

# WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

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PHOTOS BY GARTH FRANCIS / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

## EXTENSIVE TRAILS SYSTEM

IS A THOUGHTFUL PART OF MASTER PLAN FOR WELLEN PARK

**BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA**

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

**R**ick Severance, president of Wellen Park, walks the walk. Or, more accurately, runs the run. An avid runner, Mr. Severance can be found several nights a week on the Wellen Park pathways and trails. This not only helps him personally to stay fit but gives him insight as to how residents and community members are utilizing these amenities.

“I love the various use types and multigenerational use,” Mr. Severance says. “And I’m amazed at how many people wave to each other as they cross paths.”

SEE TRAILS, A15 ►



▲ Members of the South County Runners Club on a recent run.

◀ A Wellen Park resident enjoying an afternoon stroll on one of the community pathways.

“The mixed-use building will become a signature backdrop for Downtown Wellen’s outdoor spaces, defining it as an active and thriving lifestyle destination.” — Alan Wold, New Orleans architectural firm of Trapolin-Peer.

## A signature building for downtown Wellen Park

**BY RUSTY PRAY**

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

One day in the not-too-distant future, Wellen Park will offer a downtown to residents and visitors, a welcoming, walkable destination

that will have something special for everyone. The face of Downtown Wellen will be a two-story mixed-use building that includes retail and restaurants on the first floor and office space on the second. Construction is expected to start this summer and be completed in 2022.

The character of the 32,500-square-foot building will help define Wellen Park’s downtown for years.

“The mixed-use building will become a signature backdrop for Downtown Wellen’s outdoor spaces, defining it as an active and

thriving lifestyle destination,” says Alan Wold, a member of the design team at the New Orleans architectural firm of Trapolin-Peer.

Mr. Wold says planners had in mind using the facility as a “destination building — something

SEE BUILDING, A4 ►

### Play ball

Spring training kicked off at CoolToday Park. **A42** ►



### Wander with Wellen

A peaceful habitat beckons wildlife — and those who want to know it. **A8** ►



### Pet parade

A celebration of Wellen Park’s adored and adorable animal companions. **A14** ►



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AROUND TOWN

# A. Lys Brows & Beauty

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

You'll put on a happy face after visiting A. Lys Brows & Beauty, which opened last July in the Wellen Park Marketplace.

The business offers services and products to enhance natural beauty, promote relaxation, reduce stress and help people look and feel their best.

It's something that mother-and-daughter owners Arpina Lys and Liana Dorgelus have been doing for years.

"We had a location that was too small and were hearing a lot about the upcoming development in Wellen Park," says Ms. Lys. "We were presented with a great opportunity to open up in this plaza.

"It's such a great location," she continues. "We have a lot of exposure from people going to Publix and Irma's Tacos next door."

Ms. Lys is a licensed esthetician with an artist's eye for eyebrow shaping. She received her training as a facial specialist from the Florida College of Natural Health. Ms. Dorgelus received her esthetic training from the Florida School of Electrolysis and Skin Care. She is certified in brow threading, makeup applications and skin treatments. Both are also licensed permanent makeup tattoo artists.

Ms. Lys says their most popular service is threading eyebrows as well as upper lips, chins and full faces.

"We're the only ones between Sarasota and Fort Myers (who offer this treatment)," she says. Threading, she explains, provides a crisp, sharp eyebrow look in less than 10 minutes. Compared with waxing or tweezing, it's much cleaner and gentler on the skin. "It's the most precise way to shape the eyebrows," she says, adding people who use Retin-A on their



COURTESY PHOTO

Arpina Lys works her relaxation magic on a customer.

skin should not wax because that can damage the sensitive top layer of their skin.

Other services at A. Lys Brows & Beauty include facials, eyelash and eyebrow tinting, individual eyelash extensions, microblading and permanent makeup and semi-permanent makeup.

They recently added lash lifting, which Ms. Lys describes as "like a perm" that lifts the eyelashes. The treatment can include tinting. "The beauty industry is growing. New techniques and services are being introduced," she says. "We like to stay on top of what our customers want."

Both women and men come to the salon. Men often want their eyebrows reshaped, deep cleaning facials, removal of skin impurities such as milia and skin tags, and skin

treatments for broken capillaries and hyperpigmentation.

The duo has a location in Port Charlotte and is opening another later this year in the Cocoplum Village Shops in North Port.

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# BUILDING

From page 1

recognizable that people can orient themselves to when they're in Downtown Wellen.

Renderings suggest a structure that fits into the laid-back Southwest Florida style: low cut, Spanish influence, pastels. The design includes covered walkways, three restaurants, patio dining and other amenities.

"A core aspect of the design is its connection to the outdoor spaces the building occupies," Mr. Wold says, adding the restaurants will have outdoor seating and café seating as well. And most of the parking will be in the rear of the building in order to enhance the pedestrian experience.

The building's second floor, accessible via stairways and an elevator, thoughtfully divides multiple office spaces, each with expansive outdoor terraces overlooking the grand lawn and the lake, and a glass corridor that connects the buildings.

A possible outcome is the building will attract customers that will come for the retail, or to enjoy the shade and courtyard spaces, but stay or return for the businesses above.

The Downtown Wellen building will give Trapolin-Peer another foothold in Southwest Florida.

"It's beautiful," says Peter Trapolin, who founded the firm in 1981. "We've done work in Florida before, but this is our first building in the Southwest Florida area. We're excited to be here."

The design took several months to complete. "It wasn't as though we arrived at this design at our first pass," Mr. Wold says. "We went through many different schemes ... the word we kept using was 'transitional style.'"

"We weren't looking for something either strictly traditional or ultra-modern."

The process did not follow the path



COURTESY RENDERING

Construction of the 32,500-square-foot mixed-use building is expected to start this summer and be completed in late 2022.

of conference-room brainstorming and PowerPoint presentations. That was because of the lockdown that came along with COVID-19.

"We started this design process as lockdown started," Mr. Wold recalls. "We were all working remotely. There were emails, photos, sketches, conference calls. It was a very different way to work."

"As architects, typically we prefer to be together to design. But we all think this worked out really well." 🍷

"It wasn't as though we arrived at this design at our first pass. We went through many different schemes ... the word we kept using was 'transitional style.' We went through many different schemes ... the word we kept using was 'transitional style.'"

— Alan Wold, a member of the design team at Trapolin-Peer



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ALL WELLEN GOOD

# Atlanta Braves Foundation hits a home run in Wellen Park and surrounding community

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Besides providing sports entertainment to the community, the Atlanta Braves also gives its support through its foundation.

The Atlanta Braves Foundation is the team's charitable arm that supports local, regional and national charities throughout country, according to Mike Dunn, Braves' vice president of Florida operations. Since 1994, the foundation has provided support to thousands of organizations and has contributed more than \$7 million in financial and in-kind assistance to the community through the generosity of Braves players, employees, sponsors and fans.

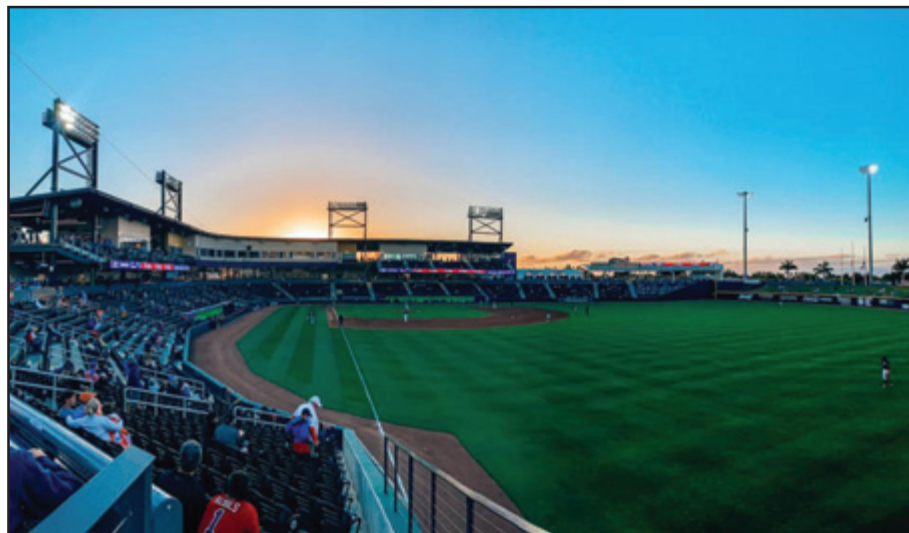
"We'll identify those in need that we can potentially impact — often with no pomp and circumstance," Mr. Dunn says, adding the organization frequently maintains anonymity about the various charities it supports.



DUNN

Some of the foundation's good works are public, however, including My Warrior's Place, a retreat center for veterans, military service members, law enforcement officers, fire fighters and Gold, Blue and Silver Star families, offering many helpful programs for them.

The foundation also aids Venice Challenger Baseball, a league designed for children and adults who can't play baseball



CoolToday Park is the Spring Training home of the Atlanta Braves.

in the usual way. The Braves made a large contribution toward the construction of the Venice Challenger complex. "We believe in promoting baseball to all those who want to play, despite any challenges they might have," Mr. Dunn says.

"We also support the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life, the Gary Sinise Foundation, St. Francis Animal Rescue, Habitat for Humanity and Boys and Girls Clubs of America."

St. Francis Animal Rescue works a concession stand at CoolToday Park, the Braves' Spring Training home, and receives a percentage of their sales.

But helping the community isn't always about money, Mr. Dunn says.

"We provide experiences for kids and adults — behind-the-scenes programs and meetings with players. We have hosted some folks from hospice. It's always gratifying to be able to help and offer assistance. I am fortunate and blessed to have my health and work in a business that can provide happiness to others."

As an example, he says, the foundation has provided motorized wheelchairs to those who depend on them to get around.

"It's gratifying to see a smile on a child's face or to get a thumbs-up from someone



A 50-50 raffle at every Spring Training game helps raise funds for the foundation.

who is struggling," Mr. Dunn says.

There is a two-step process to be approved for a grant from the Atlanta Braves Foundation. Organizations should send an email to [springtraining@braves.com](mailto:springtraining@braves.com) and describe the need. Foundation personnel will review the request and reach out to the requesting organization.

Those who have attended Spring Training games at CoolToday Park are familiar with the team's 50/50 raffle, one way it raises funds for charity. Another is the Scoreboard Message Program. Individuals, corporations and organizations can also make contributions at [www.braves.com](http://www.braves.com).

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WANDER WITH WELLEN

# A peaceful habitat beckons wildlife — and those who want to know it

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

A mulberry tree serves as a fast-food stop-over for migrating birds.

A series of golf-course water hazards has been engineered to provide a nursery for young tarpon to send clean, naturally filtered water to Lemon Bay.

There's a bird observation area, a butterfly garden and a kiosk constructed as an Eagle Scout project.

A killdeer nest snuggles against young plant life.

Welcome to the Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve in Englewood, an 80-acre swath of land that served as an 18-hole executive golf course from the early 1970s to 2006. Off Gasparilla Pines Boulevard on the Cape Haze peninsula, the land borders five condominium complexes and has been in the hands of the Lemon Bay Conservancy since 2010.



FURNER

The conservancy has transformed the golf course into a peaceful preserve for wildlife and wetlands growth, planting about 8,000 trees and shrubs in dozens of species throughout the acreage.

The primary purpose of the preserve is to protect and enhance the habitats within the preserve in order to provide a refuge for wildlife and opportunities for environmental education and scientific research. The long-range goal is to convert the existing golf course ponds into a series of interconnected wetlands and to restore the uplands to



RUSTY PRAY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

**Clockwise from top left: Migrating birds stop for a nosh at some mulberry trees. Cattle egrets are relatively new to the preserve acreage and come to dine on the abundance of insects there. The Lemon Bay Conservancy has transformed a onetime golf course into a peaceful preserve for wildlife and wetlands.**

native habitats. Planners envision freshwater wetlands on the eastern side of the preserve transitioning to tidal wetlands on the western side.

Eva Furner, a nearby resident and a conservancy board member, amplifies that mission.

"The primary reason we're doing this is to help the water — and to help wildlife habitat," she says. "But we also want to use it as a place that educates the public about the value of restoration. We've created a whole trail network through the preserve, and we're doing regular nature walks, scavenger hunts and other events to promote continuing education about the value of adding habitat.

"We're adding things of value to the community, not only from the preservation work."

Some of the walks are for members; others include the general public.

Ms. Furner points out a man-made mound that looks suspiciously like a onetime golf course tee. But she says no and points to a couple of cattle egrets on the side looking for lunch.

"We never had cattle egrets before," she says. "But they really like this habitat with so many insects."

Not that vestiges of the golf course don't still exist. Tees and greens are part of the

landscape. They're just different — as in, not manicured. And those water hazards might be home to a gator or two these days.

Although she is not an ecologist or botanist — Ms. Furner is a retiree from IBM — she has a strong interest in the environment and she knows Lemon Creek Wildflower Preserve well.

"I've just always enjoyed nature," she says. "Here, you have so many opportunities to get out and explore things." Exploration can begin with a visit to the website, [www.lemonbayconservancy.org/wildflower-preserve](http://www.lemonbayconservancy.org/wildflower-preserve), where details are also available about guided walks and other activities. ♦

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AROUND TOWN

# State College of Florida: Part of the Community

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Simply put, SCF is part of the community.

"We are local. We are connected to the community in every way possible," says Jamie Smith, director of communications and marketing. "We've fit in great with the community for more than 60 years." SCF Venice is a 100-acre campus that features a canopied outdoor performance pavilion, fitness trail, environmental education center, the Dr. Bill Jervey Jr. Library and Lake Jervey — all open to the public pending the lift of COVID-19 safety restrictions.

"The campus is so serene, surrounded by nature," Ms. Smith says. "It has all the academic tools, but it exudes serenity."

In addition, the Venice campus offers a unique dual-enrollment program that allows for students to complete an associate degree at the same time they receive their high school diploma. Beginning in ninth grade, SCF Collegiate School Venice students progress in a rigorous academic environment, permeated by technology. The inaugural Venice SCFCS



class graduates in May this year.

"SCF Collegiate School is ideal for highly motivated students interested in working toward their college degree while in middle and high school," Ms. Smith says.

Louis Ferreira, a senior at the SCFCS, is vice president of the National Honor Society and volunteers on the student leadership

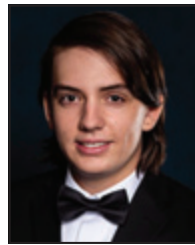
team.

"Attending the State College of Florida Collegiate School Venice has been a great experience," says Louis. "It is exciting to be in the inaugural graduation class where we will receive our high school diploma and associate in arts degree simultaneously. It is also very convenient being so

close to the shopping center in Wellen Park where I can get something to eat or get coffee and find a place to study." Louis plans to attend Florida Polytechnic University, where he received an academic scholarship.

SCF Collegiate Schools are public charter schools created through a charter with the Sarasota County School District and operated by State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota.

For more information, visit [SCFCS.SCF.edu/Venice](http://SCFCS.SCF.edu/Venice).



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SIP 'N' SERVE

# Reel in dinner from the Fresh Catch food truck

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

You could spend a few hours on a boat, hoping the fish you want grabs your line.

Or, you could reliably count on the Fresh Catch food trucks that visit Gran Paradiso, Grand Palm, IslandWalk, Renaissance and Sarasota National as well as the Englewood Farmer's Market and Atlanta Braves.

Fresh Catch Fish Company was established in 2014. In addition to its store in Punta Gorda, its food trucks make weekly stops at dozens of locations from Tampa/St. Pete to Marco Island.

The owners work with local and national commercial fishing operators to source fresh seafood. But the trucks also are known for their fresh-cut meats, homemade sausages and prepared foods.

The dozens of fin fish they sell include amberjack, cod, barramundi, bronzini, catfish, Chilean sea bass, cobia, corvina, Dover sole, yellow tail snapper, swordfish, tripletail, turbot, wahoo and walleye.

Local favorites include cobia, grouper, hogfish, mahi-mahi, red snapper, triggerfish and tripletail.

They also have shellfish such as clams, lobster tail, mussels, oysters, sea scallops, shrimp and stone crabs.

There are many alternatives to seafood as well. Meat eaters can choose from chicken breast fillets, filet mignon, French-cut Duroc pork chops, New York strip steak, half-pound prime beef patties, ribeye steak, T-bone steak and top sirloin.

Customers can also dig into beef tenderloin pot pie, poppyseed chicken pot pie, roasted chicken pot pie and shepherd's pot pie.



MILA BRIDGER / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

**Fresh Catch Fish Company's food trucks make weekly stops at dozens of locations in town.**

Stuff yourself with sausages that include butifarra, chicken apple, chicken basil, chorizo picante, half smoke, lamb merguez, maple sage, Mediterranean lamb, pastrami, raging brat, rosemary lamb, spicy Italian, sweet Italian and Thai chicken.

The meats are on a roll with a wide variety of salamis: ararat, cacciatore, chajari, Chesapeake with Maryland crab seasoning, Chorizo de Pamplona, cinta, dillio, duck breast prosciutto, fuet, wild fennel, porcini, soppressata and truffle mania.

If you're not sure how to prepare the fish or meat you've purchased, the Fresh Catch website will inspire you with mouthwatering recipes. Add these to your recipe file: Florida blue crab cakes with tangy butter sauce, low country shrimp boil, baked tripletail, seared mahi mahi, Faroe Island salmon, steamed mussels with white wine and garlic, chicken breasts with balsamic vinegar and garlic, and pan-roasted New York strip steak.

When you don't feel like cooking, pick up a ready-made dinner like Cajun mac and cheese, Cajun jambalaya, seafood casserole, shrimp scampi, lobster-stuffed chicken breast

or chicken stuffed with spinach, ricotta and feta cheese.

Start your meal with a homemade snack dip. Fresh Catch has crab, lobster, smoked rainbow trout and smoked salmon artichoke flavors.

And don't forget the extra goodies like clam chowder, lobster bisque, crab cakes, crab-stuffed portobello mushrooms, and salmon patties.

Fresh Catch offers daily and weekly specials on its website and by signing up for email notifications. 🍷

## Make it at home

### Faroe Islands Salmon with Miso Sesame Ginger Glaze and String Beans

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Servings: 4

- 2 TBS extra virgin olive oil
- 1 1/4 pounds Faroe Islands salmon filet
- 1/2 cup Nature's Basket Organic Miso Sesame Ginger dressing, divided
- 1 lb. French green beans, trimmed (also available frozen)
- 1/4 cup green onion, chopped diagonally
- 1 tsp black sesame seeds for garnish

Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven and set to broil. Line a baking pan with foil and coat with oil. Place salmon, skin side down, on baking pan. Use a paring knife to score the salmon with 1/4-inch-deep diagonal cuts, about 2 inches apart. Spread 1/4 cup of dressing over salmon. Broil for 10-12 minutes, rotating the pan a few times, until lightly browned and internal temperature of fish reaches 145 degrees. Remove from oven and drizzle with 2

## FRESH CATCH FISH CO.

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>> **Phone:** 833-559-7676

>> **Online:** See the weekly food trucks schedule at [www.freshcatchfishco.com](http://www.freshcatchfishco.com)



FRESH CATCH FISH CO. / COURTESY PHOTO

**Faroe Islands Salmon with Miso Sesame Ginger Glaze and String Beans.**

TBS dressing.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to boil. Cook beans for 2-3 minutes, until bright green and crisp-tender. Use a slotted spoon to transfer beans to a medium bowl. Toss with 2 remaining TBS of dressing. Cover with foil to keep warm.

Serve salmon garnished with green onions and sesame seeds, alongside green beans.

For a wine to enjoy with this dish, we recommend a pinot noir. If that is not your preference, go with a big and rich chardonnay. 🍷

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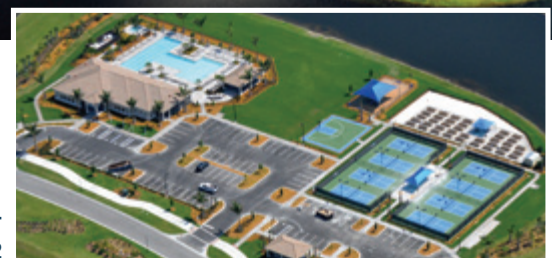
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# PET PARADE

## A CELEBRATION OF WELLEN PARK'S ADORED AND ADORABLE ANIMAL COMPANIONS



### MAX

Meet Max, the Prince of the Preserve. Always dapper and dressed for success, Max lives with owner John Kersten in the **Preserve** neighborhood.



### PEPPER and REESE

Just look at these incredible furesidents! Pepper and Reese live with their owners in **Gran Paradiso** and enjoy the vibes on our local beaches every chance they can.



### @GENERALK9OBI

surveying his kingdom at **Blue Heron Park**, where he loves spending time with owner Stephen Ladevaia.



### DOLLY

Meet Dolly, a paw-dorable pup who enjoys the wind in her fur at Brohard Paw Park. She and her humans moved into the **Renaissance** neighborhood in February. We're excited to welcome them all into the Wellen Park family.

Welcome to the **Wellen Park Pet Parade**, where we share pictures sent in by the proudest pet owners in our pet-loving community. Rest assured that whether your best animal buddy is a cat, a bird, a rabbit or even a reptile, we want to see it and share it in the Wellen Park Journal and on our social channels.

Submit your pet pics via email to [info@wellenpark.com](mailto:info@wellenpark.com) or via Facebook messenger [@wellenparkfl](https://www.facebook.com/wellenparkfl). We'll do our best to include them in the next Wellen Park Pet Parade and on our social channels.



**TRAILS & PATHWAYS**



- US-41**  
± 4.75 MILES
- WEST VILLAGES LOOP**  
± 6.3 MILES
- PLAYMORE ROAD**  
± 2.1 MILES
- WEST VILLAGES PARKWAY**  
± 3.7 MILES
- PRETO BOULEVARD**  
3.35 MILES
- COLLEGE LOOP**  
1.25 MILES
- WEST VILLAGES PARKWAY LAKE LOOP**  
0.67 MILES
- GRAND LAKE LOOP**  
3.75 MILES
- BLUE HERON PARK LOOP**  
1.5 MILES

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WELLEN PARK MAP



PHOTOS BY GARTH FRANCIS / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

## TRAILS

From page 1

He sees moms and dads jogging with kids in strollers, couples walking hand-in-hand, pet owners exercising their dogs, cyclists, running groups and people carrying gear to a favorite fishing hole.

And that’s exactly how the community’s planners envisioned the way people would enjoy the trail system.

“Our commitment to trails and pathways is paramount,” Mr. Severance emphasizes. “It’s where wellness thrives. Trails have a way of engaging both in the physical aspect of wellness and the mental and psychological

benefits of wellness.” He also notes that people who are active often have improved health, including better memory.

Wellen Park currently has nine trails that range from .67 miles along the West Villages Parkway Lake Loop to 6.3 miles along the West Villages Loop.

An additional 15 miles of trails are planned during the next five years. These will include a north-south trail of about 3 miles that abuts a pristine wetland and a trail around the 80-acre lake that will be the centerpiece of Downtown Wellen.

Mr. Severance says the trails are integral to the success of Wellen Park because they help connect people in the community. Studies also show that trails are the No. 1 amenity people are looking for when buying a home,

SEE TRAILS , A36 ►

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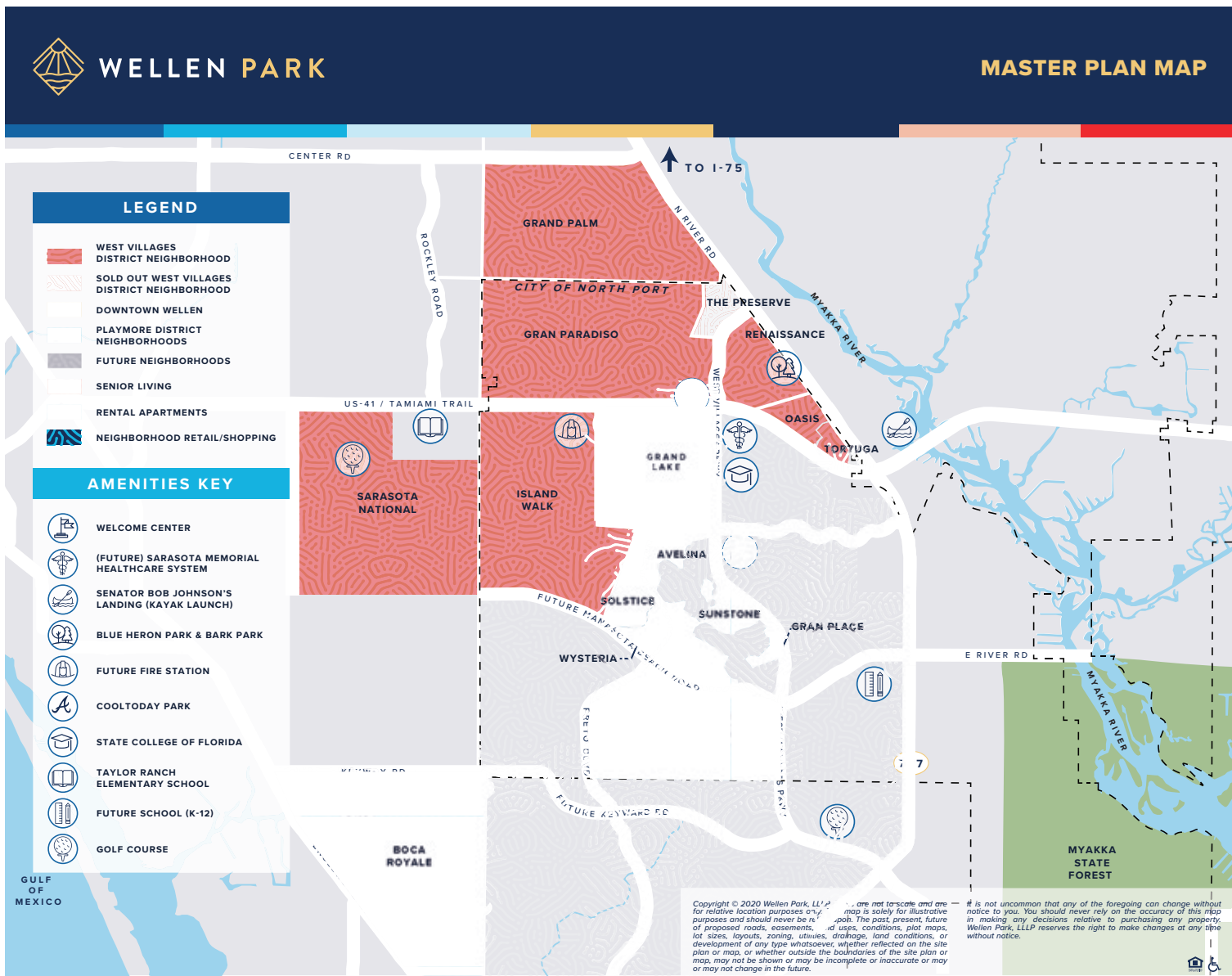
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**NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES**

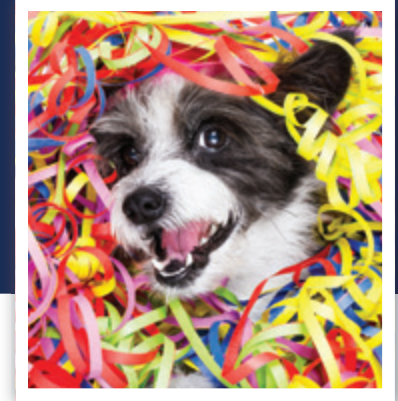
NEIGHBORHOOD	BUILDER	HOA FEES	Condos	Townhomes	Coach Homes	Attached Villa	Single-Family	Maintenance Included	Gated	Park	Country Club On-site Dining	Golf	Lifestyle-Directed Activities	Fitness Center	Club House	Card Rooms	Pickleball	Tennis Courts	Bocce	Croquet	Resort Pool	Lap Pool	Spa Services	Trails	Tot Lot	Dog Park	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Golf Cart Friendly	
Avelina	Neal Communities	\$\$\$					•	•	•																				
Boca Royale	Neal Communities	\$\$\$					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Gran Paradiso	Lennar	\$\$		•	•		•	•	•																				
Gran Place	Sam Rodgers	\$\$\$					•	•	•																				
Grand Palm	Neal Communities	\$\$\$					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
IslandWalk	DiVosta Homes	\$\$					•	•	•																				
Oasis	M/I Homes	\$					•	•	•																				
Renaissance	Mattamy Homes	\$\$\$					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sarasota National	WCI, a Lennar Company	\$\$\$\$	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Solstice	Toll Brothers	TBD					•	•	•																				
Sunstone	Mattamy Homes	TBD					•	•	•																				
Tortuga	Lennar	\$					•	•	•																				
Wellen Park Golf + Country Club	Lennar	TBD	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Wysteria	Neal Communities	\$\$\$					•	•	•																				





# PET TIPS

From veterinarian  
**Andrea Daniels of West Villages Animal Clinic**  
www.westvillagesvet.com



Our pets are always there for us. **National Pet Week** May 2-8 celebrates this bond and encourages pet owners to be certain to provide their best friends with everything needed for a happy, healthy life.

Everyone loves their pets, but not everyone is aware of all that their pet needs to be happy and healthy long into its senior years. The following tips are vital to provide a lifetime of love.



**Commit for life.** Select the pet that's right for your lifestyle. Even if you've already welcomed a pet into your home, your veterinarian can help you better understand your animal's social and health care needs.



**Socialize now.** New doesn't have to be scary. Help your pet get comfortable in new situations by exposing them to a variety of interactions with other animals, people, places and activities.



**Travel with care.**

Whether you are taking a short car trip or flying in an airplane, when you take your furry friend along there are precautions you can take to make sure it arrives safely. This ranges from proper restraints during travel (appropriate leash, harness, collar, carrier, seat belts) to travel certificates. Plan ahead and know exactly what's needed when you travel with your pet this summer.



**Nutrition and exercise matter.**

Nutrition is important to both weight management and overall health. Nearly 60% of dogs and cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Exercise regularly with your pet to increase the human-animal bond and to reduce weight. Plus, you'll feel good about it, and you might even drop a pound or two as well!



**Be prepared for emergencies.** Make sure your pet is part of your family's emergency plans. Know what to do in case of an emergency, how to assemble emergency and first aid kits, and how to properly identify your pet so your family can be reunited in the event of a separation.



**Love your pet? See the vet!** Regular preventative care and examinations are critical to keeping pets healthy. This in turn improves quality and length of life. Pets often hide signs of illness, which makes regular check-ups vital to catching health problems early.



AROUND TOWN

# North Port AMVET Post 312 welcomes new members

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

If you're an honorably discharged veteran of any branch of the military and feel your service didn't end when you were discharged, this is your golden opportunity to help a good cause by having a good time.

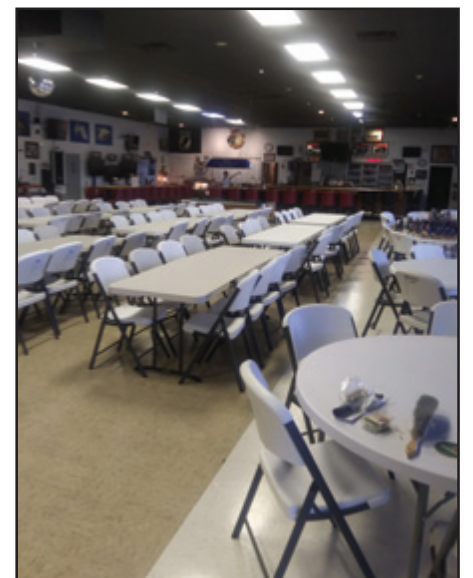
You can be part of the continuing effort of veterans helping veterans in a lot of different ways when you join your local AMVET post.

At North Port AMVET Post 312, Commander William Pitts II is always eager to involve new members. "You can come in and pick up an application to fill out at home or bring along your DD14 or separation papers and initial membership fee to sign up while you're here," he says.

Membership is open to all honorably discharged veterans of any branch of the service for just \$35 per year (\$250 for a lifetime membership). Here's the mission you'll become part of:

"Our patriotisms do not just stop with supporting our post but also with insuring we help as many veterans and their families as we can to adjust to civilian life and support them as well as our own members through hard times. Each membership dues, each person who donates \$\$\$, each meal purchased, each beverage bought, each special event, each bus trip and each volunteer's time helps not only your Post but numerous veterans throughout our own Post first and then within our community."

AMVETS Post also commits to helping other charities in the community as well. There is much to do and enjoy ultimately benefits those in need; the fun, the camaraderie and the civic duty that results from this is something AMVETS consider their privilege.



Honorably discharged veterans of any branch of the U.S. military are always welcome at North Port AMVET Post 312, where lunch, dinner, live entertainment and more fun is always on tap.

COURTESY PHOTOS

After a long spell of interrupted activities due to the pandemic, Commander Pitts is enthusiastic about things getting back to "some semblance of normalcy." The post at 7050 Chancellor Blvd. in North Port is open and at full capacity, but temperatures are taken upon entry, and social distancing is recommended — which is great news for the veterans who reap the benefits of the activities, as well as the members who love taking advantage of everything Post 312 has to offer them.

Food and drink play a large part in this. The kitchen serves up meals in-house and take-out meals by advance order for 80-100 members

on a regular basis. Nightly special offerings vary but include T-bone steak and prime rib. Friday is seafood night.

Dinner is served from 5-7 p.m. daily; lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Saturday; and Sunday brunch from 8:30-11 a.m. and Sunday hot dogs and burgers from 1-4 p.m.

Live entertainment is often on the schedule, but members can always entertain themselves by joining the dart league (rubber tip, of course) or playing virtual golf or bowling.

AMVETS have a lot to offer everyone and there's always room for new members. For more information about Post 312, go to [www.amvetpost312.org](http://www.amvetpost312.org).

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AROUND TOWN

# Toll Brothers' Solstice neighborhood coming soon to Wellen Park's Playmore District

BY CHARMAINE ENGELSMAN-ROBINS

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Pretty much every homebuyer is familiar with the mantra "Location. Location. Location." Obviously, that's an extremely important (and unchangeable) piece of the real estate puzzle. But once that's settled, the new home itself has to fit the individual family's current and anticipated needs, and work well for them wherever it is. Finding that winning combination can be a tall order.

Chris Ryan, Tampa/Sarasota division president for national luxury home builder Toll Brothers, is extremely pleased with the successful marriage of location and construction that will be offered by the builder's 270-home, gated Solstice neighborhood coming to master planned Wellen Park's Playmore District.

Mr. Ryan notes that, even following the trials of living with a global pandemic, families are going to experience normal changes in their needs, so their home needs to function well for them now and in the future as their lives evolve. Whether working or retired, empty-nesters or extended (maybe multi-generational) family, the one thing that's pretty much guaranteed is change. How well you adapt to it can be largely influenced by how adaptable your home is to those changing needs.

A home that can accommodate your needs now and as years go by is a huge plus. Add a location that encourages a healthy lifestyle, is in a district of great schools that also offers shopping, recreation, exercise opportunities and dining all in close



**Above: A typical great room in a home in the new Solstice neighborhood. Right: Front elevation of a model available in Solstice.**

COURTESY IMAGES



proximity, and you might never need (or want) to move again.

"We really will have something for everybody," Mr. Ryan says about Solstice, where designs are offered as attached villas and as one- and two-story, single-family homes with expansive, flexible floor-plans. "No two families use their home in exactly the same way, so the ability to personalize your plan and décor is vital," he adds.

Toll Brothers anticipated and meets those

1967), successful history of excellent customer and you can have great faith in the four pillars of the company's foundation:

- An uncompromising commitment to its reputation of providing a great customer experience, every time.
- A commitment to building exceptional homes only in exceptional locations.
- Distinctive architecture that keeps Toll Brothers luxury homes on the cutting edge of design.
- A dedication to providing unique choices and personalizations to make every Toll Brothers home the owner's personal and unique dream home.


Construction of the Solstice neighborhood is scheduled to begin this spring; the first models should be open late in the year.

"Everybody is on a different timeline," Mr. Ryan says, "so we do our best to make available whatever stage of construction best fits the customer." This means offering buyers the option of a home where construction has begun but there are still plenty of opportunities for personalization, a "quick move-in" home that's ready to go and, of course, the personal vision realization that starts with selecting a lot and deciding every detail from square one.


As a national company with divisions in 24 states, including five here in Florida, Toll Brothers is known for its hallmarks of quality, craftsmanship and value. They are excited to bring this reputation to their Solstice neighborhood in Wellen Park.

For more information and/or to get on the list for email or text updates, go to [www.tollbrothers.com](http://www.tollbrothers.com).





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# HOMES AT WELLEN PARK

SPRING 2021

| A21

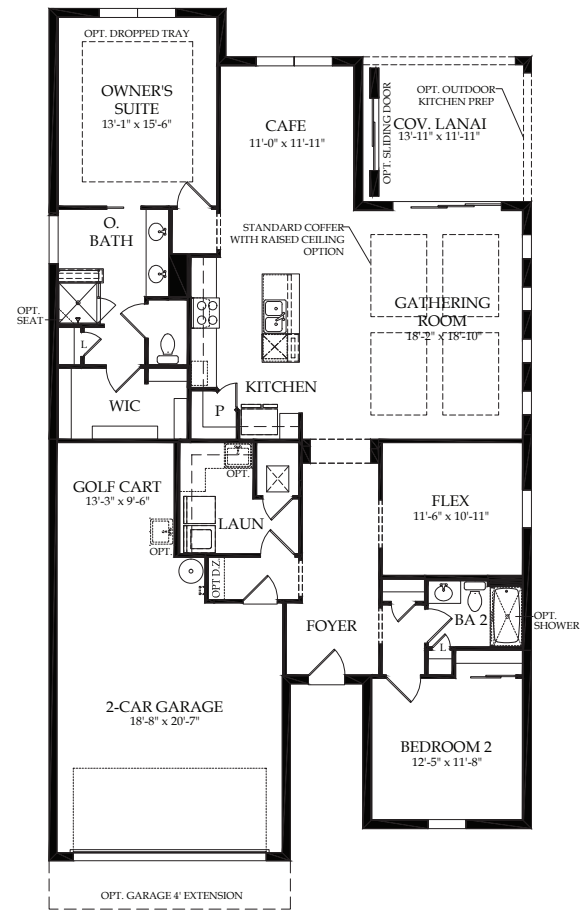
## ISLAND WALK – DIVOSTA



### Summerwood

Summerwood is a versatile floor plan that offers 2-5 bedrooms, well-suited for families and empty nesters alike. The beautiful one-story home design (with optional upstairs loft) features an open kitchen with center island that overlooks a bright gathering room, perfect for entertaining and everyday living. The 2-car garage includes an expanded area ideal for a golf cart or extra storage.

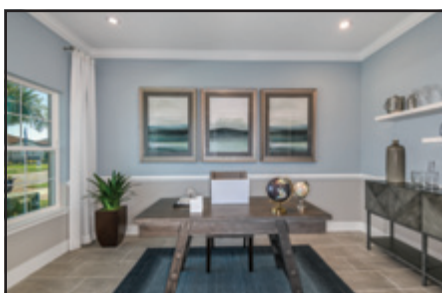
**Sales center:**  
**13639 Salinas St., Venice**  
**941-220-0548**



#### Specifications

- Base price: From the low \$400s
- SF: 1,861 to 3,070
- 2 to 5 Bedrooms
- 2 to 3 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

## RENAISSANCE – MATTAMY HOMES



### Dominica II

The Dominica II is a spacious 2,381 square feet, 3 bedroom, 2 bath, 2-car garage single-family home with a connected versatile retreat area and flex room that are perfect for guests, a kid's playroom or a home office. A designer kitchen with a large island is perfect for any home chef or meals on-the-go, and seamlessly flows to the dining area and spacious Great Room. The private owner's suite features a generous walk-in closet and owner's bath. This home also includes a covered lanai — perfect for enjoying the sunny Florida weather.

**Sales center:**  
**11720 Renaissance Blvd., Venice**  
**941-208-6375**



#### Specifications

- Base price: \$376,990
- SF: 2,381
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

\* Prices are subject to change without notice.

# OASIS – M/I HOMES



## Holiday

The Holiday is a stately and sophisticated one-story home, with distinct elevation options.. The home's standard layout comes with 3 bedrooms, 3 full bathrooms, a den, planning center, a 3-car garage, and a large covered lanai with an open floorplan.

**Sales center:**  
**19806 Bridgetown Loop, Venice**  
**941-208-6897**



### Specifications

- Base price: From \$475,990
- SF: 2,598 – 3,203
- 3-4 Bedrooms
- 3-4 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

# GRAN PARADISO – LENNAR



## Berkly

The Berkly floor plan features 1,879 square feet of living space ideally arranged in two stories. The upstairs is where the three bedrooms reside with a convenient split plan with owner's bath and guest bath. The downstairs features an expansive family room and dinette off of the kitchen for multitudes of relaxation options. A downstairs half bath keeps guests from having to go upstairs and is the perfect priming spot before heading out. A large lanai is ideal for spending a lazy day reading or kicking back with a nice cool drink after a long day. The one-car garage keeps your auto safe from the elements rain or shine.

**Sales center:**  
**20061 Galleria Blvd., Venice**  
**941-214-9684**



### Specifications

- Base price: \$239,999
- SF: 1,879
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2.5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Townhome

\* Prices are subject to change without notice.

# GRAND PALM – NEAL COMMUNITIES



## Sea Mist

The spacious Sea Mist plan is designed by Neal Communities for optimal comfort and livability. The common living area of great room, kitchen and dining nook is open and airy. The kitchen includes a large center island and can optionally be built as a gallery kitchen. Sliders from the great room take you to an expansive wrap-around lanai with options for an outdoor kitchen wall and pool bath. The home's master suite holds a bedroom with optional coffered ceiling, two walk-in closets and a dual sink master bath with walk-in shower and private water closet. The remaining two bedrooms share a bath that has the option of Jack and Jill entry. A den, an especially large laundry room and a three-car garage. This home comes with the option of adding a second floor with bonus room with either a full bath or a second master suite.

**Sales center:**  
**21209 Wacissa Dr, Venice**  
**941-214-9190**



### Specifications

- Base price: From the mid \$400s
- SF: 2,427
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2.5 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

# BOCA ROYALE – NEAL COMMUNITIES



## Bright Meadow

This lovely three-bedroom plan in Boca Royale comes with a variety of personalizing options. Off the foyer, the spacious family room is open to the kitchen, which features an island, a walk-in pantry, and breakfast nook. Sliders lead from the family room to a sunny covered lanai. A den features attractive French doors. The master suite with optional coffered ceiling in the bedroom holds two walk-in closets and bath with dual sinks, walk-in shower and water closet. Both additional bedrooms include walk-in closets. You have the option of transforming one of the bedrooms into a guest suite with private bath.

**Sales center:**  
**1 Golf View Dr, Englewood**  
**941-214-9760**



### Specifications

- Base price: From the low \$400s
- SF: 2,288
- 3 Bedrooms
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

\* Prices are subject to change without notice.

# TORTUGA – LENNAR



## Marsala

The 2,201 square foot Marsala home is designed to entertain, featuring an open-concept kitchen and great room. A sumptuous Owner's suite creates a personal retreat set apart at the back of the home with two walk-in closets and fabulous master bath. Two additional bedrooms each have their own private bathroom. The den is a great home office or hobby room. The Marsala is complete with a spacious covered lanai and two-car garage.



**Sales center:**  
**20061 Galleria Boulevard, Venice**  
**941-214-9684**

### Specifications

- Base price: \$343,999
- SF: 2,201
- 3 Bedrooms + Den
- 3 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

# SARASOTA NATIONAL – WCI, A LENNAR COMPANY



## Roma

The living is easy with a perfect 1,917 square feet of under-air living space, featuring 3 spacious bedrooms, 2 full baths, a large 2-car garage and airy and open living room with sliders leading to screened-in lanai.



**Sales center:**  
**23114 Copperleaf Drive, Venice**  
**941-246-0076**

### Specifications

- Base price: \$338,999
- SF: 1,917
- 2 Bedrooms & Den
- 2 Bathrooms
- Home Type: Single Family

\* Prices are subject to change without notice.



WELL-VERSED



A bowl created by potter Keith Charron.

COURTESY PHOTO

## Wellen Park Welcome Center welcomes latest works by potter Keith Charron

The Wellen Park Welcome Center proudly showcases works by some of our area's most talented artists, one or two artists at a time, with just a few of their pieces on display. Painter Laura Pommier was recently presented in this publication as the featured artist, and some of her work is currently on exhibit at the center; now you can also see works by the gifted potter Keith Charron.

When Mr. Charron got out of the Army in 1967, he went to work in his parents' ceramics studio in Massachusetts, returning "on and off" for a few years, frequently pitching in when they needed help with the business. His love and appreciation of pottery soon grew into a desire to create his own pieces, to continue learning about the field, and eventually to share his knowledge with others.

He moved to Punta Gorda in 2005 and of course brought along his love of art and the desire to continue to create it. After taking some classes to further expand his knowledge of the medium, he became an instructor.

"Teaching has actually turned out to be the best part of my art," he says. "I just love to see the look on a student's face when they truly get what they've been learning."

Even with some necessary limitations because of the pandemic, he continues to hold classes in much the same way he always has: He purposely presents his "On the Wheel Again" sessions to very small classes — sometimes just one or two students (adults only) and never more than four or five — per six-week session.

"I don't want to have larger classes where a lot of the students' time is spent waiting for a chance to ask a question," he explains.

Held at the North Port Area Art Center from 9 a.m. to noon on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the classes are as malleable as the clay that's worked with: There is no "one schedule fits all" beginning or end to the curriculum, so everyone doesn't have to start on the same day; you can jump in any time and your complete six weeks will begin with lesson one at that session, no matter where other

students are in the process.

"Work with clay is done in many phases," Mr. Charron says. "Some of the process is spent waiting ... for various stages of the piece to pass."

He estimates that each student will have a finished piece in four weeks. So why be in class for six? "The second week, you'll start your second piece; that way you always have something in the pipeline be working on," he says.

Classes are held year-round. All are welcome and must agree to follow CDC guidelines of wearing masks and maintaining a safe, courteous distance from other students.

To find out more about Mr. Charron's work, start by seeing some of it on display at the Wellen Park Welcome Center (including his personal favorite piece, an 18-inch-square platter). Then give him a call at 508-864-5161 and he'll be delighted to talk with you about it.

To enroll in his "On the Wheel Again" classes or to get scheduling information, call the North Port Area Art Center at 941-423-6460.

The Wellen Park Welcome Center, where works by featured artists are on exhibit and for sale, is at 12275 Mercado Drive in Venice. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.



"Teaching has actually turned out to be the best part of my art. I just love to see the look on a student's face when they truly get what they've been learning."

— Keith Charron

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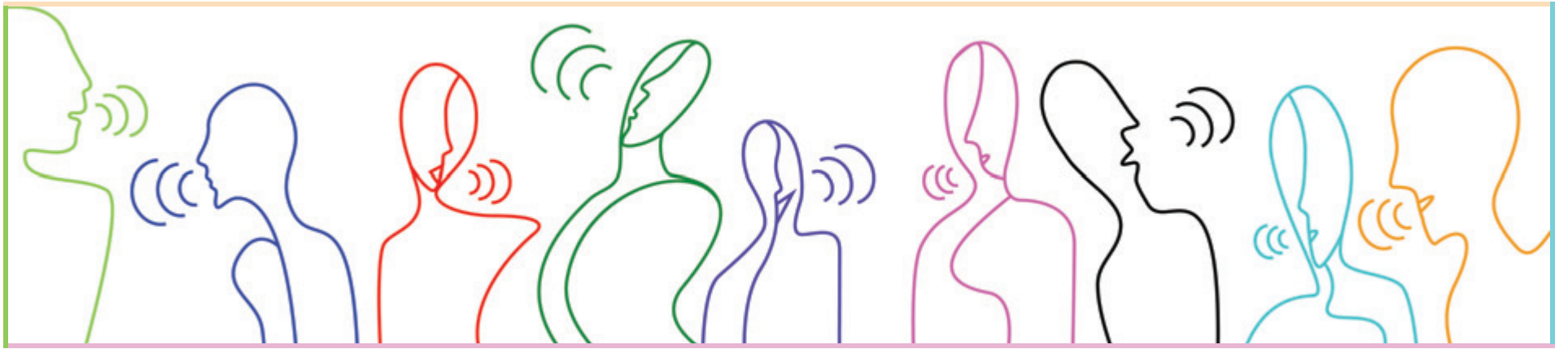
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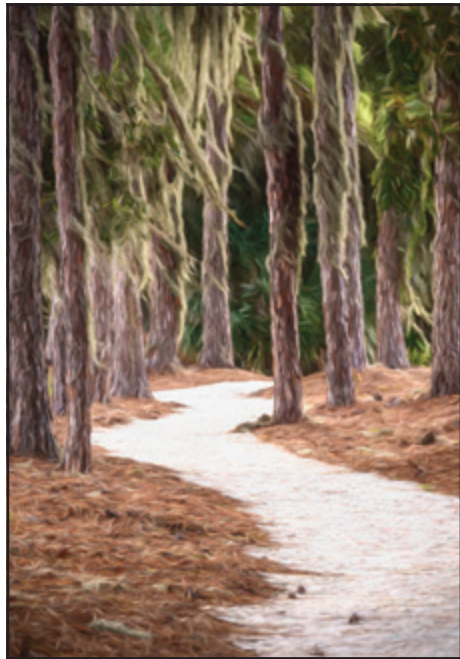
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ALL WELLEN GOOD



## Rumor Mill Roundup



*Hello, Neighbors – It’s time again for the Rumor Mill Roundup addressing some topics we’ve heard around the watercooler and some questions we’ve been asked about most often in the Wellen Park Welcome Center. Below are brief summaries of the “real story” for our most recent topics of interest. This is just a very friendly reminder that even though you might have read it on social media or heard it over drinks, it might not be totally true.*

**■ The trail around the 80-acre lake in Downtown Wellen is all asphalt.**

The trail is part concrete and part crushed shell. The concrete portion will be adjacent to Downtown Wellen’s retail, dining and entertainment areas. As you meander toward the large preserve areas and fishing pier, the trail will be lined with crushed shell, which allows rainwater to seep into the soil below, reducing worries of water accumulation or runoff. Additionally, shell pathways help complete the look of a natural Florida-style landscape.

**■ Cell towers are not permitted in Wellen Park.**

Satisfying resident demand for greater connectivity to friends and family is extremely important to the developer, who is actively in discussions with several providers for new cell phone towers within Wellen Park. Rest assured, the placement and aesthetic nature of the towers is a key part of the overall discussion.

**■ Sarasota County School District is planning to break ground on its new school campus in Wellen Park in 2022.**

According to the Sarasota County School District, construction start for a new kindergarten-through-eighth-grade school and an adjacent high school is undetermined. In February, the board reviewed a proposed five-year capital improvement plan that includes a new high school, expected to open for the



2027-28 school year. The five-year plan is updated annually, so the district’s planners can push the construction start date back if the population increase falls short of projections.



# CELEBRATING YOUR WELLEN PARK MOMENTS

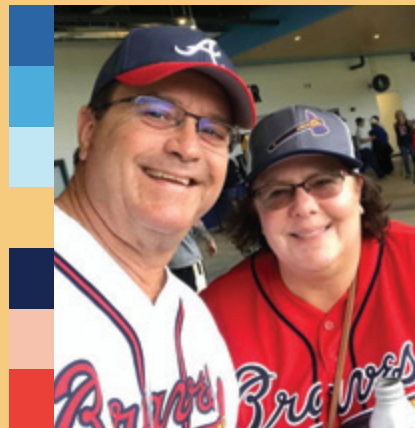
We can’t thank you enough for sharing your favorite Wellen Park moments with us during our recent photo contest!

Follow us @WellenParkFL for future contests

**GRAND PRIZE WINNER**



**WEEK 1 WINNER**



**WEEK 3 WINNER**



**WEEK 2 WINNER**



**WEEK 4 WINNER**



ALL **WELLEN** GOOD



■ **Grand Palm, Sarasota National and Boca Royale are not part of Wellen Park.**

Sarasota National, Grand Palm and Boca Royale are not part of the West Villages Improvement District, but they are part of the Wellen Park Marketing Association. Each respective builder of these neighborhoods desired to be affiliated with Wellen Park

through marketing and advertising for new homes sales within the brand. The marketing association is separate and distinct from WVID.

If you have a rumor that you want clarified, please don't hesitate to contact [info@wellenpark.com](mailto:info@wellenpark.com)

Be Well! 🍷



Sarasota National

COURTESY PHOTO

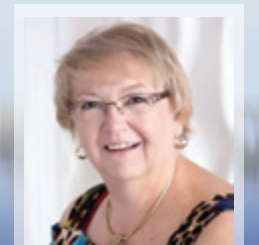
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UPWELL

# Running club members like going places

BY ROBIN F. DEMATTIA

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Paul Jiantonio started running because he was bored. He started the South County Runners for a similar reason. He wanted to help runners find new venues and new friends.

“Most people would rather run with a group than by themselves,” Mr. Jiantonio says. “It’s good for socialization.”

The South County Runners started about five years ago. Mr. Jiantonio is an original member but took over the group when it got too large for the founder to manage. He established a private Facebook group for South County Runners that has almost 100 members. They communicate about when and where to run, and share information about upcoming races and other events.

Members currently run 5K starting at 6:15 p.m. every Tuesday, setting out from Brew-Burgers in Venice, and at the same time every Thursday, leaving from CoolToday Park. They occasionally go out for longer distances on Saturdays. Walkers are welcome.

In Wellen Park, the group does not enter gated sections. They leave the stadium heading toward State College of Florida. They turn left on Playmore Road and then right on Preto Boulevard, going about halfway down and then head back to the stadium. The route is very safe and most nights the sunsets are amazing.

Mr. Jiantonio says it’s a scenic route that has good lighting. During darker winter months, though, he does encourage runners to bring lights.

Like many runners, Mr. Jiantonio finds the sport relaxing. “You can pretty much clear your mind,” he says.



Tiffany Fernandez makes her way way around Wellen Park.

STEPHEN LINEBERRY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

He likes finding someone else who runs at the same pace, which is a benefit of the group. He says attendance on Tuesday and Thursday evenings varies depending on people’s schedules, because many of the members work. Members range in age from their 20s to 60s, and the mix of men and women is 50-50. They have varying degrees of athleticism, from walkers to people who compete in Iron-man events.

Regardless of why they join the group, Mr.

Jiantonio says, “I want people to show up and have a good time.”

Kevin Jones, a member of the group and runner for 11 years, agrees with that sentiment. Although he runs to stay healthy, he admits with a laugh that, “I absolutely hate running. You can’t like every aspect of everything you do. Running is almost a necessity of staying healthy and staying fit. So I run.”

To help make it fun, he has participated in more than 130 obstacle courses races, includ-

ing the world championships.

He brought that same spirit as the organizer of the recent St. Paddy’s Day 8K held in Wellen Park that benefited the Venice YMCA. About 165 runners followed the route that Mr. Jones mapped out along Villages Parkway, Playmore Road and Preto Boulevard.

“It was very scenic,” he says. “One of the nice things was you didn’t have to pass any major streets.”

He says he also likes Wellen Park’s wide

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UPWELL



**Kevin Jones, Kathleen Strayer, Carl Poleschner, Cameron Rayburn, Steve Holmes, Tracy Hussey and Rich Meyerholz**

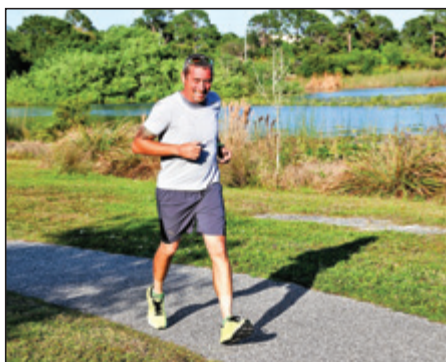
bicycle and pedestrian paths. “They are not narrow sidewalks. There is plenty of room for runners.”

Mr. Jones joins the South County Runners on Thursday nights for the camaraderie. “It’s difficult to just run the necessary miles by yourself. It makes it bearable when I can go with someone.”

He looks forward to planning more running events and to participating in the Publix Half Marathon & 5K on Oct. 23 in Wellen Park.

“There’s so much opportunity (for events) in this area, with the greenway and parks,” he says, adding he looks forward to exploring more Wellen Park streets and the lake trails as they are developed.

Wellen Park currently has nine trails that range from .67 miles along the West Villages Parkway Lake Loop to 6.3 miles along the West Villages Loop.



**Paul Jiantonio**

“Runners come for the location and the community of people,” he says. “We all like running somewhere different.”

To learn more, follow South County Runners on Facebook. 📍

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WANDER WITH WELLEN

# Take an adventurous day trip to an alternative reality

BY PATRICIA HORWELL

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

Less than an hour and a half from Wellen Park lies one of west coast Florida's cultural jewels: The Dali Museum in St. Petersburg. Dedicated to the Surrealist works of Salvador Dali, the museum opened in 1982. The debut of the new building in January 2011 has contributed to Tampa Bay's cultural renaissance — an explosion of artistic institutions and outlets.

"Our collection is grounded in the art, archives and biographical complexity of a single creative individual, honoring one per-

son's vision, talent and life — Salvador Dali," says marketing director Beth Bell.

The building itself is a work of art as well. Its geodesic glass bubble, nicknamed "The Enigma" and comprised of 1,062 triangular glass panels, is a fitting tribute to Dali's legacy of innovation and transformation.

In addition to a comprehensive collection of works from the artist's childhood through the end of his career (he was born in Figueras, Spain, in 1904 and died there in 1989), the museum regularly features special exhibits of other well-known and some not-so-well-known artists. Through May 2, for example, visitors can see the 2021 Student Surrealist Art Exhibit. Initiated in 1992, this annual show



THE DALI MUSEUM / COURTESY PHOTO

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WANDER WITH WELLEN



**“Visual Magic: Dalí’s Masterworks in AR” allows viewers to study eight pieces in the museum’s permanent collection using augmented reality technology to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning behind their complex imagery.**

presents work by middle and high school students who are invited to explore ideas and visions like those explored by Dalí and other Surrealists.

The traveling “Van Gogh Alive” exhibit’s stop at The Dalí has been extended through June 13. Visitors experience Vincent van Gogh’s works in an immersive art installation that opens a new window into the celebrated painter’s artistic genius and delivers the sensation of walking right into his paintings.

“Visitors love the musical score and the immersive visual format and are often struck with emotion upon exiting,” Ms. Bell says about “Van Gogh Alive.” Many have described the experience as “magical,” she says, adding, “We have been overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response.”

Since it opened in November 2019, “Visual Magic: Dalí’s Masterworks in AR” has allowed visitors to view eight pieces in the museum’s permanent collection using augmented reality technology to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning behind their complex imagery.

Coined by museum founder A. Reynolds Morse, the term “masterworks” refers to paintings exceeding 5 feet in height or width and painted over a period of a year or longer — in other words, they are both monumental in scale and critical Dalí paintings. To see these works through the lens of AR, a free app is available for iOS and android. Then view them in the museum’s James Family Wing (or reproductions of the works from anywhere on a personal device).

Coming up next, “At Home with Dalí,” an exhibit showcasing a diverse group of Dalí portraits by five photographers, opens July 1 and will be featured indefinitely. Dating from the 1950s and early 1960s, the images provide an intimate view of Dalí in his home environment in the Catalonia region of Spain.

The museum is taking appropriate pandemic precautions, operating at reduced capacity via advance timed tickets. Staff and visitors must wear masks and have a thermal temperature check upon entering the building. Physical distancing reminders, plexi-screens and hand-sanitizer stations are placed in key locations. All payments at parking, store and café must be via credit card only. 💛

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- >> **Where:** One Dalí Blvd. St. Petersburg
- >> **Hours:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday-Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday-Saturday
- >> **Contact:** 727-823-3767 info@thedali.org

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WHY I LIVE HERE

# Resident loves sense of community at Island Walk

BY RUSTY PRAY

Wellen Park Journal Correspondent

It was moving day for Rick Arrighi, making it seem he might not be a good candidate for this “Why I Live Here” feature.

No worries. The Rhode Island native and retired railroad dispatcher wasn’t moving out of IslandWalk at Wellen Park, where he has been a happy resident since 2018. He was simply moving nearby, from a rental and into the home his step-daughter, Tanya, shares with her wife, Stephanie.

“I hate moving,” he grumbles.

But he loves IslandWalk, “so I’m not going anywhere,” he says. “I’m never going to spend another winter in Rhode Island. I have a house up there that I’m putting on the market. There’s no reason for me to have it.”

At IslandWalk, “Everyone is so friendly. It’s not like up north,” he says, “It’s so refreshing, so different.”

The feeling, it seems, is mutual.

Mr. Arrighi is a familiar figure in the neighborhood. He plays guitar and harmonica and has become a regular performer at Barrel & Bean, the café attached to the Wellen Park Welcome Center.

The now-local musician took the long

road to get here, following a path that led from Rhode Island to Key West, and then up Florida’s coast to IslandWalk.

When he retired in 2014 after 40 years with the railroad, Rick and his wife, Cindy, moved to Key West and immediately adopted the island lifestyle, one filled with music, boating and swimming. It wasn’t long before they met a Duval Street entertainer and Rick asked to sit in with him.

“We went on stage,” Rick recalls. “We played a song. He said, ‘Do you want to do another?’” Soon he was covering for another musician who was ailing. “It was a baptism by fire,” he says.

By 2018, however, Key West was losing its allure. Rick and Cindy got in their camper and started exploring other areas of the Sunshine State. They parked for a couple of months at a campground in North Port to be near Tanya and Stephanie. They were back on the road, headed to the Grand Canyon, when COVID-19 hit.

“We high-tailed it back to Florida,” Rick says. Then Cindy was diagnosed with cancer. She died in January, and Tanya and Stephanie invited Rick to move in with them.

“And that’s why I’m here,” he says.

He’s a popular figure at Barrel & Bean.

“It’s all about the people, the activities. It’s healthy. You can play pickleball. You can walk your dog. Everybody’s friendly.”

— Rick Arrighi

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RUSTY PRAY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

**Rick Arrighi is happy making music — and his home — in Wellen Park.**

“I try to get people involved — play tambourine, stuff like that,” he says of his tailored-to-the-audience act. “It’s more a community thing than it is about me. I love to play, but if somebody wants to sing, I’m going to let them do it. If somebody comes in and wants to jam on my guitar, I let them at it.”

He loves playing the blues.

“I’ve always had a guitar,” he says. “I had always played three-chord songs, but I really

learned to play when I was in Key West. I had to learn songs for that kind of audience.”

And IslandWalk?

“It’s all about the people, the activities,” he says. “It’s healthy. You can play pickleball. You can walk your dog. Everybody’s friendly. You can have these drop-in parties with neighbors, which Cindy would have loved.

“It’s a community.”

And Rick Arrighi is happy to be a big part of it. 🍷



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# TRAILS

From page 15

he says.

Because Wellen Park is being built on a former ranch, the development team has been able to utilize the natural landscape when creating the trails.

Half, a nationwide engineering firm, prepared a master trail development plan for Wellen Park.

“We took advantage of vistas across wetlands, prairies and ponds,” says Mark Llewellyn Sr., executive vice president of Florida operations for Half.

Plans call for wayfinding signs at trailheads to help people navigate where paths cross, and signs with QR codes to learn more about native flora and fauna in the area. There will also be benches and shaded areas.

“In the Florida heat, it’s important to provide places for people to rest, cool down, and have a drink of water,” Mr. Llewellyn says.

The existing paths and trails are concrete or asphalt, though some of the new paths will be crushed shell or boardwalk over wetlands.

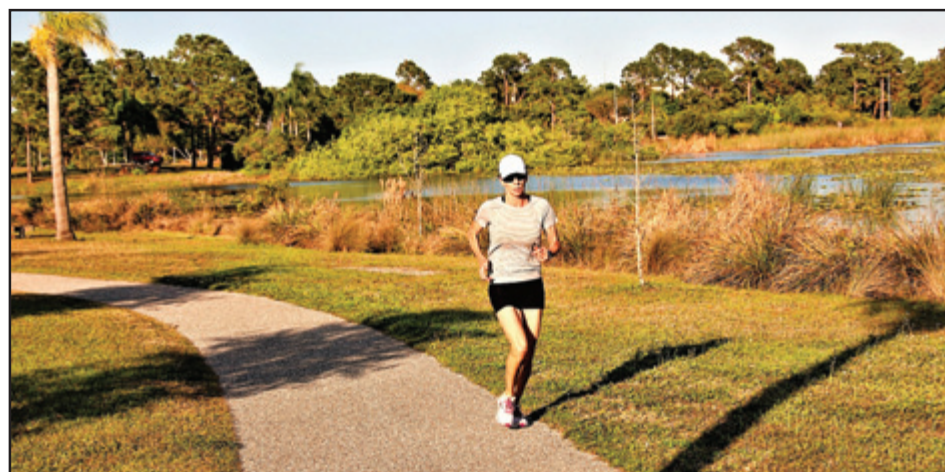
Mr. Severance says safety was paramount, so the bike lanes and roads are wide and the concrete paths are 12 feet across.

“We want people to feel comfortable and be able to do two-way modality on the trails,” he says.

The developer is also considering how to connect Wellen Park’s several neighborhoods through the trails and paths.

“Good trail design takes advantage of the natural environment and takes into consideration where pedestrians will likely access them, and how they will safely move from point A to point B,” Mr. Severance says.

Mr. Llewellyn notes that the Wellen Park



GARTH FRANCIS / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

**Because Wellen Park is being built on a former ranch, the development team has been able to utilize the natural landscape when creating the trails.**

**Plans call for wayfinding signs at trailheads to help people navigate where paths cross.**

STEPHEN LINEBERRY / WELLEN PARK JOURNAL

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Sunset over one of Wellen Park's waterfront trails.

RICK SEVERANCE / COURTESY PHOTO

"Good trail design takes advantage of the natural environment and takes into consideration where pedestrians will likely access them, and how they will safely move from point A to point B."

— **Rick Severance,**  
*president of Wellen Park*

trails might connect to longer-distance regional trails, such as the state's Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail. Already, the Wellen Park trails feed into a trail at the nearby State College of Florida.

The state has also almost finalized its Coast-to-Coast Trail, which will stretch 250 miles from St. Petersburg to Titusville.

"From an eco-tourism standpoint," Mr. Llewellyn says, "there are all kinds of things happening in communities that will support these long-distance trails."

As the number of Wellen Park trails and pathways continues to increase, Mr. Severance envisions offering more activities along them.

"I absolutely want to host some non-traditional events," he says, suggesting an adventure event that includes multiple sports as well as activities such as kayaking, biking, fun runs and fishing rodeos.

"The goal is to expand and enhance our trail network as Wellen Park continues to evolve and develop future residential areas," he says. "We continue to hear from residents how our trails and pathways improves their quality of life." ♦

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# EVENTS CALENDAR

*Times and dates are subject to change. Always confirm details before heading out to events.*

**Through April 24** – Second annual “Adopt ‘em All!” event at Suncoast Humane Society. Waived adoption fees for all dogs and cats, all ages. Adoptions and meet-and-greets by appointment only. Call 941-474-7884. Striving to build a no-kill community, Suncoast Humane Society is celebrating its 50th anniversary. More info at [www.humane.org](http://www.humane.org) and on Facebook as Suncoast Humane Society.

**Through April 29** – “Color My World,” juried exhibition at the Venice Art Center. Also on display: works by The Florida Society of Botanical Artists. 390 Nokomis Ave. S. 941-485-7136 or [www.VeniceArtCenter.com](http://www.VeniceArtCenter.com).

**Through April 30** – “Get Inspired by Something Old,” on exhibit at the North Port Area Art Center. Gallery hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to noon Saturday. 5950 Sam Shapos Way. 941-423-6460 or [www.northportartcenter.org](http://www.northportartcenter.org).

**Through May 22** – “Tails on Trails,” Suncoast Humane Society virtual walk to save shelter pet lives. Walk as much as you want, anytime before May 22, anywhere you like, even on a treadmill. PACK leashes will match every donation up to \$5,000 to double the animals’ chances! Early birds who register at [www.TailsOnTrails.GiveSmart.com](http://www.TailsOnTrails.GiveSmart.com) before April 30 save \$5 on registration.

**Through July** – “Playing in Paradise: The History of Venice Sports” on exhibit at the Venice Museum and Archives. Information and artifacts on various sporting activities in Venice, starting with the 1927 Tarpon Tournament and up to the recent Venice High School state championship teams. 351 Nassau St. S., Venice. Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday-Wednesday. Free admission. 941-716-7255, [www.museum@venicegov.com](http://www.museum@venicegov.com) and [www.archives@venicegov.com](http://www.archives@venicegov.com).

**April 22** – “VAC Uncorked,” cocktails and painting at the Venice Art Center. 6:30-9 p.m. \$35 for VAC members, \$40 for others. 390 Nokomis Ave. S. Sign up or get information at [www.VeniceArtCenter.com](http://www.VeniceArtCenter.com), or call 941-485-7136.

**April 23** – Venice Farmers Market. 7-11 a.m., Venice Boulevard and Venice Way.

**April 24** – Registration deadline for “Tea & Pearls” hosted by Business and Professional Women of Englewood/Venice and taking place May 1. Enjoy tea and finger sandwiches plus a display of vintage tea sets, hats and gloves provided by Venice’s own “Tea Lady” Joan High. Make new friends, network, and learn about tea party etiquette. 1-3 p.m. at the home of Morina Chmiela, 4382 Via Del Villeti, Venice. \$25 in advance. Sign up at [www.bpwve.org](http://www.bpwve.org).

**April 24** – The 6th annual Downtown Hoedown for the Troops. Noon to 11 p.m. at City Marketplace in Punta Gorda. Live music by Exile, Jake Hoot, Red Clay Strays, the Sweet Tea Trio and more. Tickets and more information at Eventbrite.

**April 30** – Venice Farmers Market. 7-11 a.m., Venice Boulevard and Venice Way.

**April 30-May 2** – Five-time World Champion Elvis Presley tribute artist Dwight Icenhower at The Venice Theatre. Also featuring a special performance by Shawn Bryant as Buddy Holly. 140 Tampa Ave. W. 941-488-1115 or [www.venicetheatre.org](http://www.venicetheatre.org).

**May 1-June 4** – “Get Inspired by Vacation and Travel,” on exhibit at the North Port Area Art Center. Artist reception 6:30-8 p.m. May 14. Gallery hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to noon Saturday. 5950 Sam Shapos Way. 941-423-6460 or [www.northportartcenter.org](http://www.northportartcenter.org).

**May 4-19** – See works by art students from South Sarasota County schools on exhibit at the Venice Art Center. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4



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p.m. Monday-Friday. 390 Nokomis Ave. S. 941-485-7136 or [www.VeniceArtCenter.com](http://www.VeniceArtCenter.com).

**May 6** – “VAC Uncorked,” cocktails and painting at the Venice Art Center. 6:30-9 p.m. \$35 for VAC members, \$40 for others. 390 Nokomis Ave. S. Sign up or get information at [www.VeniceArtCenter.com](http://www.VeniceArtCenter.com), or call 941-485-7136.

**May 7** – Folk Legacy Trio – Live music returns to The Venice Theatre. 140 Tampa Ave. W. 941-488-1115 or [www.venicetheatre.org](http://www.venicetheatre.org).

**May 7** – Venice Farmers Market, 7-11 a.m., Venice Boulevard and Venice Way.

**May 12** – Florida West Coast Car Club Show. 4-7 p.m. at Perkins Restaurant and Bakery, 6001 S. Salford Blvd., North Port.

**May 14** – Venice Farmers Market. 7-11 a.m., Venice Boulevard and Venice Way.

**May 14** – Artist reception for “Get Inspired by Vacation and Travel” at the North Port Area Art Center. 6:30-8 p.m. 5950 Sam Shapos Way. 941-423-6460 or [www.northportartcenter.org](http://www.northportartcenter.org).

**Starting in mid-May** – Register for the summer session of virtual classes for children and adults at The Venice Theatre. 941-488-1115 or [www.venicetheatre.org](http://www.venicetheatre.org).

**May 20** – The season’s final “VAC Uncorked,” cocktails and painting at the Venice Art Center. 6:30-9 p.m. \$35 for VAC members, \$40 for others. 390 Nokomis Ave. S. Sign up or get information at [www.VeniceArtCenter.com](http://www.VeniceArtCenter.com), or call 941-485-7136.

**May 21** – Venice Farmers Market. 7-11 a.m., Venice Boulevard and Venice Way.

**May 22** – Charlotte County Italian Festival at the Charlotte County Fairgrounds. 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. 2333 El Jobean Road, Port Charlotte.

**May 23** – Third annual Venice Beach Fossil Shark Tooth Hunting Day Trip. Departing at 4 a.m. from the Venice Dive Center, 902 Tamiami Trail S., Nokomis. Call 601-336-2272 for reservations and information.

**May 28** – Venice Farmers Market. 7-11 a.m., Venice Boulevard and Venice Way.

**May 28-June 24** – “Dazed and Confused” juried exhibition at the Venice Art Center. Also on display: works by John Hintz and Terrance Joyce. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. 390 Nokomis Ave. S. 941-485-7136 or [www.VeniceArtCenter.com](http://www.VeniceArtCenter.com).

**May 29 (rain date May 30)** – “Patriotic Pops” by The Venice Symphony. 7:30 p.m. concert followed by fireworks at CoolToday Park. Conductor Troy Quinn leads the orchestra in a program celebrating American music from John Philip Sousa to John Williams. Sgt. 1st Class Randall Wight, a member of the U.S. Army Field Band, returns as guest vocalist. Sponsored by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. Sponsorships and seating for groups of five or more are available by calling the

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# EVENTS CALENDAR

There's always something fun going on at **Barrel & Bean** next to the Wellen Park Welcome Center. Think weekly wine and beer pairings, trivia night, live music and more. Check Facebook @ barrelandbeanatwellenpark for the latest happenings.



symphony office at 941-207-8822. Individual tickets (\$15-\$50 for adults, \$10 for ages 17 and younger) are available at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com). To sign up for email updates, visit [www.thevenicesymphony.org](http://www.thevenicesymphony.org).

**May 31** – Memorial Day Veterans 5K and 10K Race. Live event starts at 7 a.m. at Punta Gorda's Laishley Park; virtual event ongoing. Participants in the live event must register in advance. Details at [www.memorialdayrace.org](http://www.memorialdayrace.org).

**June 5-Aug. 27** – "Get Inspired by a Second Chance," on exhibit at the North Port Area Art Center. Artist reception 6:30-8 p.m. June 18. Gallery hours 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. 5950 Sam Shapos Way. 941-423-6460 or [www.northportartcenter.org](http://www.northportartcenter.org).

**June 7-Aug. 6** – "Youth ART" exhibition at the North Port Area Art Center. Artists reception 6:30-7:30 p.m. Aug. 6. 5950 Sam Shapos Way. 941-423-6460 or [www.northportartcenter.org](http://www.northportartcenter.org).

**June 11-12** – Calusa AKC Agility Trial at Bratty Paws Dog Plex. Starts 8 a.m. June 11 5 p.m. June 12. Hosted by K9 Body Works, which makes K9 massage available at event for your K9 athletes. 2551 Taylor Road, Punta Gorda.

**June 17** – 2nd annual Caribbean American Heritage Month Celebration and HUD Fathers' Day Initiative Family Fun Day at the Port Charlotte Beach Park. 1-9 p.m. 4500 Harbor Blvd., Port Charlotte.

**June 18** – Artist reception for "Get Inspired by a Second Chance" at the North Port Area Art Center. 6:30-8 p.m. 5950 Sam Shapos Way. 941-423-6460 or [www.northportartcenter.org](http://www.northportartcenter.org).

**June 19-20** – 28th annual Downtown Venice Craft Festival. Booths with stained glass, photography, jewelry and more, plus a green market for plants, live orchids, handmade soaps and more. Masks are mandatory. Handwashing and sanitizing stations available. Free admission.



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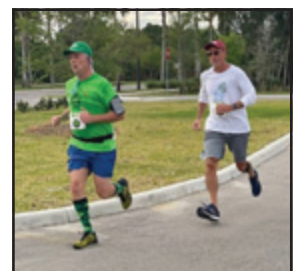
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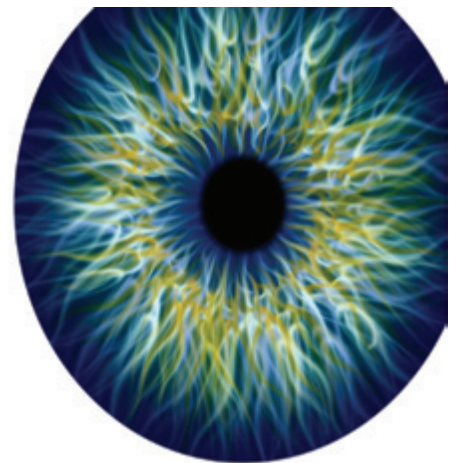
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# SPRING TRAINING PHOTOS



The Atlanta Braves playing the Minnesota Twins on March 5, 2021 at CoolToday Park.

ATLANTA BRAVES / COURTESY PHOTO



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# SPRING TRAINING PHOTOS



ATLANTA BRAVES / COURTESY PHOTOS  
Baseball fans got to see their favorites start the season at CoolToday park with Ron Acuna, Jr., above, Ozzie Albies, right and A.J. Minter along with the rest of the Atlanta Braves team.



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