, my mom — a very smart lady — had me shadow a couple teachers she worked with who were exceptional, and she said, 'go spend the day with this teacher.' And I did. And I thought, 'why am I fighting this?' I really felt like, yes, this is what I've been called to do.



Madison Bierl

Above: Laurie Breslin was sworn in as School District of Manatee County superintendent Sept. 9.

Courtesy

Right: Laurie Breslin graduated from Manatee High School in 1995.



## THE LAURIE BRESLIN FILE

Roles Laurie Breslin has held in her educational career include:

- Teacher at Southeast and Manatee High schools
- Assistant principal at Manatee and Palmetto High schools and Booker High in Sarasota
- Principal at Sarasota Middle School (during the pandemic)
- Director of secondary curriculum; executive director of curriculum, instruction & assessment; and executive director of student support & family engagement in the School District of Manatee County

*If you had to pick, what would your top priority be as school superintendent?*

The No. 1 one goal is always safety and security. You can't teach, you can't retain good teachers if you don't have a safe and secure learning environment. So that will always be No. 1, that's fundamental. It just has to be a part of the recipe.

*What's the next priority?*

Student success. What are we doing operationally to support student success? Are we best utilizing all of our dollars to support student success? Are we defining student success in a way that is transferable to post-secondary, so they are coming out college-career ready, in a way that we can accurately measure and see the success?

*Who are some of your career mentors?*

Robin Thompson, who I worked with at Manatee High School is one of many mentors. We were able to do some writing and presentations together back when I was working on my doctoral degree, and she was just a really great influence. (Thompson, Breslin and Robert Gagnon co-wrote "Constructing an Online Professional Learning Network for School Unity and Student Achievement" in 2011.) And my parents, Randy and Pam. Pam was an educator, and worked at the district office as well in school improvement. And my dad was a contractor; he worked for Neal Communities. Both showed me the value of hard work, of honesty and really just what it means to be a good contributor to your community.

## OFF THE CLOCK: LAURIE BRESLIN

New Manatee School District Superintendent Laurie Breslin and her husband have four children between them, ages 11 to 21. Some of her activities when she isn't working include:

■ Watching their sons play sports, including baseball.

■ Watching college football. "My husband, who's an avid Florida State fan, agreed to get season tickets to the Gators this year," she says, "really, so we could go see (our son) Caden (who is a student there) and have excuses to go to Gainesville." (Laurie Breslin is a UF alum.)

■ Reading, everything from young adult fiction — when she seeks a "non-brain stress," she says — to books in the education field.

■ Traveling with family. The Breslins went to the Outer Banks in North Carolina this past summer. Bucket list trips range from an African safari to taking her kids to San Francisco and up through Oregon, to visiting more national parks.





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Mark Wemple  
Morgan Bettes Angell and  
the company she founded,  
Independent Jones, has  
helped put on the Lakewood  
Ranch Blues Festival.



# Blues (Fest) Clues

The Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival, primed for its second year, has a varied and voluminous history in the region.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

Sarasota-Manatee can't quit the blues. Perhaps it's more accurate to say the region can't quit blues festivals. There has been at least one every year since 1991, with various organizations and producers effectively passing the baton to keep them going. The current incarnation, the Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival, debuted last year and is back again on Saturday, Dec. 6. The 11-hour event show-

cases eight acts that cut a broad swath across the blues spectrum.

The area's festival streak has been partly based on an old riff claiming the region is a fertile place for the blues. "No!," says Barbara Strauss, who produced the Sarasota Blues Festival from 1992 to 2010. "We're not Kansas City." Or Chicago or Memphis or New Orleans or the Mississippi Delta, for that matter.

No, the 35-year legacy of blues festivals in Sarasota-Manatee can be credited to a series of dogged promoters, producers, musicians and boosters

— among them Jack Sullivan, the late Johnette Isham of Realize Bradenton, Strauss, Paul Benjamin and, most recently, Independent Jones, a Bradenton-based event production company. The latter two are collaborating on the 2025 version of the Lakewood Ranch fest.

## RAMBLIN' MAN

Another contributor was the late Gregg Allman, who lived in the area for a good portion of his adult life. The '91 fest was produced by the Sarasota Blues Society, which promptly went defunct. Strauss stepped in, just scraped by her first year and was ready to call it quits. She was friendly with Allman,

*Continued on Page 42*



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and one night found herself in the Telstar (now Baysound) recording studio in Sarasota, where he was rehearsing. Allman spotted one of the first blues festival posters on the wall. “He said, ‘Who had a blues fest and didn’t invite me?’” Strauss recalls. “I said, ‘Me.’ He said, ‘Why didn’t you invite me?’ I said, ‘I can’t afford you.’”

They worked it out. Gregg Allman & Friends headlined Bluesfest ’94 at the Sarasota County Fairgrounds. (It’s worth noting a 15-year-old Derek Trucks opened the festival.) That show, Strauss says, drew 10,000 paying concertgoers, and put her event on solid footing. The subsequent two-decade span represented the glory days of area festivals. Strauss presented a who’s who of blues (and blues-adjacent) stars at the Fairgrounds and Ed Smith Stadium: Buddy Guy, Solomon Burke, Dr. John, Jimmie Vaughan, Bobby “Blue” Bland, Maria Muldaur, Little Feat and others. Allman headlined four times.

After Strauss sold her interest to a Texas-based company called ExtremeTix, the fest struggled for a few years. Then it shut down. In 2012, Isham and Realize Bradenton took the baton and unveiled the Bradenton Blues Festival to shine a spotlight on the new Bradenton Riverwalk. The event had a strong 12-year run, drawing more than 2,000 fans each year, even though the star power of the acts had dimmed. In February 2024, organizers announced the event’s permanent cancellation.

## PULL THE STRINGS

That could’ve been curtains, but Paul Benjamin — who was the artistic director for the Bradenton fest — joined with Independent Jones to keep the music playing. They scouted for new venues, settling on Lakewood Ranch’s 8-acre Waterside Park, which includes a colorful splash pad, sand volleyball courts, an event lawn and other amenities. The venue looks out over Kingfisher Lake and the condos beyond.

Grizzled veterans of local blues fests, who sometimes traipsed through muddy fields to take in the music, might snicker that the current incarnation takes place in a neat-and-tidy park in a planned community like Lakewood Ranch. Benjamin doesn’t see it that way. He cites a few advantages: more orderly ingress and egress over



Jay Heater

Morgan Bettis Angell and Paul Benjamin believe a Blues Festival in Lakewood Ranch can be sustainable on an annual basis.

a bridge linked to Waterside Pavilion, which alleviates the need for temporary fencing; “actual, real restrooms” (his words), augmented by some porta-lets; easy access to vendors, which are right on the festival grounds (unlike the Bradenton Riverwalk).

“We had a couple of bands that played last year that had played Bradenton,” Benjamin adds. “And they said, ‘Wow, we like this new venue so much better.’”

He says that the inaugural Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival drew a crowd of roughly 1,000, a solid start. He hopes to draw 1,200 to 1,500 this year and “by year three, we’ll get it up to 2,000 people like we were getting in Bradenton.”

Benjamin is confident the fest pulls in committed blues fans, but is also counting on Lakewood Ranch residents to turn out due to curiosity and “to support something that’s in [their] backyard.”

He put together a diverse program to keep people entertained over several hours in a laid-back environment. “We’re trying to get new people to come out and say, ‘I didn’t realize this music was so good,’” he says. “They don’t realize there are so many different aspects to the blues. My thought is, if I can get ‘em here once, I’m gonna get them hooked.”

General admission tickets are \$75. Visit [LakewoodRanchBluesFestival.com](http://LakewoodRanchBluesFestival.com).



Courtesy

DeSoto Tiger, the closing act scheduled for the Lakewood Ranch Blues Fest, includes Damon Fowler, Jason Ricci and Jonathan Boogie Long.

## SING SONG

Artists scheduled for the 2025 Lakewood Ranch Blues Festival lineup on Dec. 6 include:

### 9:30-9:55 a.m.

#### Music Compound Band:

Youngsters who are part of the performance-based music school.

### 10:15-11:15 a.m.

**The Shaelyn Band:** Formed in Jacksonville in 2020, this electric blues/R&B outfit is fronted by a female and male vocalist duo who exude a lot of fun playing off each other.

### 11:35-12:35 p.m.

**Eden Brent:** Coming up in the Mississippi delta, Brent developed a rollicking boogie piano style, which she combines with soulful vocals.

### 12:55-1:55 p.m.

**Albert Castiglia:** The former guitarist for blues legend Junior Wells, Castiglia, from Miami, plays blazing blues-rock.

### 2:15-3:15 p.m.

**Johnny Rawls:** The Mississippi native’s music is best

classified as Southern soul, built around rhythm and blues and showcasing Rawls’ commanding vocals.

### 3:35-4:40 p.m.

**Toranzo Cannon:** The Chicago-based artist helps keep the Windy City blues tradition alive with a sound driven by his electric guitar and lusty voice.

### 5-6:05 p.m.

**Chambers Deslauriers:** Singer Anika Chambers and guitarist Paul Deslauriers met at a blues conference and ultimately married.

### 6:25-7:30

**Desoto Tiger:** The Bradenton-based headliner is a “super-group” consisting of guitarists Damon Fowler and Boogie Long, and harmonica player Jason Ricci. All three are singers and front their own bands. Backed by a bassist and drummer, the trio will surely cover a wide gamut of the blues — and have a blast doing it.





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**PAGE 50**

Photo by Mark Wemple  
Kendra Simpkins  
has been working in  
brain-based health  
with military veterans  
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*class act*

# Cone of Certainty

Grew up poor in a faltering communist country. Bullied in school. Served in combat zones as a U.S. Marine. Sold copiers. Lakewood Rancher Eric Konovalov has done all that — and a lot more.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

**H**e grew up in Azerbaijan, then part of the Soviet Union, where, as a 7-year-old, he would trudge through the snow to buy potatoes and onions for his family. When he was 10, the family left the then-crumbling USSR with \$400 his mother had hidden from airport guards. They ended up in Baltimore. He served eight years in the U.S. Marines and saw combat in Afghanistan. He sold copiers, got good at it, and became a sales manager for Xerox.

These days, Eric Konovalov (pronounced Cone-of-Olive) lives in the Polo Run neighborhood with his wife and two sons. He runs his own sales and executive coaching business called The Goal Guide.

He's 45 and life is good.

Does he ever stop and take stock of where he started and what he's accomplished?

"Yeah," Konovalov says. "I have to intentionally do it when I'm stressed or when I'm up against the wall, or I'm being hard on myself. I remind myself that the life I'm living now was like a dream for me. I have to remind myself that, 'yeah, I've achieved a lot.'"

## NAME GAME

During two extended interviews, Konovalov never presented himself as a master motivator. Instead, he was quietly reflective, free of the amped-up energy you might expect from a sales coach. What emerged was a fascinating, often harrowing, life story of a man who is one of your neighbors.

He grew up Arkady Konovalov in

*Continued on Page 48*



Photos by Mark Wemple  
Eric Konovalov moved  
to the Lakewood Ranch  
area five years ago.



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Continued from Page 46

Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, which borders the Caspian Sea. Scarcity prevailed. With two young kids — Arkady and older sister Inna — his mother divorced and remarried a widower with two daughters. It was a union not of love but of practicality, Konovalov says, with the parents pooling resources. “My mother was an instructor at a music university, so she would get concert tickets, which she could trade to buy us food sometimes,” Konovalov recalls.

Konovalov wore too-small shoes but never went hungry. He was unaware of being Jewish in a country that was 95% Muslim because Soviet people were not permitted to practice religion.

The family left the USSR on a flight from Moscow, but not before the guards rifled through their bags and took jewelry and heirlooms, somehow missing the \$400 Konovalov’s mother had stashed away. The family spent a few months in Austria and Italy before settling in Baltimore because a relative who lived there helped get them guest visas. “When my mom walked into a grocery store in America, she cried,” Konovalov says.

Konovalov spoke no English. One of his first teachers was Bugs Bunny. “I used to greet people by saying, ‘What’s up, Doc?’” Konovalov recalls. He enrolled in an all-boys Hebrew school, which had a woman who taught English as a second language. “Once I was immersed in the environment I picked [English] up quickly,” he says. But Konovalov was an odd fit in the school because he wasn’t a practicing Jew.

He left the Hebrew school after about six months and enrolled in Deer Park Elementary in Randallstown, Maryland. That’s when the taunts kicked in, starting with his name. As a remedy, the Baltimore relative coined him Eric. “It helped me assimilate,” he says, but the bullying persisted. “It was a funny thing to beat up on the foreign guy,” Konovalov says. His mother signed him up for karate classes when he was in the seventh grade. “I was already good at taking punches,” he says, dryly. “But I got to the point where I just wouldn’t take any crap.”

## SEMPER FI

With no intention of going to college, Konovalov joined the Marines, which deployed him to Afghanistan shortly after 9/11. He worked as an aerial observer

on light attack helicopters, among other assignments. He later did a tour in Iraq. How did he react when live bullets started flying? “It was scary, it was exciting, it’s what you trained for,” he says. “You reacted. The Marines were very good at making you feel that you were part of the best fighting force in the world.”

On Dec. 27, 2003, while in the military, Konovalov met a woman named Julia Feldman, a native of Moscow, at a party of Soviet émigrés in Baltimore. He was stationed at Andrews Air Force Base near D.C. and she was finishing up college at the University of Maryland. They began dating, and things quickly grew serious. When Konovalov was offered a tour in Iraq, Julia told him she didn’t want to be the wife who stayed home while her husband took deployments around the world. “So I had to make the hard decision between the girl and the Marine Corps,” he says. “I decided I wanted to be with her.”

After leaving the Marines in his mid-20s, Konovalov found himself out in the world with no readily evident skills. A former commanding officer suggested sales. After turning down a few straight-commission jobs, he accepted an offer from a former Marine to sell copiers. His starting pay was \$44,000 a year — more than he made in the military. Konovalov didn’t even know what a cold call was, but he started working the phones and knocking on doors. “It was a humbling experience, but, y’know, no one was shooting at me,” he says.

Within a couple of years, he was a top salesman. Konovalov moved on to Xerox but never adjusted to the button-down corporate culture, so he left after three years. He signed on as sales manager with a family-owned company that sold office equipment. Konovalov went in with a mission-driven approach learned from the Marines, looking to whip his team into shape. He quickly alienated them, and they tried to get him fired.

“I couldn’t connect with these people, and it occurred to me that I had to learn more about leadership,” he says. Konovalov read books by John Maxwell and other leadership gurus. “I still remember the spark,” he says. “It was a quote by Maxwell, adapted from Teddy Roosevelt: People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

Konovalov won over his sales crew by getting to know them as people, hom-



“  
*People  
don’t care  
how much  
you know  
until they  
know how  
much you  
care.*

## ONE OF ERIC KONOVALOV’S FAVORITE LEADERSHIP QUOTES

ing in on their needs and wants, and helping them establish goals and plans to get there. Company sales soared.

He joined a John Maxwell leadership team and started coaching. His employer let him work the gig on the side. Konovalov moved his family to Lakewood Ranch in early 2020 while keeping his management job and clients in Maryland. Then Covid hit. “[My boss] said, ‘I love you, but we just can’t afford to keep you,’” Konovalov says. “It was the best thing to happen because in order to really succeed in my coaching career I had to burn the ships. I’ve been on my own ever since.”

Goal Guide is a family business, with Julia working alongside her husband. Eric joined the Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance and has been an avid networker. He does regular local speaking engagements for free. He has authored a book (not ghost-written) titled “B2B Sales Secrets.” He coaches a group of about 50 entrepreneurs, hosts a podcast called Relentless Goal Achievers. All told, Konovalov says, he’s worked with more than 4,700 sales professionals.

He’s happy with his success, but — true to his profession — not satisfied, declaring, “It’s nothing compared to what I’m gonna achieve in the next 10 years.”



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*charity snapshot*

# This We'll Defend

With new space at the ready, Kendra Simpkins has big plans for Operation Warrior Resolution — dedicated to providing holistic mental health services for the region's veterans.

BY MARK GORDON  
DEPARTMENTS EDITOR

**K**endra Simpkins, who founded a nonprofit in 2018 that assists military veterans with their mental health, says knowing her why is easy — it's hearing it out loud that can be hard.

Consider a U.S. Army veteran who approached her recently after a group therapy session at the organization, Operation Warrior Resolution. The veteran leaned into Simpkins, herself a U.S. Army veteran, and half-whispered, "I wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for you," adding he contemplated suicide before discovering Operation Warrior Resolution.

"That's my why," says Simpkins, recalling the exchange. "That's why I get out of bed in the morning."

Simpkins seeks to help a lot more veterans in Lakewood Ranch and beyond overcome their issues — and find their why — in leading a multimillion-dollar expansion of Operation Warrior Resolution. That includes buying a new facility, a 6-acre site with two properties on it, in unincorporated east Manatee County, about three miles north



Photos by Mark Wemple

Kendra Simpkins has been working in brain-based health with military veterans for nearly a decade.

*Continued on Page 52*





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Continued from Page 50

of the intersection of Lakewood Ranch Boulevard and State Road 64.

Operation Warrior Resolution paid \$1.69 million for the site in June, Manatee County property records show. The parcel, with several undeveloped acres and the pair of homes totaling 5,000 square feet, replaces some properties OWR previously rented in Sarasota. One of those properties was destroyed during Hurricane Debby in August 2024. “We lost everything,” says Simpkins.

The new spot, says Simpkins, is both bigger and better. And in going bigger and better, the new OWR home represents both the high stakes need for more services for more veterans and the high pressure Simpkins feels to come through for the people she calls her tribe. She hopes to double the amount of veterans OWR sees in 2026, to about 800 from some 400 in 2025.

Operation Warrior Resolution had \$1.03 million in revenue in its most recent fiscal year, according to public tax filings, and \$412,927 in assets. It has eight employees, and Simpkins wants to bring on a few more. Its core method of working with veterans is called brain-based healing. That’s an “approach rooted in neuroscience to rewire the brain so there are no longer any emotional disturbances from past or current events,” the organization says on its website. It’s fast and effective, and can be sometimes accomplished in one to three sessions, Simpkins adds in an OWR promotional video.

Beyond brain-based healing, other OWR services include tactical healing retreats; weekend retreats; family and children’s services; workforce training, including a partnership with FleetForce for truck driver training; and combat conscious yoga.

“What we do is help the brain rewire how it sometimes views these past events,” Jerrod Klein, a U.S. Air Force veteran and trauma resolution specialist at OWR, says on the video. “And what sort of sets us apart from say traditional therapies is we get to the core of the problem ... not every organization sees the immediate results. We get to see the immediate results.”

## ALL SHE CAN BE

The granddaughter of a World War II veteran, Simpkins was born in Sarasota. She pursued a military life as

early as a teenager, when she was a Junior ROTC student at Riverview High School in south Sarasota. She struggled at first with some of the physical tasks, she recalls, saying her instructor told her “I don’t think you’re cut out for the military.”

Simpkins ultimately proved that teacher wrong. She had a diversion at first, working as a waitress at some St. Armands Circle restaurants for about eight years. Then she joined the Army, eventually becoming an intelligence analyst in South Korea. “I always wanted to get into the service,” she says. “I felt like it was my purpose.”

Simpkins was honorably discharged from the Army in 2010 after a traumatic injury. Declining to go into detail about what happened, Simpkins says it was a tough time in her life. “I know what it’s like to slip into that darkness,” says Simpkins, 43. “I know what it feels like when you feel like there’s no way out.”

Simpkins next went back to college. She graduated with a degree in psychology from the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee in 2014, then earned a master’s degree in social work from Columbia University in New York City in 2016.

She moved back to the Sarasota area and started working in counseling in private practice. Yet traditional therapies in many cases, she discovered, created more hardships for clients — not less. “I was six months out of school and feeling burned out because I wasn’t seeing any progress in the people I was working with,” she says. “I thought there has to be a way out of pain that doesn’t cause so much pain.”

## NAMASTE

Those experiences, plus some gaps she found in services through the Veterans Administration, led Simpkins to start OWR.

“Usually when a veteran reaches out for help they don’t know where to go or what they need or what will be useful for them,” she says on the OWR video. “And that’s OK because we do. And we can guide them in that process.”

From an operations perspective, Simpkins’ biggest challenge is having the infrastructure to support the growth she envisions with the new east Manatee campus.

Loosely related, among the two people she aims to hire is an executive director, so she can get out of being both



the head of operations and the chief fundraiser. About 65% of the organization’s budget comes from grants, while 35% comes from private donors. Simpkins would like to see that ratio be more like 50-50. (One recent grant was from the Barancik Foundation in Sarasota, which provided OWR \$850,000 “toward the purchase of a permanent state-of-the-art facility from which to base its operations and improve the quality of its holistic mental health care services for veterans.”)

Plans at the new site include providing space for equine therapy and building a barndominium to hold more yoga and meditation sessions.

In the meantime, Simpkins is focusing, she says, on making the new east Manatee space a “warm and welcoming” place for veterans to connect. “Community for the military is a real big deal to me,” she says, and so is creating a place “where (veterans) can find a common purpose and a common goal.”

Expansion plans are underway for a new 6-acre site Operation Warrior Resolution, founded by Kendra Simpkins, acquired in east Manatee County.

“  
*I thought  
there has to  
be a way out  
of pain that  
doesn’t cause  
so much pain.*

KENDRA SIMPKINS





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# calendar winter 2026

## DECEMBER

### DEC. 2

#### FESTIVE PHOTOS WITH SANTA

Santa Claus will be ready to greet you from 6:30-8:30 p.m. every Tuesday and Thursday at Lakewood Ranch Main Street.

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

### DEC. 3

#### 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. 7 and Feb. 4.

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

### RANCH NITE WEDNESDAYS

This midweek community event features food trucks, cornhole, live music and cocktails from Good Liquid Brewing & Scratch Kitchen. Ranch Nite continues every Wednesday through May from 6-9 p.m. at Waterside Place, 1561 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch.

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

### DEC. 4

#### WONDERLAND CIRCUS

Nothing says the holidays like the circus, especially when the star is Sarasota's hometown hero, Nik Wallenda. For the third year, superstar aerialist Wallenda teams up with the Circus Arts Conservatory to present "Believe," with returning favorites Master of Ceremonies Ty McFarlan, comedian Johnny Rockett and, of course, Nik Wallenda. Runs through Jan. 4 at the Big Top at UTC, 191 University Town Center Drive, Sarasota.

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

### DEC. 5

#### MUSIC ON MAIN

This monthly event returns on Lakewood Ranch's Main Street from 6-9 p.m. Enjoy a free concert by RJ Howson, food vendors, beer trucks and kids activities, along with the holiday tree-lighting. Proceeds will benefit



Photo by Harry Sayer  
William Cruzado and Carlos Benitez Aviles wow the crowd on the Wheel of Destiny at the 2024-25 Wonderland Circus: "Illuminate."

Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance.

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

### DEC. 6

#### LAKEWOOD RANCH BLUES FESTIVAL

Enjoy a day of local blues performers, food, drinks and vendors at Waterside Park, 7301 Island Cove Terrace, Lakewood Ranch. Gates open at 9 a.m., and the live music kicks off at 9:30 a.m. with Music Compound and closes with Desoto Tiger from 6:25-7:30 p.m. General admission is \$75; admission with a reserved cushioned seat in front of the stage is \$150.

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

### JINGLE & JOG

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 or \$15 for ages 1-17.

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

### DEC. 6-7

#### 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](http://ParagonFestivals.com).

### DEC. 7

#### THE MARKET AT LAKEWOOD RANCH

The Market at Lakewood Ranch, featuring fresh vegetables, produce,

## MEET SANTA

Restaurants around Lakewood Ranch and Waterside Place will host a meal with Santa Claus. Visit [LakewoodRanch.com](http://LakewoodRanch.com) for details.

■ Noon to 2 p.m.

**Dec. 6** at Good Liquid Brewing Co., 1570 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch

■ Noon to 2 p.m.

**Dec. 6** at Twisted Pit, 8130 Lakewood Main Street, Suite 104, Lakewood Ranch

■ 9-11 a.m. **Dec. 7** at Forked, 7600 Island Cove Terrace, Suite 100, Lakewood Ranch

■ 9-11 a.m. **Dec. 13** at Ed's Tavern, 10719 Rodeo Drive, Lakewood Ranch

■ Noon to 2 p.m.

**Dec. 13** at Agave Bandido, 1550 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch

■ Noon to 2 p.m.

**Dec. 14** at Allswell, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Unit 102, Lakewood Ranch

■ 9-11 a.m. **Dec. 20** at Remy's on Main, 8138 Lakewood Main St., Lakewood Ranch

■ Noon to 2 p.m.

**Dec. 20** at Deep Lagoon, 1540 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch

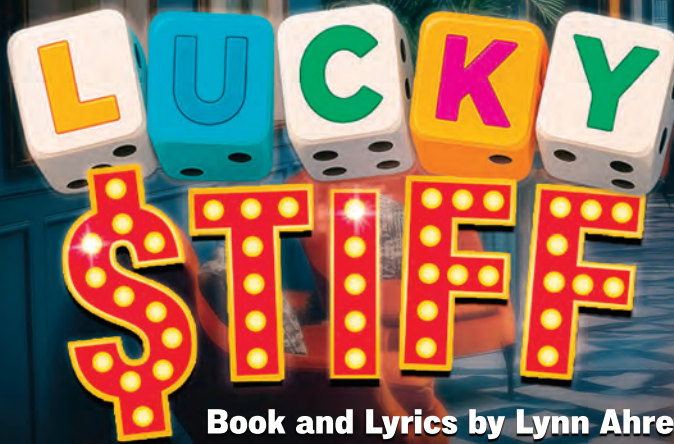
*Continued on Page 56*



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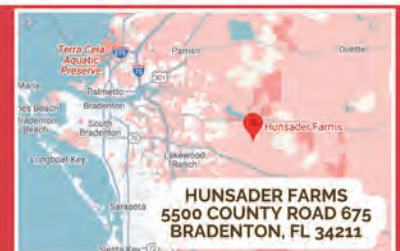
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*Continued from Page 54*

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, Lakewood Ranch. Continues every Sunday.

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

## **DEC. 12** **JINGLE 5K**

Move your feet to the jingling beat for this festive jingle bell run. The annual race begins at 7 p.m. at Lakewood Ranch Main Street. All runners receive a finisher's medal and a shirt. Festive music will be played throughout the course, and a party on Main Street with complimentary food and beverages will follow the race. The run/walk costs \$50; the kids race costs \$23; the virtual 5K option costs \$50. The race benefits Lakewood Ranch Medical Center Foundation and Big Bill Foundation.

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

## **MOVIE IN THE PARK: 'HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS'**

The family-friendly free movie night runs the second Friday of each month at Waterside Park, 7301 Island Cove Terrace, Lakewood Ranch. This month, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" will begin approximately at 8 p.m. The first 512 attendees can enjoy a free pizza slice. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs. Concessions will be available. Inflatables will be available for the kids at 6 p.m. Continues Jan. 9 and Feb. 13.

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

## **DEC. 13** **SARASOTA CARS AND COFFEE**

Join fellow car enthusiasts from 8-10 a.m. every second Saturday of the month at the West District at UTC, 125 N. Cattlemen Road, Sarasota. Enjoy complimentary coffee, local vendors and live music.

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

## **MAIN STREET MARKET**

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Lakewood Ranch Main Street, more than 70 local vendors will be out with food, beverages, retail and more at the bou-

tique market, hosted by Main Street Market LWR.

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

## **HOLIDAY SHOEBOX DRIVE & RECEPTION**

Drop in from 4-6 p.m. to donate money or decorated shoeboxes filled with items for seniors in need, supported by Meals on Wheels Plus of Manatee. Collections will be taken at the Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota Elks Lodge, 4602 Lena Road, Bradenton. Admission to the reception is free with a wrapped and filled shoebox or a \$20 donation.

■ Visit [MealsOnWheelsPlus.org/event](http://MealsOnWheelsPlus.org/event).

## **CHRISTMAS GLOW RUN 5K**

Nathan Benderson Park will be decked out in holiday spirit for this glow-in-the-dark run. Participants receive a cotton tank or tech shirt and a finish medal with entry. Race begins at 5:45 p.m. at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Registration is \$58 in advance or \$60 on race day. Parking costs \$10.

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

## **DEC. 14** **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 \$58 in advance or \$60 on race day. Parking costs \$10.

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

## **DEC. 15** **CHANUKAH ON MAIN STREET**

Chabad of Bradenton and Lakewood Ranch will celebrate Chanukah from 6-8 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](http://ChabadOfBradenton.com).

## **DEC. 18** **UTC NIGHT MARKET**

UTC's monthly night market is 6:30-9:30 p.m. at The Green at UTC, 125 N.



Photo by Lesley Dwyer

Cattlemen Road, Sarasota. Enjoy live music and more than 35 local vendors selling gifts, jewelry, art, handmade goods and more. Continues Jan. 15 and Feb. 19.

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

## **DEC. 19** **SIGHTS + SOUNDS: LAKEWOOD RANCH WIND ENSEMBLE**

The December event of the Sights and Sounds cultural series features the Lakewood Ranch Festival Band. The 22-member ensemble will perform traditional and nontraditional marches, as well as holiday favorites.

The free concert begins at 6 p.m. at Waterside Park, 1560 Lakefront Drive, Lakewood Ranch. Seating is limited.

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

## **DEC. 20** **CHRISTMAS ON MAIN**

Main Street at Lakewood Ranch goes big for the holiday season. Enjoy free rides and games from 4-6:30 p.m. and a candlelight service by Grace Community Church from 7-8 p.m.

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

Lakewood Ranch Main Street is overtaken by bubbles on Dec. 7, 2023, for Chanukah on Main Street.

*Continued on Page 58*





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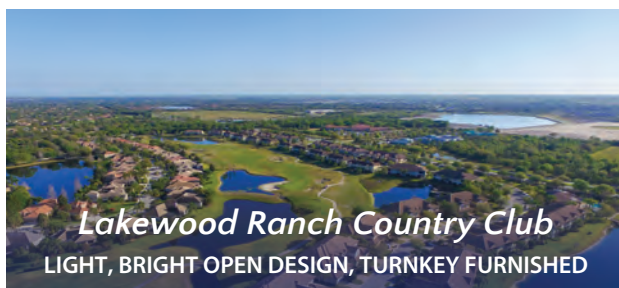
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Continued from Page 56

## DEC. 21

### 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 12, 2026.

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

## DEC. 31

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

Celebrate New Year's Eve at Waterside Place, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Lakewood Ranch. The event kicks off at 7 p.m. with live music, activities, and food and drinks and welcomes 2026 with a midnight drone show. Admission is free.

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

# JANUARY

## JAN. 2

### 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](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

## JAN. 11

### ALPHA WIN TRIATHLON SERIES

Test your endurance with a triathlon at Nathan Benderson Park, 5851 Nathan Benderson Circle, Sarasota. Three distance options are available for different experience levels. Individual registration is \$119 for the Alpha Sprint, \$209 for the Alpha Olympic and \$299 for the Alpha Long Course; discounts are available for military and youth. An awards ceremony follows for each distance.

■ Visit [Alpha.win](http://Alpha.win).

## JAN. 15

### MEGA CHALLAH BAKE

Chabad of Bradenton hosts its annual challah-making event for girls and women ages 9 and up at 7 p.m. at Grove, 10670 Boardwalk Loop Lane, Lakewood Ranch. The event is \$45 per person, and reservations are required.

■ Visit [ChabadOfBradenton.com/MegaChallahBake](http://ChabadOfBradenton.com/MegaChallahBake).

## JAN. 15-25

### MANATEE COUNTY FAIR

The Manatee County offers rides, games, livestock shows, musical entertainment and more at the Manatee County Fairgrounds, 1402 14th Ave. W., Palmetto. Hours vary by day. Tickets and information TBA.

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

## JAN. 17

### 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](http://MainStreetMarketLWR.com).

## JAN. 18

### 'NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS'

The Lakewood Ranch Wind Ensemble presents "New Year, New Beginnings" at 2 p.m. at Peace Presbyterian Church, 12705 E. S.R. 64., Lakewood Ranch. The concert features guest pianist Robert Boguslaw in George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" and Percy Grainger's "Children's March." Admission is \$15 or \$5 for students.

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

## JAN. 24-25

### 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 hand-made works of paintings, sculptures, photography, jewelry and more. Admission is free.

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

# FEBRUARY

## FEB. 6

### 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](http://LakewoodRanch.com).

## FEB. 7

### SUPERHERO FUN RUN/5K

Bridge a Life's annual Superhero Fun Run and 5K supports children in the



Photo by Jay Heater

local community. The 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 \$25-\$50 for the 5K and \$20-\$25 for the fun run. Superhero costumes are encouraged.

■ Visit [5KHero.com](http://5KHero.com).

## FEB. 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](http://MainStreetMarketLWR.com).

## FEB. 14 TO MARCH 8

### CIRCUS SARASOTA

Circus Arts Conservatory presents its Circus Sarasota 2026 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 \$40-\$100; parking is included.

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

Joaquin Arguello splits through a host of players to take a shot Dec. 31, 2024, at the Sarasota Polo Club.



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# All That Glitters

From shimmer to bubbly, this season's style scene is all about shining bright — and celebrating bold, beautiful moments.

BY EMILY LEINFUSS | CONTRIBUTOR

## Malibu Fox

140 University Town Center Drive, Suite 209  
941-667-5170; [MalibuFoxShop.com](http://MalibuFoxShop.com)

Malibu Fox makes dressing up effortless with this head-turning holiday trio. The Emory Park ruffle mini dress adds a playful twist, Anne Michelle's scarlet lace mules bring a whisper of vintage charm and Ettika's sculpted wrist cuff delivers a bold metallic statement. Together, they create a look that shines at every holiday gathering — festive, fearless and unmistakably chic.





## Men's Warehouse

243 N. Cattlemen Road, Unit 75  
941-351-1631; MensWarehouse.com

When the invite says formal but you're feeling fabulous, Men's Warehouse has your back. Slip into Stacy Adams smoking loafers — decked out in studs and topped with a bold metal logo — for instant edge and sparkle. Add a bow tie with painterly swirls, metallic shine and olive-gold flair and you're not just dressing up, you're owning the room.

Stacy Adams loafers: \$89.99



Bow tie: \$34.99

## Monkee's of Lakewood Ranch

1561 Lakefront Drive, Suite 104  
941-358-8868; MonkeesOfLakewoodRanch.com

Show your sparkle this season with Julie Vos jewelry — bold, timeless and unmistakably radiant. A gleaming emerald demi-cuff and a London blue pendant, both in 24K gold plate, add instant brilliance. With one shimmer, your holiday style transforms from lovely to unforgettable.

Julie Vos demi-cuff bracelet: \$285



Julie Vos blue pendant: \$145



Feathered evening clutch: \$93



Velvet evening clutch: \$89

## Scout & Molly's Lakewood Ranch

5275 University Parkway, Unit 132; 941-210-4686  
ScoutAndMollys.com

Nothing turns heads faster than the right party bag. Scout & Molly's feathered evening clutch, with its luxe marabou feathers and snappy closure, adds playful drama to any outfit. Prefer sleek? Go for the velvet crossbody in black or pewter with a detachable chain strap. Either way, your essentials are secure and your style is pure holiday glam.

*Continued on Page 62*



### Crate & Barrel

140 University Town Center  
Drive, 941-702-9900  
CrateandBarrel.com

### Fine Wine & Tastings on Main

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Unit J105, 941-355-4718  
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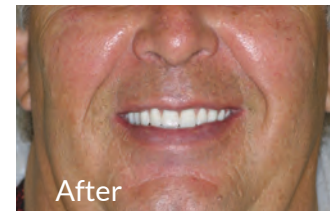
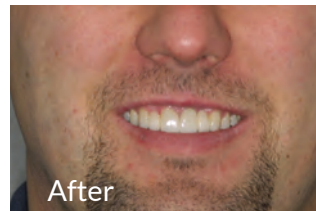
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- Post Doctoral Instructor of Full Mouth Reconstruction
- Member International Academy of Oral Biological Dentistry and Medicine
- Practicing dentistry for 33 years

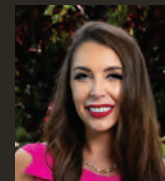
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# Something NEW is Cooking at the Ranch

These new Lakewood Ranch restaurants have innovation on the menu.

BY SU BYRON AND MARTY FUGATE | CONTRIBUTORS

Lakewood Ranch's dining landscape continues to evolve, driven by chefs and restaurateurs with an appetite for innovation. From artfully crafted sushi and authentic Texas barbecue to Dublin-inspired pub fare and health-forward bowl cuisine, a new generation of restaurants is adding depth and flavor to the community's culinary identity. Here's a glance at five new arrivals.



Photos by Lori Sax  
Espresso martini



The steak tartare —  
topped with a quail  
egg and served with  
crisp house chips





# Allswell

This lively gastropub blends neighborhood charm and big city sophistication. The brainchild of Tory Delaney and her husband, Darren Shore, they bring nearly 25 years of restaurant experience and passion to this new venture.

**THE BIG IDEA.** Outstanding tavern food in a jovial, casual setting. The pubs and taverns of the British Isles are the inspiration.

**INTERIOR DESIGN AND AMBIANCE.** Exposed brick, warm wood accents and cunning lighting. Inviting, not intimidating.

**SUPERSTAR DISHES.** The double-smash burger with hand-cut tallow fries is always a crowd-pleaser. Other favorites include pork medallions with pommes puree and drunken cherry butter sauce, buffalo chicken egg rolls and scotch eggs.

**DELIGHTFUL DETAILS.** The custom wallpaper on the back wall is a nod to the owners' history. According to Delaney, "We started with 1970s Irish post stamps, then replaced the images with photos of our family and loved ones, many of whom have passed. It's a way of weaving our story into the space."

**SATISFIED CUSTOMERS.** "Expats love us. Our Irish, British, Scottish and South African guests tell us that Allswell feels like home. Our authenticity means the world to them."

**IF YOU GO:** Allswell, 7500 Island Cove Terrace, Unit 102, Lakewood Ranch; 941-233-5448; AllswellSarasota.com.

*Continued on Page 68*



Classic fish and chips



# Kuro Sushi

This 21st-century sushi palace serves a spectrum of Japanese-inspired dishes and fresh sushi. There's a less-is-more philosophy — with an intimate sushi counter and abundant small plate options. Restaurateur and chef Daniel Dokko is the mastermind behind it.

**ORIGIN STORY.** Dokko has already launched three thriving area restaurants — Kore Steakhouse at Waterside and two iterations of JPan Sushi & Grill. Kuro is the next step in Dokko's creative evolution.

**THE BIG IDEA.** Dokko's vision is a contemporary spin on Japanese dining — high-end, but not elitist. "Kuro Sushi is all about mixing traditional Japanese flavors with a modern twist," says Dokko. "Think fresh sushi, bold flavors and creative presentations in a sleek but comfortable setting. It's the kind of place that works just as well for a date night as it does for hanging out with friends or just grabbing great sushi when you're craving something a little different."

**WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?** While Sarasota has no shortage of great sushi eateries, Dokko takes it to another level. "Kuro is about pushing the boundaries of what sushi and Japanese dining can be." It's an experimental, risk-taking attitude and not the same-old same-old.

**INTERIOR DESIGN AND AMBIANCE.** Architect David Morrison infused Kuro with warmth and openness. The sleek, modern space has a robata grill, a sushi counter, a full bar and 120 seats. His design is modernist, not minimalist. Dark wood panels and "thoughtful lighting" create a sense of theatricality.

**WHAT'S TO DRINK?** The menu includes craft cocktails, Japanese whiskies and curated sake selections.

**IF YOU GO:** **Kuro Sushi**, 8126 Main St., Lakewood Ranch; 941-422-5876; KuroSushi.Bar.

*Continued on Page 70*



**Above:** Restaurateur and chef Daniel Dokko stands outside his newest venture, Kuro Sushi, on Main Street in Lakewood Ranch — his latest evolution after Kore Steakhouse and JPan Sushi & Grill. Dokko and chef Brian Briones, **right**, bring a modern edge to Japanese cuisine at Kuro Sushi on Lakewood Ranch Main Street. Their less-is-more philosophy focuses on small plates, fresh ingredients and bold, contemporary flavors.





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# Flower Child

This fast-casual, Arizona-born eatery radiates good vibrations and serves up wholesome bowls, wraps and salads. The peace-and-love spirit that inspired celebrated restaurateur and James Beard Award nominee Sam Fox's first Flower Child has since blossomed into 42 locations nationwide — with Lakewood Ranch marking the 41st stop on his ever-growing journey to keep the summer of love going strong.

**THE BIG IDEA.** “Healthy food for a happy world” is the brand’s motto and mission, and it delivers. Flower Child’s cuisine nourishes both body and spirit. It’s health food with personality, not edible medicine.

**WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?** Flower Child’s wholesome bowls, fresh salads and wraps — all customizable with chicken, steak, shrimp, salmon or tofu — have already built a cult following. Add gluten-free desserts and playful drinks like rose petal lemonade, and it’s easy to see why Flower Child stands out. And if you’re in the mood for a little indulgence, there’s beer, wine and a killer sangria to round things out.

**INTERIOR DESIGN AND AMBIANCE.** The space is bright, airy and California-cool — with natural wood, greenery, murals and cheerful splashes of color. The sunny design lifts moods and fires appetites.

**SUPERSTAR DISHES.** It’s hard to pick just one. Fans rave about the Mother Earth Bowl — a colorful mix of ancient grains, roasted veggies, avocado and miso vinaigrette. The Flying Avocado Wrap and chicken enchiladas are also top picks, while the house-made hummus and gluten-free desserts keep everyone coming back.

**IF YOU GO:** **Flower Child**, 6532 University Parkway, Suite 160, Sarasota; 941-373-0199; [IAmaFlowerChild.com/Locations/Flower-Child-Sarasota-FL](http://IAmaFlowerChild.com/Locations/Flower-Child-Sarasota-FL)

*Continued on Page 74*



Courtesy photos

**Above:** Restaurateur and James Beard Award nominee Sam Fox, founder of Flower Child, has grown his feel-good dining concept into 42 locations nationwide. **Below-left:** Good vibes only. A Flower Child team member brings sunshine — and wholesome bowls — to every table. **Below-right:** Cheers to health and happiness: a toast with Flower Child’s signature rose-petal lemonade and seasonal sangria.







The Flower Child crew outside the Lakewood Ranch location — proof that “healthy food for a happy world” starts with a happy team.



Sharing made easy — guests dig into house-made hummus with a side of laughter and good company.

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Courtesy image

#### Above:

A sampler of Twisted Pit BBQ's smoked specialties, including brisket, turkey, ribs and house-made sides. Chef Evan Percoco says patience is the first ingredient in every recipe.

## Twisted Pit BBQ

The experienced restaurateurs Zach Zeller and Evan Percoco have turned this Main Street venue into a backyard barbecue dreamscape. As the duo behind the E-Z Restaurant Group, they've opened three Lakewood Ranch restaurants in just two years — and their latest, Twisted Pit BBQ, is already smokin' hot. Percoco explains why.

**THE BIG IDEA.** True to its name, Twisted Pit blends authentic Texas smoking traditions with fresh Florida flair. The result? Bold, soulful dishes — from fall-off-the-bone ribs to signature barbecue bombs — that keep fans coming back. "Patience is the first ingredient in every recipe," says Percoco. "We smoke our brisket for hours and brine and air-dry our turkey days before it hits the smoker."

#### INTERIOR DESIGN AND AMBIANCE.

Twisted Pit tricks your senses into thinking it's a backyard barbecue. Picnic tables rest on concrete floors painted like grass; fence slats adorn the walls; the scent of a newly mowed





Photo by Lesley Dwyer

lawn fills the air. They literally bring the outside in.

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?** Twisted Pit reflects both the cuisine and the founders' personalities. "Zach and I are both a little twisted, in the best way," says Percoco. "Our team is fun, our service is engaging and we don't take ourselves too seriously. Our name captures that energy."

**SUPERSTAR DISHES.** Smoked turkey brined for 24 hours, trays of brisket and ribs and scratch-made mac and cheese. Don't forget the Lakewood Ranch Water, made with silver tequila, guava puree, lime juice and sparkling water. Like it hot? Make it a Baja Bonfire with jalapeno lime juice and a Tajin glass rimmer.

**CHEF PERCOCO'S FAVORITE PART OF THE JOB?** Making new friends and welcoming old friends who return. "It's so amazing seeing the same people keep coming back. That's very rewarding."

**IF YOU GO:** Twisted Pit BBQ, 8130 Lakewood Main St., Suite 104, Lakewood Ranch; 941-388-8037; TwistedPitBBQ.com.

**Above:** Restaurateurs Zach Zeller and Chef Evan Percoco inside their latest venture, Twisted Pit BBQ, a backyard-inspired smokehouse blending Texas tradition with Florida flair.

*Continued on Page 76*

# IMAGINE

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# 131 Main

Steak, seafood, exceptional wines and an intimate ambiance set the tone. This Center Point Plaza newcomer is the fifth in Joe Douglas' family-run restaurant group. Like its North Carolina siblings, it's built on attentive service and thoughtful, made-from-scratch cooking — reimagined here with a hint of Gulf Coast flavor.

**ORIGIN STORY.** Restaurateur Joe Douglas brought 131 Main to Lakewood Ranch with his daughters Paige Riemke and Bailey Douglas, making it a true family affair. Their vision? An upscale yet comfortable restaurant serving American cuisine made from scratch every day. Douglas' goal is simple: he wanted to create a place that feels as welcoming as home, with food that's even better.

**INTERIOR DESIGN AND AMBIANCE.** Clean, modernist architecture inspired by the Alys Beach community. Inside, you'll find leather booths, wal-

nut tabletops, a dramatic open kitchen and stage lighting above every table. Original artwork by Florida artists hangs on the walls, highlighted by Luis Kaiulani's bold yellow sculpture.

**SUPERSTAR DISHES.** Douglas refuses to pick favorites. To him, it's like "choosing your favorite child." From flopping-fresh fish to racks of ribs to inventive

salads, he says there's nothing but superstars on the menu. Our suggestion: Do not leave without trying the cast-iron corn bread, the shrimp and grits and the rainbow trout.

**IF YOU GO: 131 Main Restaurant,** 6608 University Parkway, Lakewood Ranch; 941-394-0131; 131-Main.com/Lakewood-Ranch.

Photo by Lesley Dwyer  
Restaurateur Joe Douglas and his daughter Paige Riemke lead the family-run team behind 131 Main in Lakewood Ranch. The upscale yet welcoming restaurant is known for its made-from-scratch American cuisine, attentive service and Gulf Coast flair.



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### HEIDI K. ANDERSON, MD

#### Board Certified Dermatologist

has 20 years of experience in medical and surgical Dermatology. More than 16 of them have been in our local community. She believes in compassionate, comprehensive care and works with the patient to achieve quality outcomes. Her training started at Princeton University and continued at Wake Forest School of Medicine and the University Of Cincinnati School Of Medicine where she studied both Pediatrics and Dermatology.

She is a community faculty member at FSU and believes in educating on the Art & Science of Healthy Skin. To create balance; she loves her two young adults, rescue dogs, running and capturing her travels through photography.



### DR. LEAH S. COHEN, MD

#### Board Certified Dermatologist

is an Ivy League-trained Dermatologist who completed her residency at the nation's leading dermatology program—the University of Pennsylvania — where she was selected for the prestigious combined residency and cutaneous oncology fellowship program.

She earned her medical degree at FIU's Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, graduating #2 in her class, and was inducted into both the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society and the Gold Humanism Honor Society. She also completed a dedicated research

year in dermatology at Moffitt Cancer Center and the University of South Florida. Dr. Cohen received her undergraduate degree from Washington University in St. Louis. She's now thrilled to call sunny Sarasota her new home.

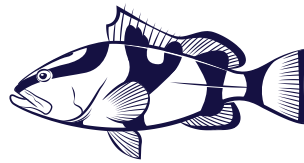


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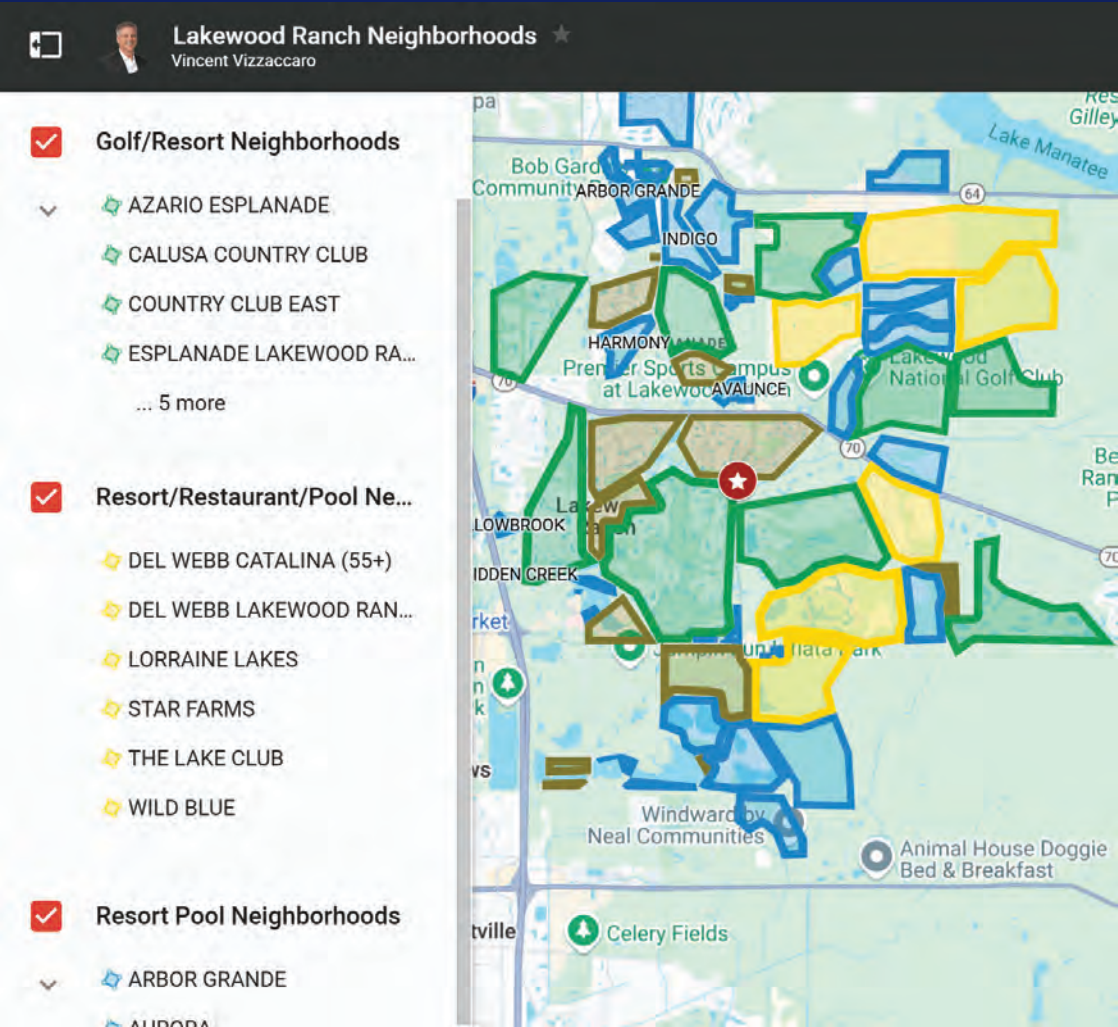
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# *Old Florida,*

At Jiggs Landing, fishing, food and live music come





# New Vibes

together on the banks of the Braden River. BY EMILY LEINFUSS | CONTRIBUTOR



Photos by Lori Sax

"Jiggs is a community asset in every sense," Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources Department Director Charlie Hunsicker says. "We've preserved a wonderful river and lake environment for this generation and the next."



**A**t Jiggs Landing Preserve and Outpost, mornings begin with the splash of paddles on the Braden River and end with live music drifting across the water. In between, visitors can fish, birdwatch, boat or simply relax in a lakeside cabin with a front-row view of Old Florida's natural beauty.

But Jiggs' appeal runs deeper than its peaceful scenery. More than a park and commissary with modern comforts, this ecological and cultural landmark has deep roots in Manatee County. Tucked along the Braden River where it widens into the Evers Reservoir, it connects nature, community and history in ways that are increasingly rare today.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In 1944, Al "Jiggs" Metcalf and his wife, Agnes, purchased 7 acres at 6106 63rd St. E., and opened a modest fish camp in 1945. Al, reportedly a large man, resembled the character "Jiggs" from the comic strip "Bringing Up Father." The couple used the waterfront property as both a homestead and a camp for fishermen, according to his niece, Sandy Metcalf, who lived with them as a teenager in one of the four cabins Al built.

For decades, the landing was a hub of Old Florida hospitality, with cabins for rent and long tables under the pines for family-style meals. But over time, the property changed hands multiple times, fell into disrepair, and by the early 2000s seemed destined for condo development.

That changed in 2007, when Manatee County's Parks and Natural Resources Department stepped in.

"The destiny of this property before Manatee County intervened was another multistory condominium," recalls Charlie Hunsicker, now the department's director. "What we have today is a peaceful retreat to an earlier time, with modern conveniences and an opportunity to see some truly incredible sunsets."

### PRESERVING LAND, WATER AND SPIRIT

Three years after the purchase and following major improvements — including new seawalls, an upgraded

*Continued on Page 84*



Denise Kleiner with her grandson James Kleiner.

“*From the beginning, Jiggs Landing felt like a community treasure, a place with soul, stories and the kind of charm that draws people together.*”

DENISE KLEINER



Musician David Fowler, a regular performer at Jiggs Landing Outpost, shares a song and a smile with locals gathered under the oaks.



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Continued from Page 82

boat ramp and reconstruction of the original four cracker-style cabins — the county reopened Jiggs Landing as a public preserve. The decision was as much about ecology as recreation: the 7-acre site borders the Evers Reservoir and the Braden River, which supply Bradenton's drinking water. By protecting this land, the county helped ensure the sustainability of that vital resource for generations to come.

Preserving the land and water was only the first step; restoring its spirit took longer. That's why Denise Kleiner, then (and still) owner of Florida Boat Tours, helped launch the Braden River Historical Society in 2007, to encourage preservation of Jiggs Landing's cultural and historical legacy.

The society initially aimed to save the historic cabins, but they were too far gone. Its next mission was to encourage the county to build a replica cabin to serve as a museum and reminder of the past. Before the originals were torn down, photographer Niki Butcher — wife of renowned landscape photographer Clyde Butcher — documented one of the old shacks. "It was covered in vines and bushes," she recalls.

Butcher later painted the photo in her signature style and donated it to support the replica project. "I really feel it's important to keep some of your history of a place so people in the future know what it took to build a community into a major city," Butcher says.

With funds raised, the replica cabin was furnished with period pieces, including a Kelvinator fridge, porcelain sink and enamel-topped table, Kleiner explains. In 2010, it opened as a tangible nod to an earlier time.

## A NEW ERA FOR FUN AND FOOD AND RECREATION

In 2016, Kleiner was named general manager of Jiggs Landing's commissary, "The Outpost" where, over time, she improved amenities and created the community hub you find today. That included reviving the bait shop and adding a café that served breakfast, lunch and snacks — where seniors gather for morning coffee, families arrive later for ice cream and sandwiches, and anglers come for a cold beer after fishing.

Continued on Page 86



Michael Kloss and Sarah Mason enjoy evening refreshments at Jiggs Landing Outpost.



The Outpost's bait and snack counter offers sandwiches, barbecue, ice cream and Florida nostalgia in equal measure.

*"I really feel it's important to keep some of your history of a place so people in the future know what it took to build a community into a major city."* NIKI BUTCHER



Before the original cabins at Jiggs Landing were torn down, photographer Niki Butcher documented one of the vine-covered shacks in her signature hand-colored style.





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\*\*Source: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33346082/>



Continued from Page 84

Kleiner also coordinates waterfront cabin rentals, which she upgraded to earn the name “glamping” rather than camping and, in addition to running the kayak rentals, she suggests three DIY experiences on the water: “Morning Glory” for sunrise and birdwatching; “Linger Lodge Expedition” for exploration; and “Sunset Kayak Paddle” for a “magical kayaking adventure.”

Live music has also been part of the Outpost’s charm since 2016. The singer and songwriter Raiford Starke was the first to play at Jiggs, offering what’s been called “good, old-fashioned, homemade music,” as well as “Southern swamp boogie.” Starke says he’s “like a human jukebox. I just want to make people happy and play music.” Starke was also the first to play at Jiggs once it reopened from the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown.

Today, during season, visitors will find a diverse roster of performers playing music most evenings, starting at sunset.

“I can hear the music from my house,” says wildlife photographer Janis Park-

er, who lives nearby. “What I like best about Jiggs is that kids can have an adventure here without really having to travel. The cabins, the playground, the barbecues — it’s perfect for families.”

Kleiner continues to view her core role as keeping the site’s history alive. “Jiggs Landing’s roots as a 1940’s fish camp are vital to preserve because they’re one of the few remaining threads of visible history in this part of Manatee County,” she says. “Protecting that history keeps the spirit of Old Florida alive and gives the community a sense of place that’s rooted in something real.”

## FISHING AND BIRDING

Fishing remains a central part of Jiggs Landing’s allure. Anglers can enjoy a variety of freshwater fishing opportunities from land or by boat. Their freshwater catch can include largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, bowfin, shell-cracker and gar, says Andy “Doc” Lee, a retired forest ranger and longtime angler who has reeled in all of the above. He also reveals that he’s caught many a tarpon and snook — saltwater fish that have made their way into Evers Lake



Photo by Jay Heater

**Right:** An osprey keeps watch over its nest high above the Braden River — just one of many wildlife sightings that draw birders to Jiggs Landing Outpost.



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Annie Wilson and Ze Ellis in Mark Morris’ *The Letter V* | Photo by Frank Atura

This program is funded, in part, by Sarasota County Tourist Development Revenues.





**Above, left:** Picnic pavilions, shaded trails and wide-open river views make Jiggs Landing a favorite gathering spot for families and nature lovers alike. **Above, right:** The cracker-style cabins at Jiggs Landing Preserve offer a nostalgic nod to the fish-camp past — each one restored for overnight stays overlooking the Braden River.

Photos by Lori Sax

and the Braden River. “Most saltwater species can live in freshwater, but they can’t reproduce here. Still, they’re in there, and that’s part of what makes fishing in Jiggs so special.”

Lee also values access to the only free boat launch in Manatee County where nighttime anglers, like himself, can buy a \$30 annual G.T. Bray Park card to access the river after sunset. “Three in the morning is when you’ll find me there,” he says. “It’s peaceful, with no light pollution. I’ve turned my head east and actually seen rocket launches from Cape Canaveral.”

Jiggs is also a hotspot for birding; just ask wildlife photographer Parker. Herons, egrets, ibis, hawks, ospreys and even roseate spoonbills appear regularly. Alligators, otters, turtles and raccoons are also common, she says.

“Easy access to the lake, fishing, nature education, Florida fish camp history and entertainment — it’s all here,” says Parker. The combination has made Jiggs not just a destination but a community hub, hosting fundrais-

*Continued on Page 88*



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Pontoon boats line the dock at day's end, ready for another round of fishing, eco-tours and sunset cruises on the Braden River.

*Continued from Page 87*

ers, private concerts, holiday parades and even a Halloween "Haunted Fish Camp."

### A COMMUNITY TREASURE

People love Jiggs for different reasons. For many, it's hobnobbing with familiar faces at the Outpost and the sense of stepping back into an earlier, slower Florida. Kleiner sums it up: "From the beginning, Jiggs Landing felt like a community treasure, a place with soul, stories and the kind of charm that draws people together. It wasn't just about restoring a place, it was about reimagining it as a hub for connection, recreation and shared memories."

Her hope — and the county's goal — is that Jiggs continues to be a place where families return, generations connect and the spirit of Old Florida thrives alongside the new. Charlie Hunsicker is right with her.

"Jiggs is a community asset in every sense," he says. "We've preserved a wonderful river and lake environment for this generation and the next. Right here in Manatee County, people can experience the Old Florida tradition of fish camps, with modern conveniences."

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Jiggs Landing Preserve is free and open daily, with access to trails, playgrounds and picnic areas. Cabins can be reserved online and the Outpost café serves food, drinks and sells bait. Live music at sunset is seasonal. Whether you come to fish, birdwatch, kayak or simply relax with a drink, Jiggs offers the best of Manatee County in one spot: history, hospitality and the beauty of Florida's rivers.



Photo courtesy of Janis Parker  
Wildlife photographer Janis Parker enjoys a sunset cruise on the Braden River, where she often captures scenes of the birds and wildlife that make Jiggs Landing such a peaceful escape.



Photo courtesy of Denise Kleiner  
Sunset at Jiggs Landing

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# CLEAR SAILING

Meet the members of the Sarasota Model Yacht Club, who find purpose, rivalry and plenty of laughter steering their ‘toy boats’ across Benderson Park’s Green Parrot Lake.

BY ERIC SNIDER | CONTRIBUTOR

It’s mid-September, on one of those mornings that tease you into thinking summer may be on the wane, even as you know it can’t possibly be true. The fellas in the Sarasota Model Yacht Club are taking advantage of the temperate weather. About two dozen of them — seniors all — stand by the bank of Green Parrot Lake in Nathan Benderson Park, controllers in their hands. Clad in fishing shirts, baggy shorts and broad-brimmed hats, they look on as sails flap in the ample breeze, another reason it’s an ideal day for racing their “toy boats.”

That’s what Bill Schmeising, the club’s commodore for the last three years, calls the vessels, with hulls a meter long and sails about five feet high. The Long Island native is a master in the art of self-deprecation — of himself, his club, his hobby.

“It keeps a bunch of degenerate old men off the streets,” he says.

A dozen of them are out sailing Soling 1-Meter boats — modeled after the full-sized Olympic Soling keelboat —

*Continued on Page 92*





Photos by Lori Sax  
From left: Bill Schmeising,  
John Stryhn and Al  
Knezevich display their  
radio-controlled Soling  
1-Meter yachts at  
Nathan Benderson Park's  
Green Parrot Lake.





Continued from Page 90

one of five fleets that race in the SMYC. It's a bucolic scene. Bonhomie abounds. Old dudes having a good time, bantering back and forth. But what appears at first to be an exercise in carefree fun has a seriousness beneath. These geezers are competitive — some more than others — and must follow a set of rules laid out by the American Model Yachting Association, essentially international sailing standards adapted for radio-controlled boats. The rules dictate right-of-way, contact between boats, penalties, starts, courses, scoring and more.

"We profess to follow the Corinthian spirit," Commodore Bill, 77, says with a smile and mock hauteur, "which means you sail as a gentleman. All of that can go out the window when the bell goes off."

Sometimes the sailors argue — mostly when boats bump into or impede each other — and it occasionally gets heated, although there is no record of one member throwing another in the lake. If a racing dispute remains unsettled at the end of a session, it goes to a protest meeting. "I sometimes have to remind the guys it's a toy boat you're sailing for a 50-cent ribbon," Commodore Bill says.

## TAKING THE HELM

The Soling sailors gather two to three mornings a week — depending on the season and weather permitting — to race for about three hours. They steer their boats twice around a course of two or more buoys that, depending on conditions, are stationed 200 to 300 feet apart. An appointed race director logs the finishes — standings, no times — and within a couple minutes it's on to the next run. The guys take a break in the middle.

Unlike the relative orderliness of real-size sailing races, these contests can look like a flock of ducks dosed with edibles — as in, all over the place. When riding with the wind, they're sleek and speedy. But making turns and heading into the wind can be random. A strong gust might push a boat out wide, requiring a drastic course correction, allowing several others to pass. When front runners cross the finish line, an inexperienced sailor might still be

Continued on Page 94



Sails catch the morning breeze on Green Parrot Lake as the Sarasota Model Yacht Club's Soling 1-Meter fleet rounds the buoys during a Saturday race.



“  
*I sometimes  
have to  
remind  
the guys  
it's a toy  
boat you're  
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**COMMODORE BILL  
SCHMEISING**

Commodore Bill Schmeising shares a laugh with fellow club members during a morning of sailing and good-natured rivalry at Benderson Park.





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struggling to complete the first lap.

"Think about it," Commodore Bill says. "With normal sailing, you're on the boat. You can feel the boat, you have a beautiful view of what's going on on the boat. Here, you're not on the boat. You're watching the boat go by from a distance, so you have to concentrate on that and translate that into your thumbs."

The handsets have only two controls — for the sail and the rudder. Further, all the Soling boats are identical except for their color schemes. They must be the same size, have the same sails and weigh at least 10 pounds. That levels the playing field, making it all about skill.

But how much skill? How much time does it take to become a competent radio-controlled yacht racer? Well, we're not talking 10,000 hours. More like 10, according to Commodore Bill. About 75% of SMYC members have previous experience sailing full-size boats. That helps because it enables them to read the water and anticipate the

wind. Commodore Bill says that these folks can become proficient in just two or three hours. Candidly, that sounds generous, and it may be a sales pitch to get more people to come out.

But it's plain to see that even if you're bad, it's still fun. And newbies — who might get in the other sailors' way or otherwise create havoc — don't take heat from the veterans. In fact, the vets go out of their way to help out the rookies. "We've all been novices," Commodore Bill says. The club welcomes newcomers with open arms. Here's a familiar scenario: A curiosity seeker will saunter up to the group. One of the members will hand them a controller and say, "This is the rudder, these are the sails, knock yourself out," Commodore Bill explains.

It's all part of the egalitarian nature of the sport. So is the cost to set sail. SMYC charges \$75 in yearly dues. A newcomer can buy a boat and the necessary equipment for \$500 to \$800. Further, race attendance is up to the member. Sailors can show up three times a week year-round, or a couple times a year.



Members of the Sarasota Model Yacht Club — controllers in hand and eyes Nathan Benderson Park for friendly competition and camaraderie.



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## A LIFELINE

This Saturday morning's two front-runners are Commodore Bill and "Boatyard John" Stryhn, 77, an 11-year member who stands about 6-foot-5 and lives in Central Park in Lakewood Ranch. He's the go-to guy for repairs, paint jobs and new boats. (He gets paid, but not a lot.)

Al Knezevich, the club treasurer, is another top sailor. He has been appointed race director for this session, so he has put his controller aside. Knezevich, 83, and I sit next to each other in folding chairs, with him dividing his attention between director duties and giving me race play-by-play. The Indiana native and his wife lived around the U.S. and in Europe, then on a 42-foot trawler for several years before returning to land and eventually buying a home in the Indigo neighborhood.

Knezevich had read blurbs in the local newspaper about this model sailing club. One day about 10 years ago he popped down to the lake and ran into a couple of acquaintances. He signed

*Continued on Page 96*



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up straight away. "It's healthy psychologically, emotionally," Knezevich says. "It's a support mechanism for guys our age."

The SMYC consists of 80 dues-paying members, which makes it one of the largest model sailing clubs in the country. Its ranks are overwhelmingly male — one woman actively participates — and white. Hardly anyone is under 60. One Soling racer is 91. Commodore Bill estimates that during the summer about 25 sailors turn out. When the weather cools, and the snowbirds return, that number swells to as many as 60. It's during these times that the races draw a few spectators who come to relax and take in the idyllic tableau.

The SMYC launched in 1996 when Milt Thrasher and Dick Sherman built their own Soling models and raced them in the lake behind Thrasher's house in Sarasota. (Both are now deceased.) The club's ranks grew rapidly.

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From left: Warren Swanson, Al Knezevich, John Stryhm, Bill Schmeising, Jim Green and Chris Wingardt get ready for the next race at Nathan Benderson Park's Green Parrot Lake.

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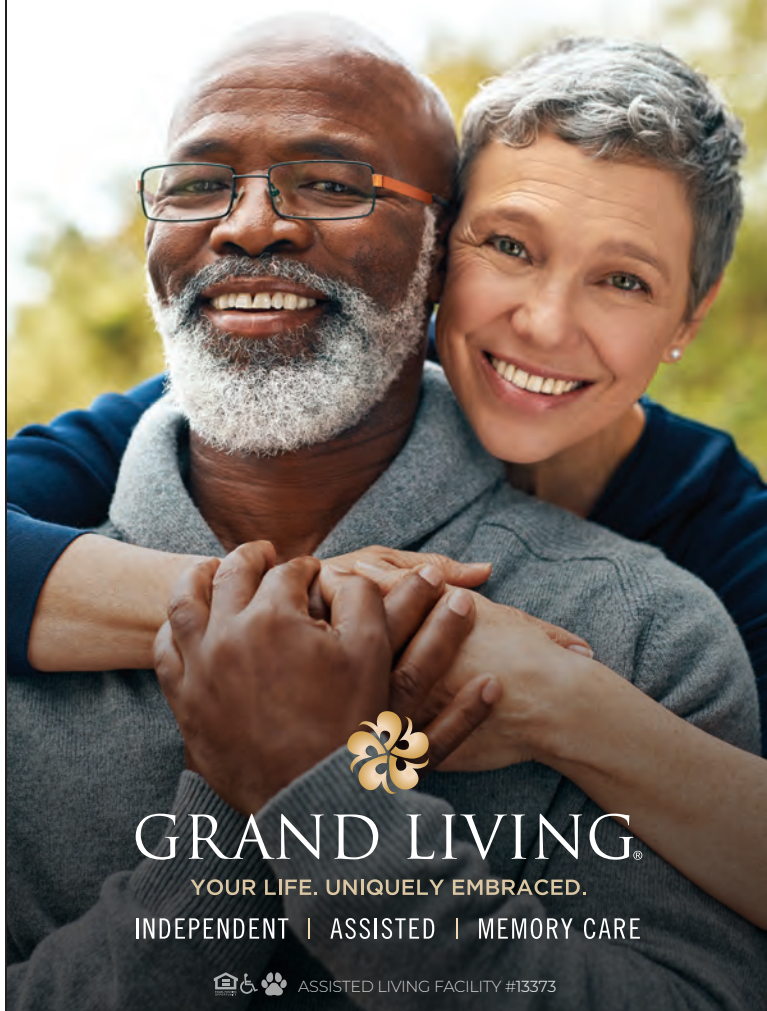
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Continued from Page 96

The races hopped from lake to lake until settling in Benderson Park in 2015.

The SMYC would love to grow its numbers — in part because the age of its members guarantees regular attrition. The group has scored newspaper stories and featurettes on local TV, which has boosted membership a little. A couple of residents at Plymouth Harbor, a high-end, high-rise retirement community in Sarasota, contacted the club about starting a splinter squadron after the summer is over. And there's always the dream of attracting younger folks. "We'd like to," the commodore says. "But it's difficult for people who work during the week. Basically, it's a retiree sport."

All told, the SMYC is, at its core, an object lesson in male fellowship, which becomes harder and harder as men age. The sport offers friendly competition, mental and physical engagement, and the challenge of conquering a new skill. Sailing gets them off the couch

Continued on Page 100



Bill Schmeising, commodore of the Sarasota Model Yacht Club, at the helm of his "toy boat" on Green Parrot Lake.



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*Continued from Page 98*

and outdoors and provides members a vast social circle with a shared interest.

In Commodore Bill's memory, the club has only dealt with one real jerk. "The commodore at the time gave him his money back and said, 'Do us a favor and don't come back,'" he recalls.

On Saturdays, some of the sailors convene to a post-race lunch, currently held at Glory Days Grill in University Town Center. For their annual club dinner at the Peridia Golf & Country Club, the members bring their spouses. "At the dinner the wives joke, 'God, we hate when they have to cancel,'" Bill says with a wry smile. Libations flow, ribbing ensues, awards get handed out, some with a touch of irony — like "Most Creative Sailor." One year, Knezevich earned the honor for plunking his boat into the dock just as he was about to win a race. (His model yacht emerged unscathed.)

The SMYC members share an understanding that, while sailing toy boats is important, it's not that important.

"It's a hobby, y'know," Commodore Bill says. "It's not a way of life."

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# HAVEN

SPOTLIGHTING LIFE ON THE RANCH

Drama and luxury characterize this estate size home in the Lake Club. **PAGE 106**

Photos courtesy of Stacy Haas and Michael Saunders & Company  
Long views over a tranquil lake add a special touch to this 5,000-square-foot home in the Tuscan-inspired community.









---

# Classic Form, Modern Spirit

This Lake Club home balances timeless design with contemporary comfort — and the distinctive artistry of its owners.

BY ROBERT PLUNKET | CONTRIBUTOR

Left: The formal living room boasts a striking painting of a rhino, acquired during a recent safari in South Africa.





Bold color choices enliven the home's expansive kitchen, with multiple prep countertops and seating areas.

Sometimes the happiest houses seem to resemble their owners. One striking example is Brian and Marilyn Keemer's home in the Lake Club. It has a unique style and is packed with carefully crafted details. The visual effect is stunning. But what really sets the home apart is something you rarely find these days — a sense of adventure.

The tone is set by the enormous rhino in the living room. No, not a real rhino, but a 10-foot-high portrait. The Keemers bought it in Johannesburg, South Africa, during a recent visit. One look and they knew it belonged in the home they built 13 years ago.

Much of the home's success is due to Brian's career in engineering. He works with multinational companies and municipalities to help them develop systems incorporating technol-

*Continued on Page 110*



Photo by Lori Sax

The Keemers enjoy the lush landscape of their Lake Club neighborhood, where their home's views and tranquil setting embody Lakewood Ranch's elegant ease.





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*Continued from Page 108*

ogy and — now A.I. — to improve the way they do business. This attention to detail can be seen everywhere in the home. Some are practical. (He insisted on a subfloor to prevent cracking of tile.) And some are fabulous. Smart features abound and everything can be operated from your cell phone.

The home, a custom Todd Johnston model, took over six months to design. Taking advantage of the superior location was a priority. The site, well over half an acre, is a spectacular one, with southeastern views out to a large lake dotted with other estate-size homes. "We designed it with awesome views from each room," Brian explains, "and we made sure that each space is conducive to our entertaining style."

But if Brian is the brains behind the

The home's primary suite is an escape for privacy and relaxation. Color choices are muted and calming, with a special TV area overlooking both the lake view and the home's pool.

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it with  
awesome  
views from  
each room.*

**BRIAN KEEMER**

*Continued on Page 112*



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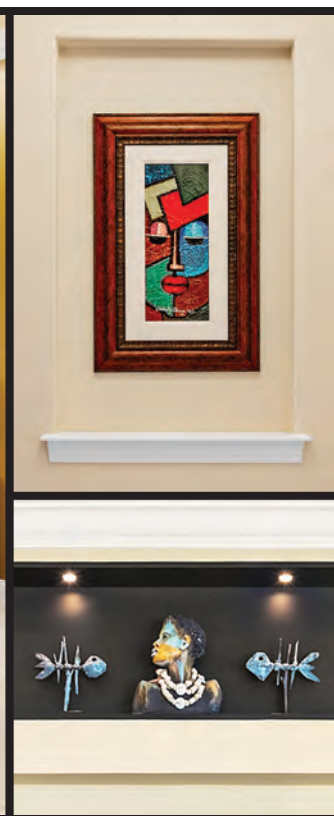


Continued from Page 110

design, Marilyn, who handled the decorating, is the heart and soul. "I was looking for something sophisticated and elegant," she recalls. "But at the same time, I wanted it to be warm and inviting." She combed the various design centers in New York looking for unique flooring, tiles and accessories. The color scheme came early. "We both like earth tones, so I chose gold and brown." She then added some leopard prints to bring a touch of the exotic. "We wanted to keep the design timeless, not trendy."

The result is a sophisticated mix of elements that grab the eye and demand closer examination. Large statement pieces are everywhere; in addition to the rhino, you'll find a dramatic grouping of Thayer Coggin furniture in the living room. The dining room is notable for the giant tusks that add panache to the sideboard.

Art is everywhere. The Keemers travel extensively (Marilyn runs a



The formal dining room offers opulent draperies and leopard print chairs. At right, examples of the carefully curated art collection that enlivens the Keemer home.

Continued on Page 114

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Continued from Page 112

travel agency that specializes in cruises) and on each trip they bring home something new — and often spectacular. One of their favorite artists is Julio Garcia, whose work illuminates the home with abstract designs and bold colors. “His work arouses your imagination with each glance,” Marilyn marvels. Another favorite is the sculptor, Woodrow Nash. His work integrates a myriad of facial expressions with male and female physiques. The Keemers have been collecting his pieces since the early 1980s, long before he became internationally known.

Marilyn’s kitchen epitomizes the home’s fusion of the visual and the practical, but in an almost indulgent way. “I love being able to gaze out at the sunset shimmering over the lake while I cook,” she says. The cabinets are black, a bold choice, and there is everything a serious cook could wish for. Top-of-the-line appliances, including a Thermador double oven, plus a



The kitchen and adjoining family room overlook a spectacular view out to the lake. The space is perfect for informal entertaining, Marilyn Keemer reports.

Continued on Page 116

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*Continued from Page 114*

six-burner gas stove top and a total of four refrigerators. In addition to the view out to the lake, there are two prep islands, which make it perfect for laying out a spread for a party, either buffet style or with servers.

The entire home is beautifully set up for entertaining, a fact the couple's friends appreciate when the Super Bowl rolls around each winter. Then, 80 or so of their nearest and dearest will gather for a memorable blow-out. Much of the action takes place in the kitchen and adjacent family room, but it always spills over into the outdoor living area, with its own complete kitchen or into the remarkable media room, with several giant TVs and a real bar with granite counter.

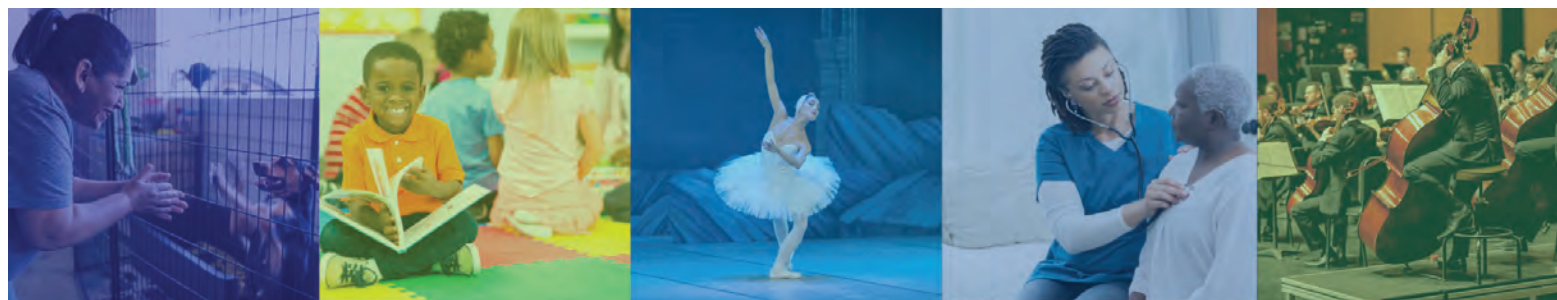
Die-hard football fans may well end up in the adjacent theater. Here, the home reaches its most dramatic moment. The seating is overstuffed elongated chaise-lounge type chairs and the decorative theme has an African vibe.



The home's bar and media room get full use during the Keemer's annual Super Bowl parties, along with the adjacent theater with its specially designed sound system.



*Continued on Page 118*



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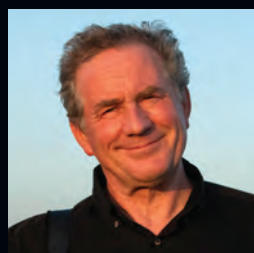
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*Continued from Page 116*

Tribal masks hang on the walls and the walls are covered with plush leopard print carpeting. But Brian's input has elevated the technical aspects. The ceiling soars to over 11 feet and the screen itself is 133 inches. There are 15 speaker zones and they are designed so that a helicopter in the movie will seem to fly from one end of the theater to the other.

The home's primary suite, entered through a vestibule with double doors, has a relaxed atmosphere, done in various complementing shades of cocoa and crème. There's a morning bar and, positioned to capture sunset views, an intimate TV area. The primary bath is particularly luxurious, with a large 6-foot soaking tub — spacious enough for two — that features a Jacuzzi whirlpool. There's also a Roman-style shower with dual entries and a variety of shower heads, both overhead and handheld.

The Keemer house is big — over 5,000 square feet, with three bedrooms



*Continued on Page 120*

The expansive primary bath is full of unexpected luxuries, including a Jacuzzi tub and a walk-in shower with a selection of shower heads.



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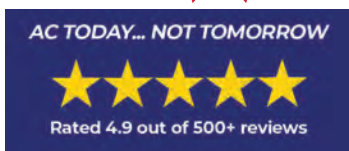
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*Continued from Page 118*

and four-and-a-half baths — but it fits the lifestyle of a busy married couple perfectly. Both Brian and Marilyn have their own offices, Brian's is near the front entrance and Marilyn's is tucked near the guest rooms. On the wall of Marilyn's office is a map of the world with a pin for each place she and Brian have journeyed to, both on vacation or as part of her cruise travel business.

But the Keemers have reluctantly decided to put their home on the market. Downsizing, you might expect. But no, the new home may well be smaller but that's not the main motivation. As far as they're concerned, it's going to be their new adventure.

The home's outdoor living area features a full kitchen, numerous seating areas and a dramatically lit spa.



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Photo by Mikenna Bowers

Clara discovers the magic of her Nutcracker in The Sarasota Ballet's "The Nutcracker."



A costumed couple turns heads at one of Art Center Sarasota's legendary Beaux Arts Ball, a dazzling tradition set to return in March as part of the organization's yearlong centennial season celebration.



Courtesy photos

Bass-baritone William Socolof brings warmth and clarity to Aaron Copland's beloved American folk songs in Sarasota Orchestra's "Copland: An American Journey," January 4 at Sarasota Opera House.





**Above:** "All Is Calm," Peter Rothstein's moving tribute to the 1914 Christmas Truce, returns to the Asolo Repertory Theatre this December.

**Right:** Directed by Meg Gibert, "Job" examines the human cost of the modern 9-to-5 at Urbanite Theatre.



fellowship. You'll hear the soldiers' words, in quotes drawn from letters and diaries. You'll hear their songs in Erick Lichte and Timothy C. Takach moving arrangements. It's a fitting tribute to the "Christmas Miracle." And the bold leap of faith that made it happen. December 3-19. *Visit AsoloRep.org.*

### THE SORROWS OF 'JOB'

Work-life balance? That's not in the job description — especially in Big Tech. Directed by Meg Gilbert, Urbanite Theatre's production of Max Wolf Friedlich's "Job" examines the human cost of the modern 9-to-5. Jane, an ambitious young tech employee, seemed destined for success until an ugly viral video made her the story instead of the storyteller. The company promptly put her on leave. Now, she just wants her job back. But that decision rests with Loyd, the company therapist, who suspects Jane might be damaged goods. Their evaluation begins politely enough, but the conversation soon spirals into a psychological duel — moral, generational and existential. At its core lies one burning question:

What do we owe each other in the digital age? Friedlich's sharp, tightly wound thriller delivers 80 minutes of crackling tension and no easy answers. You might think twice before sending in your résumé. Runs Jan. 9–Feb. 15. *Visit UrbaniteTheatre.com.*

### VISIONS OF SUGAR PLUMS

Santa makes a magical visit every holiday season. Thanks to the Sarasota Ballet, so does "The Nutcracker." Take center stage with its beloved annual production of Tchaikovsky's classic, where the curtain rises on a world of wonder. Snowflakes swirl, toy soldiers march, and Clara and the Nutcracker Prince battle the Mouse King before journeying to the Land of the Sugar Plum Fairy. It's an enchanting escape from the ordinary. You've probably seen it before — but see it again. With Robert de Warren's choreography, Tchaikovsky's glorious score, world-class dancers and lavish sets and costumes, this holiday tradition never grows old. December 12–13 at Venice Performing Arts Center. December 21–23 at Sarasota Opera House. *Visit SarasotaBallet.org.*



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*table talk*

# Steve Bishop of B&B Chophouse & Market

Sizzle, spirit and steak  
— the B&B way.

BY MARTY FUGATE | CONTRIBUTOR

**A**t B&B Chophouse & Market in Lakewood Ranch, owners Ron Fuller and Steve Bishop serve up the best of both worlds — a refined steakhouse experience with hometown heart. The chophouse delivers classic cuts and modern flair, while the market next door lets guests take the flavor home. Bishop dishes on the inspiration behind this savory concept — and the team that brings it to life.

## **B&B Chophouse's origin story is ...**

... a leap of faith in 2020. My partner Ron Fuller and I had been in the steakhouse business for decades. During the pandemic, we moved out of our restaurant on St. Armands Circle. We decided to create our own modern spin on the classic chophouse in Lakewood Ranch.

## **Our approach to steak and seafood is ...**

... uncompromising. Everything is USDA prime or higher. We cut and grind most of our beef in-house, and even have a dry-aging system. Our seafood comes in fresh from the Gulf several times a week. It's all about top quality at neighborhood-friendly prices.

## **The market aspect sets us apart because ...**

... every cut of meat we serve is available to take home. From filet mignon to Wagyu tomahawks, guests can shop in

our butcher's market right when they walk in.

## **My favorite cut of steak on the menu is ...**

... the bone-in cowboy ribeye. "Fat is where it's at," as we say — and ribeye has the finest marbling. Our infrared broiler gives it a perfect sear and locks in flavor.

## **Our signature dishes include ...**

... our slow-roasted prime rib, seasoned with a proprietary bourbon-brown sugar blend; Jack's Creek Wagyu from

Australia (a world champion steak); and a constantly changing "fresh sheet" featuring seafood and wild game.

## **First-time guests are surprised by ...**

... the space itself. From the outside, you wouldn't expect a 9,000-square-foot dining room, a giant bar and a lively patio. Inside, it feels upscale yet fun, with private nooks for dining and a speakeasy vibe.

Co-owner Steve Bishop inside B&B's Barrel Room, a cozy space that pairs fine dining with a relaxed, speakeasy vibe.



Photos by Lori Sax

*Continued on Page 126*



# LAKEWOOD MAIN STREET


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 Percoco's Pizza & Pasta


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BBQ

8130 Lakewood Main St Ste 104  
941-388-8037

 Twisted Pit BBQ


 @twistedpitbbq


Twisted Pit delivers Texas-style barbecue in a laid-back, backyard-inspired setting with smoked meats, scratch-made sides, and a bar built for good times-red solo cups and all.

With 23 rotating taps, an expanded stage, and weekly events like comedy, bingo, and live music, The Peculiar Pub is a neighborhood hangout blending craft drinks, elevated pub fare, and nonstop entertainment.

  
the  
**peculiar pub**  
bites and brews

8141 Lakewood Main St #103  
941-822-8131

 Peculiar Pub

 @thepeculiarpub





Continued from Page 124

**Our setting elevates the dining experience with ...**

... little touches like tableside, flaming cheesecake, live piano on weekends and cool jazz at Sunday brunch. We're lively but not stuffy.

**Don't leave B&B without trying ...**

... our bourbon-lacquered bacon, cut thick in-house, or our three-course dinner special — it highlights guest favorites like baby wedge salad, filet mignon and Rockefeller pasta.

**Don't forget the bourbon!**

We offer one of our region's largest bourbon selections — over 200 bottles, including rare finds like Pappy Van Winkle and Blanton's Gold. Our custom bourbon flights make even top-shelf pours affordable.

**My top culinary hero is ...**

... Danny Meyer. His book, "Setting the Table," redefines hospitality, and that's what we strive to embody here.

**Aside from B&B, my favorite local spots are ...**

... Island Time Bar & Grill and Bridge Street Bistro on Bradenton Beach and Riviera Dunes Dockside in Palmetto. We own those restaurants, too — so I don't claim to be objective!

**If I could share a steak dinner with anyone living, dead or imaginary ...**

... it would be Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson. I'm an avid golfer, so that'd be my dream table.

**The heart of the B&B experience is ...**

... our people. From the moment you walk in, you're greeted by Kit Bradman, our general manager. She knows more customers by name than anyone I've ever met. Our team has been with us for years — they bring the whole place to life.

**IF YOU GO**

**B&B Chophouse & Market**  
8205 Natures Way, Suite 119,  
Lakewood Ranch; 941-893-5403;  
BandBChophouse.com



**Above:** A perfectly seared cowboy ribeye — one of B&B's signature cuts — served with a loaded baked potato and bourbon-lacquered flair. **Right:** B&B's Signature Blended Whiskey, crafted exclusively for the restaurant, anchors one of the region's most extensive bourbon collections.

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The space is a stunner, and the deals are just as exciting. Enjoy Happy Hour daily from 3 to 6 pm and from 9 pm to close on Fridays and Saturdays. BOGO half-off starters are available every day from 2 to 4 pm. Add in Five Star Fun and daily deals, and you have your new favorite spot on the Ranch. Come see what the buzz is about!

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## C'EST LA VIE

Locally owned and operated by Christophe and Geraldine Coutelle, this award-winning local favorite opened in 1997. Experience an authentic French café for breakfast, lunch, coffee, house-made French dessert, or a glass of wine! The Downtown Sarasota location is open seasonally for dinner starting in December; hours are posted on [cestlaviesarasota.com](http://cestlaviesarasota.com). Featuring monthly wine-pairing dinners on select evenings, C'est La Vie is also available for creating party platters and customized cakes and desserts!

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941.961.0111 • Open Tue-Sat 7:30a-5p, Sun 8a-4p

**1553 Main St, Sarasota • 941.906.9575**  
Open Mon-Tues 7:30a-6p  
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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](http://EdsTavernFL.com).

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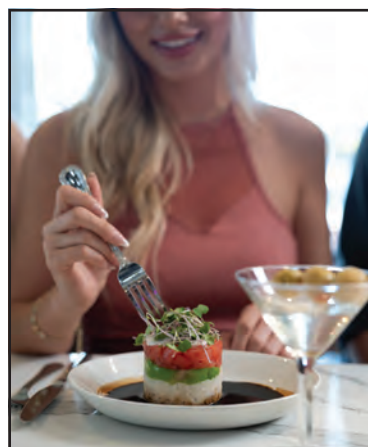


## FLORENCE AND THE SPICE BOYS

Never ordinary, always extraordinary, and with a nod to Middle Eastern Street Food, people have been raving about Florence and the Spice Boys since their food truck rolled up in 2019. And, now with two locations, foodies can easily experience visually stunning dishes that pack a punch of flavor. The menu features smaller plates great for sharing along with craft cocktails and mocktails. Fan favorite: the tumeric fried chicken sandwich with Okonomi sauce and Kewpie mayo. New rotating artisanal specials offered every month. Catering available.

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DINING OUT





# *PARTING GLANCE*

Photo by Gordon Silver  
This firecracker plant  
is bursting with blooms  
and attracting lots of  
bees in Del Webb.



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