

  
 B A B C O C K R A N C H  
**TELEGRAPH**

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"The curriculum and foundation for the school are associated with the core values of Babcock Ranch ... Babcock offers opportunities to learn from its surroundings. Too often, subjects are taught in isolation."

— Dr. Christy Noe, president and CEO of Tallahassee-based Collaborative Educational Network



Welcome to the  
**BABCOCK**  
 NEIGHBORHOOD  
**SCHOOL**

VANDY MAJOR / BABCOCK RANCH TELEGRAPH

Babcock Ranch's 'dream school' welcomes students this August

▲ The new Babcock Neighborhood School will open next month with 156 students.

BY NANCI THEORET  
 ntheoret@babcockranchtelegraph.com

**M**ICHELE BAUBLIS' THREE SONS, AS WELL AS THE other 153 students enrolled in the inaugural class at Babcock Neighborhood School, will learn about solar energy, experience Florida's natural ecosystems and discover the early history of Southwest Florida without hopping a field-bound bus. They'll simply walk to the town of Babcock Ranch's 443-acre solar field, explore its town square or even hit the nature trails nestled within native flora and fauna.

"We're just ecstatic the boys will be attending," said Mrs. Baublis who lives 10 minutes from the new charter school. "It was a bittersweet decision because we loved Bayshore Elementary but the concept of hands-on learning is fabulous. In public school, it seems like the boys are always studying to pass a test. I see this as an opportunity to pull back on so much testing and have fun learning."

The Baublis boys include third-grade twins Lincoln and Macabe and fourth-grader Jackson. The eldest son Joey, a seventh grader, plans to join his siblings next school year.

Located in Founders Square, the school expects to welcome 156 kindergarten through sixth-grade students in August. It was created around the concept of learning by doing and blending multiple subjects into class and individual projects.

Dr. Christy Noe, president and CEO of Tallahassee-based Collaborative Educational Network, wrote the BNS's charter application which was approved in a whirlwind 10 months. As a consultant for town developer Kitson & Partners, she also developed a curriculum that will be kid-driven through student surveys, devised policy and formed a governing board represented by professors from Florida Gulf Coast University, a retired engineer and local businesspeople. Dr. Noe also is writing the high school charter with that school scheduled to open during the 2019-2020 school year.



SEE SCHOOL, A8 ►

**Around town**

See some of the friendly faces from the Spring Picnic. **A32 ►**



**New**

Castle Harbour Homes breaks ground on new model. **A18 ►**



**Yummy!**

Babcock's market, café, and ice cream shop will cater to all. **A14 ►**



# TELEGRAPH

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## MEET THE PROFESSIONALS

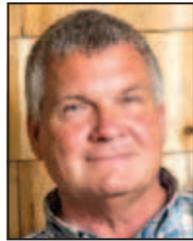
### It's all about the lifestyle for Mike Serfozo

BY **GLENN MILLER**

Babcock Ranch Telegraph Correspondent

Mike Serfozo recalls what life was like for him as a boy in Newark, Ohio, in the 1960s.

Those memories fuel Mr. Serfozo's visions into what life will be like in Babcock Ranch, where he manages the Curry Creek Outfitters store.



**MIKE SERFOZO**

"It definitely flashes me back to the simpler times when it was safe," Mr. Serfozo said, chatting at a picnic table in Founder's Square on a June afternoon. "When I think back as a kid, even at age 10 we'd take a bus and go downtown. It was a town of 40,000 people but you felt like you could do anything. You can't do that anymore."

But the prospect of working in Babcock Ranch and seeing a town sprout up from nothing appeals to Mr. Serfozo, whose title is Retail Stores Manager.

The lifestyle of America's first solar-powered town also appealed to Mr. Serfozo as soon as he heard about it.

"It's about kayaks, taking hikes and bicycling," Mr. Serfozo said. "When I looked at the (Babcock) website even before coming out, it's about people wanting to be able to walk into downtown."

The openness of Babcock Ranch stands in contrast to gated communities. There is no gate at Babcock. The winding road leading into the town is open to all.

"The gated community thing I don't especially like," Mr. Serfozo said. "One thing that stood out

with this is it's not a gated community. It's an open town. Anyone can come in to enjoy all of the amenities and beauty Babcock Ranch has to offer."

Those amenities include bicycles in front of Curry Creek and the dining at the Table & Tap restaurant, which is nestled between the store and lake.

Curry Creek Outfitters is just steps away from Founder's Square. The store brims with clothing, equipment and snacks. But it's about more than what is out front or on the shelves. It's about providing guests with an experience. Curry Creek also has two rowboats and will soon have a 12-passenger electric boat.

"I want to walk down and show the kayaks," Mr. Serfozo said.

So he and a Telegraph reporter walked outside the store, past Table & Tap, along the lake-shore to where kayaks are displayed. Mr. Serfozo pointed out there are six kayaks and six stand-up paddleboards available.

"That will expand with demand," he said.

The demand will grow as the town grows.

Mr. Serfozo brings a varied background to Curry Creek Outfitters. He graduated from Newark High School in 1976, and then went on to major in engineering at Ohio State and worked in the corporate world for Kaiser Aluminum, starting in 1978 when still in college and staying until 1990. Mr. Serfozo then went to Michelin and in 1997, he and his wife, Sharon, joined Del Sol, a company that produces products that change color in the sun.

Life is about change and change eventually came for Mike and Sharon. Now, Mr. Serfozo is helping create not only a business but also a town. He's worked as an engineer and quality assurance manager and in retail.

"I have been trained to pay attention to details

and have learned that the most important aspect of any business is customer service," Mr. Serfozo said. "It is my goal at Curry Creek Outfitters to not only offer quality products and services but to present them in a way that gives our customers a wonderful experience."

"We don't exist simply to sell products or rent equipment. Our mission is to be the experts on everything that Babcock has to offer in the way of outdoor fun."

"My staff and I try to greet and get to know our customers and spend time talking to them and answering questions they may have about our company, store, products, wildlife, events, etc."

Mr. Serfozo's first day of work at Babcock was Jan. 23. Curry Creek Outfitters is located in Woodlea Hall, which wasn't even finished at the time.

The new job and town is returning Mr. Serfozo, in a sense, to the way he lived as a boy in a family of four children with his parents.

"We did a lot of outside things," Mr. Serfozo said. "A lot of boating. A lot of camping. Just anything. We spent weeks and weeks outside."

Coming to Babcock Ranch is going back to the past while looking toward the future. The stewardship that Syd Kitson, the chairman and CEO of Kitson & Partners, demonstrates appeals to Mr. Serfozo. Mr. Kitson purchased the 91,000-acre Babcock Ranch in 2006.

"Syd bought all this beautiful land and immediately sold most of it back to the state so it would remain a preserve. What does this say about him? It says he walks the walk. Babcock Ranch is a way of life, not just squeezing in as many houses as possible" Mr. Serfozo said.

It's a philosophy that appeals to Mike Serfozo, the man in charge of Curry Creek Outfitters and one who remembers simpler times. 📍

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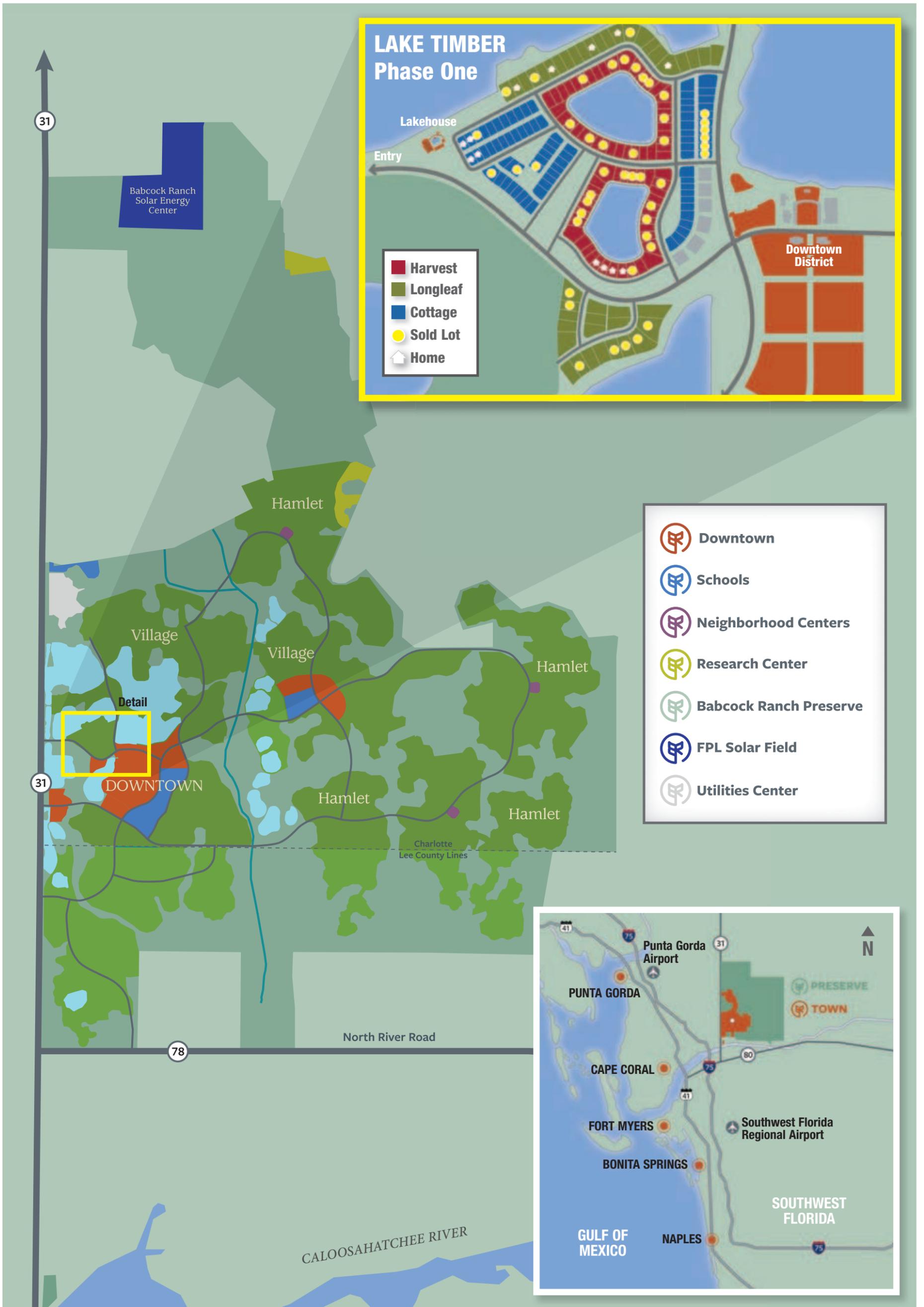
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# BABCOCK RANCH EVENTS

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**Tuesdays** – Mom & Me fitness class  
9 – 10 a.m.  
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**Tuesdays** – Strength and conditioning  
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**Saturdays** – Babcock Boot Camp  
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**Saturdays** – Paddleboard Yoga  
10:30 – 11 a.m. – Meditation/Land Yoga  
11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Paddleboard  
Yoga Lesson

Cost is \$5 per class. Must preregister. Registration is available [www.babcockranch.com/events](http://www.babcockranch.com/events).

## HAPPENINGS

All events are free and all are welcome.

**Tuesday Night Live** – live music in  
Founder's Square  
5:30 – 8:30 pm

Enjoy live music, restaurant specials at Table & Tap and games in the biergarten and on the lawn.

**Saturday Concert Series** – Live music in  
Founder's Square

4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Aug. 5** – Babcock Neighborhood School  
Back-to-School Burger Flip

**September** - Sports Camp - Call for times

■ Stay in shape with **Babcock Boot Camp (for adults)**  
Saturdays under the band shell  
in the Downtown District - call for  
times (888) 659-7488.

— [www.babcockranch.com/events](http://www.babcockranch.com/events)



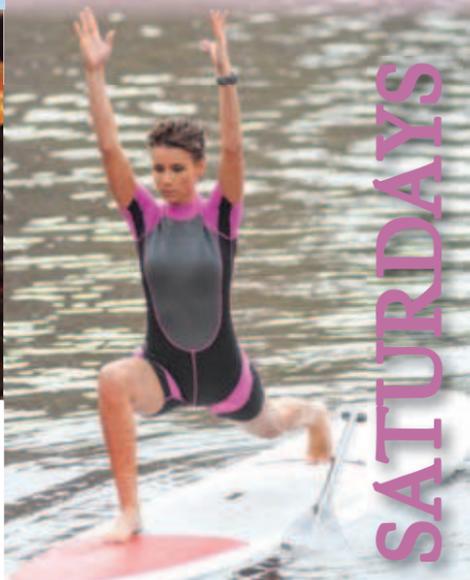
(888) 659-7488  
**September** - The Hatchery opens  
**Oct. 31** - BNS "Trunk or Treat"  
**November** - Tentative Bike Night

■ **Tuesday Night Live**, live music in Founder's Square, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m., and the **Saturday Concert Series**, 4:30 - 7:30 p.m.  
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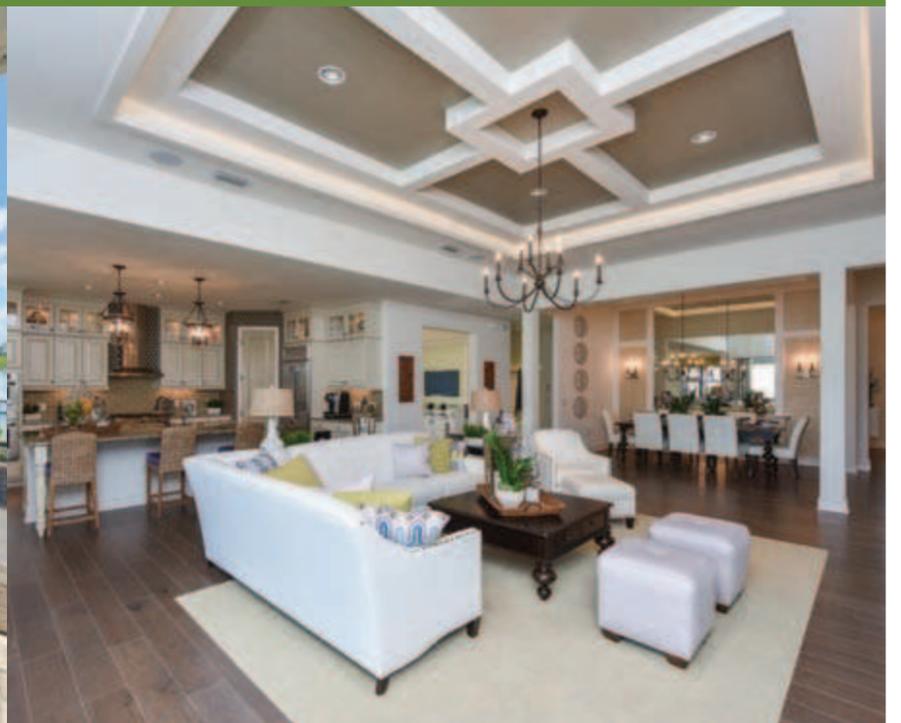
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# SCHOOL

From page 1

“Only 21 percent of proposed charter schools get approved,” she said. “The application and new building were approved in 10 months. That’s something that never happens. Usually charter schools begin in portables. We were able to accomplish this through all the support of the Babcock Ranch people and the teams they put together.”



NOE

Dr. Noe praises principal Shannon Treece, the school’s initial nine teachers and parents for believing in the mission and unique vision of BNS and its emphasis on using the country’s first solar-powered city as a classroom. Its GreenSTEAM approach expands upon STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) to include art and environmental education. Classes will explore the local landscape, history and culture while engaging and connecting students to the town’s natural environment, sustainable building practices and conservation initiatives that promote nature, health and renewable energy.



TREECE

“The curriculum and foundation for the school are associated with the core values of Babcock Ranch,” Dr. Noe said. “Babcock offers opportunities to learn from its surroundings. Too often, subjects are taught in isolation.”

For example, a visit to the \$300 million FPL Babcock Ranch Solar Energy Center might incorporate the science behind sun power and understanding how weather impacts lights in the school. Math, essays and art can also be factored into the learning experience. The school is also exploring community partnerships that will teach students how to fly drones or keep honeybees. Cape Coral Technical College has committed to bringing its laparoscope to the school in September. Students will learn how the machine



VANDY MAJOR / BABCOCK RANCH TELEGRAPH

The BNS GreenSTEAM approach expands upon STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) to include art and environmental education.

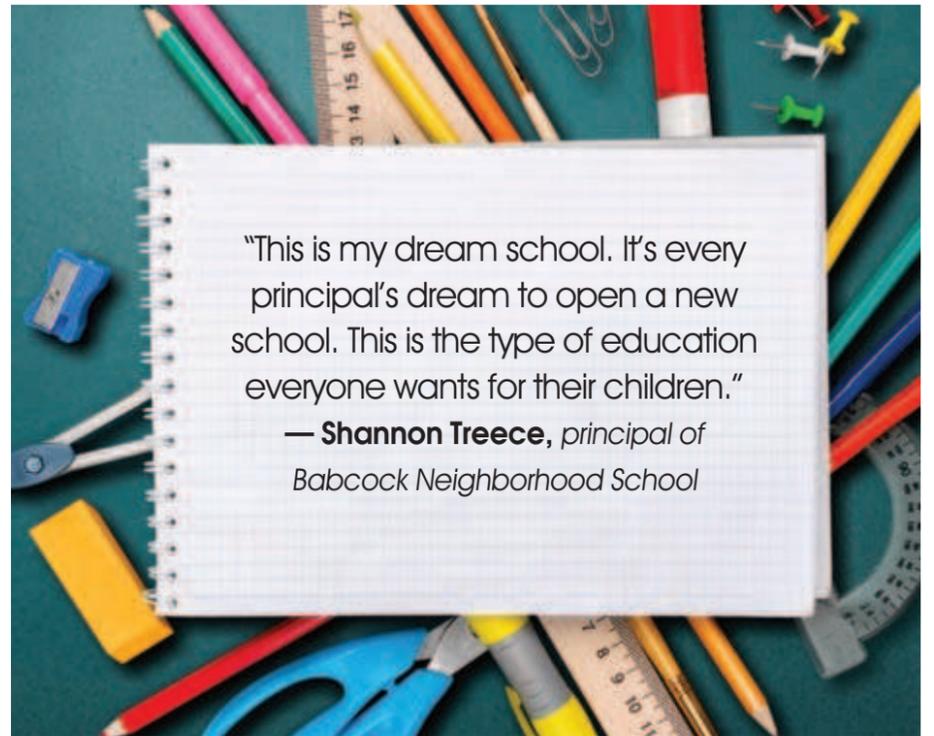
is used to perform minimally invasive surgery and make sutures.

“This is my dream school,” said Ms. Treece who left the Lee County Public School District to join the BNS team. “It’s every principal’s dream to open a new school. This is the type of education everyone wants for their children. It’s not driven by textbooks but what’s happening in the community and what’s happening around them. Students have real-world engagements while learning.”

With its prairie style-meets-modern architecture, the two-story building features large 800-square-foot classrooms (the public school standard is 600 square feet) designed for students to move around. School breakfast and lunch will be supplied by Table & Tap, Babcock Ranch’s farm-to-table restaurant. Students who qualify for free or reduced meals will be subsidized by the Babcock Ranch Foundation.

“We had the school district out and they were in awe,” said Dr. Noe, an educator and one of the state’s pioneering charter school principals in the 1990s.

“This is a different approach,” said Ms.



“This is my dream school. It’s every principal’s dream to open a new school. This is the type of education everyone wants for their children.”

— Shannon Treece, principal of Babcock Neighborhood School



The new two-story school features large 800-square-foot classrooms, 33 percent bigger than public school classrooms.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the excitement and students engaging in meaningful learning ... We're looking into all sorts of new and exciting ways to teach students. The teachers are just as excited as I am."

— Shannon Treece, Babcock Neighborhood School principal

Treece, who's worked in the education field for 17 years and was chosen from 160 applicants. "Traditional education is taught in silos. Instead of a unit in math or science, students will work on a project that blends subjects. They might study robotics and be asked to think about how it will change the world 20 years from now. They'll have to research, read and write and use critical thinking skills and collaborate and communicate as a group."

Ms. Treece hand-selected each teacher — professionals "who believe in this model and were already using project-based learning without any formal training," she said. "Hiring teachers was extraordinary. It was so clear cut which were the best, it made it easy. They're a strong group of teachers who are passionate about this type of learning. They're going to be unstoppable."

The staff includes two kindergarten teachers, one for each additional grade, another dedicated to exceptional student education as well as administrative and office personnel.

A \$520,000, two-year federal start-up grant will provide two weeks of professional development training for BNS teachers.

"The school is investing in its teachers for the next two years," said Dr. Noe.

Mrs. Baublis said she learned about the school through her sister-in-law, who works for one of Babcock Ranch's six builders.

"I was interested but a little apprehensive at first," she said. "We've been a public school family for so long but all my concerns were put aside when we meet with Shannon."

Previous obligations kept the Baublis family from attending orientation. Instead they met personally with Ms. Treece for an hour to ask questions, including Kitson & Partners' commitment to the school's longevity, the curriculum, lunches and uniforms. "I love her. We never felt rushed and she answered every question," Mrs. Baublis said. "I really like the idea of the kids learning about pollination by watching bees or planting a garden, seeing a seedling grow then the plant processed by the restaurant. Instead of the rush, rush, rush to learn, they'll go to the garden and learn. It's really neat."



VANDY MAJOR / BABCOCK RANCH TELEGRAPH

**School breakfast and lunch will be supplied by Table & Tap, Babcock Ranch's farm-to-table restaurant.**

She said two family friends have also applied to enroll their children at Babcock Neighborhood School, which will assign final seats during a lottery in July.

"The whole family is excited," she added. "This is a wonderful opportunity my boys are going to have."

Ms. Treece has been introducing the teachers via bios and photos posted on Babcock Neighborhood School's Facebook page.

BNS will operate from the Founder's Square location until 2019 then move to its

permanent site near the high school. Dr. Noe said the school is already proving the exception.

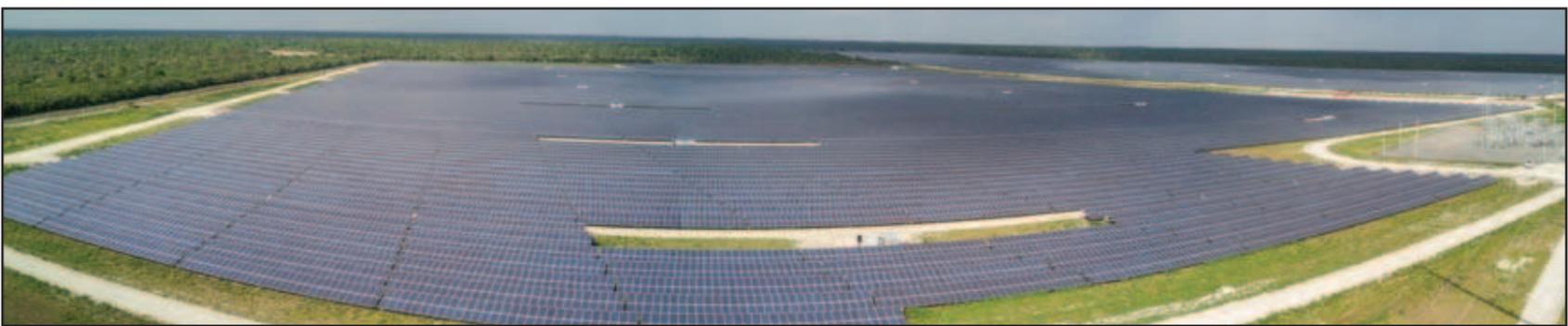
"We said we were going to do it and we've done it," she said. "A lot of schools usually delay opening because they don't have the building or the students."

For Babcock Neighborhood School students, state testing and the school's ranking are one factor of the education equation.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the excitement and students engaging in meaningful

learning," said Ms. Treece, whose daughter is also a member of the inaugural student body. "We're looking into all sorts of new and exciting ways to teach students. The teachers are just as excited as I am."

"The student voice will be very important at Babcock Neighborhood School," she added. "We will listen to them and what they need to learn. Every child has a strength and this type of model allows students to soar while addressing areas for growth." 📢



**The \$300 million FPL Babcock Ranch Solar Energy Center will be a classroom to teach the science behind sun power.**



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# MEET THE BUILDER

## Ken Fox of Fox Premier Builders

BY LAURA TICHY-SMITH

Special to Babcock Ranch Telegraph

Ken Fox, the founder and principal of Fox Premier Builders, seems to be a little like his namesake animal — quick and often on the move.

“He’ll come out to a job site a couple times a week, and when you turn around, he’s gone,” said Tom Vet, project manager for the firm. “You almost have to trap him. He’s a good guy, and I enjoy working for him.”

Educated at Lewis University, a Catholic school outside of Chicago, Mr. Fox originally began building single-family homes in exclusive communities in the Chicago area. He relocated his family owned and run business to Florida about 15 years ago. Since relocating here, Mr. Fox has built luxury homes in Talis Park and Quail West in Naples, as well as in Miromar Lakes near Estero. His niece, Nicole Fox, helms the Naples branch of the operation, called Fox Custom Builders.

Now, Ken Fox has come to help build the town of Babcock Ranch with five different models of semi-custom homes, ranging from a single-floor, two-bedroom cottage that will be priced around \$300,000 to a two-story home with a base price of \$569,000. So why is a builder of multi-million dollar homes in Naples coming to Babcock Ranch to build homes that start at around \$300,000?

“I think that it was the good opportunity out there,” said office manager Tanja Richards. “It was a good opportunity to be in a new development and new city. Our houses are less expensive — half the price if not more — than our homes in Talis Park or Quail West, so I think it was the challenge for him to be able to do a quality,



An artist's rendering of The Eden model by Fox Premier Builders.

COURTESY IMAGES

semi-custom home for less expensive. The whole area is incredible, and I think he liked the fact that it’s self-sustainable with the power and the fact that it’s out in the country. He travels a lot, and he likes to be out.”

Mr. Vet agreed with Ms. Richards about their boss.

“I think just the whole idea of building an energy-efficient and sustainable town really excited and intrigued him,” Mr. Vet said. “He’s used to building homes from the \$1 million to \$4 million range, so just to get away from that into something where our designs are



unique because we’re trying to keep our pricing down so people are interested in buying these homes. The profit margin is low on these homes right now, but I don’t think he’s in it for the money. I mean, he is, as is any businessman, but I think it is more the love of the project.”

The Babcock Ranch project is challenging its builders to come up with ideas about how to create the most energy-efficient, environmentally friendly homes while doing so at a price point. To meet the challenge of building semi-custom, green homes within

The whole area is incredible, and I think he liked the fact that it’s self-sustainable with the power and the fact that it’s out in the country.

— Tanja Richards, Fox Premier Builders office manager, speaking of founder, Ken Fox

price range, Fox Premier Homes is building the houses with structural insulated panels (SIP). The SIP technology creates an airtight, insulated home from a material so strong that homes built from it held up to Hurricane Charley. Because of how SIP is manufactured to be ready to assemble at the home site, it cuts the trimming waste typically associated with homebuilding by half, which is better for the environment.

Fox Premier Homes is distinct at Babcock Ranch in that it is the only company approaching the green building challenge with SIP. This is an innovation for Mr. Fox to be moving into building with this groundbreaking material, and the new town’s emphasis on green building techniques provided a golden opportunity for him to implement it in homebuilding. While he may be new to SIP, he made sure he hired the experience and expertise necessary for building the homes at Babcock with this material.

“I was in business for myself for 35 years up north, and I started using SIP probably 17 years

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# MEET THE BUILDER



**Fox Premier Homes is building all their Babcock Ranch homes with structural insulated panels (SIP).**

**Above: An artist's rendering of The Timberbuilt Cabin model.**

**Left: The Whisper Creek model.**

**Bottom: The Camden model.**

ago," Mr. Vet said. "It's a new way down here, but I've used this system on timber frames up north. I've known Ken Fox for six years now — he is a friend of my brother's — so he called on me. I came down to talk to him, interview with him and talk about the project. He approached me when he knew this project was finally going to move ahead. Then I came down two years ago to work for him on the custom side of his business until this project took off a year ago. He was excited about it and got me excited about it, too."

It sounds as if Mr. Fox shares another attribute with his namesake animal — intelligence. 🐾

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*Photo courtesy of John Blanco, Peace River Photography.*

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# Babcock's market, café, and ice cream shop will cater to all

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

ewilliams@babcockranchtelegraph.com

A community marketplace designed to become a vibrant, bustling intersection of food, drink, business and socializing on almost 9,000 square feet is set to open in Founder's Square in August.

Slater's Goods & Provisions, a community market and café, will be the centerpiece. Customers will be able to grab grocery essentials as well as freshly prepared meals to eat in the café or to go — for home, work, or perhaps as supplies for the trail.

Inside Slater's will be Square Scoops, a coffee and ice cream shop with 16 flavors as well as cappuccinos, espressos, lattes or anything your heart desires from a caffeine standpoint. There will be a walk-up window and separate counter heights for kids and adults, overlooking downtown Babcock.

"It's going to be a great destination to bring your kids and have a cup of coffee while reading the paper," suggested Matthew Seiler, Babcock Ranch's food and beverage director.

And just upstairs from Slater's and Square Scoops, you'll find people hard at work at The Hatchery, a collaborative office space, business incubator and career development center where people from across different generations and areas of expertise will mingle.

"It's going to be a busy building," Mr. Seiler said. "We're really excited for it."

Near the front entrance to Slater's, visitors will find fresh produce and some items that are locally sourced or made in-house, including fresh eggs, milk and cold-pressed sunflower oil.

A community garden will provide items such as tri-colored cauliflower, summer squash, zucchini, herbs, barley, ancient grain rice and edible flowers.

"That's a long-term goal to be able to grow what we can to sell and use," Mr. Seiler said.

Shoppers will also find grab-and-go artisan salads and sandwiches, along with special breakfast and lunch menu items each day and various other sundries.



VANDY MAJOR / BABCOCK RANCH TELEGRAPH

**Upstairs from the market, The Hatchery will provide a unique collaborative office space and business incubator**

A 3,000-square-foot kitchen will be a catering hub for large parties or weddings of up to 1,000 people or more and provide additional prep space for Babcock's Table & Tap restaurant.

Cooks here will also turn out breakfast and lunch for hungry school kids at the Babcock Neighborhood School, where lessons about sustainable and healthy eating will be woven into a "place-based, green STEAM" curriculum (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). A 5-acre farm will provide lessons in the farm-to-table movement and fresh meal options.

"It's a multi-faceted kitchen," Mr. Seiler said. "We'll be able to get a lot of work done and it will be really beneficial for our community."

David Rashty, a classically trained executive chef who is also behind the food at Table & Tap, will oversee a healthy school menu. It will bring to bear Babcock Ranch's eco-driven focus on health and wellness and, as president of Slow Food Southwest Florida, his commitment to

healthy, sustainable eating. The menu will be void of refined sugar, for instance. He'll use substitutes such as honey from a local farm instead.

"We want to teach them how to live cleanly and sustainably," he said. "We're showing everyone how to do things a better way."

After a day of hiking the trails or fishing one of Babcock's well-stocked lakes, residents might appreciate the craft and local beer that will be on tap at Slater's as well.

Customers will be able to knock back a few at the bar or fill up a 64-ounce growler jug to go. Slater's will also carry a wide variety of wines and hold regular tastings. Mr. Seiler has worked with Rutherford Wine Company in Napa Valley, where they have created a series of three signature, organic Babcock Ranch wines: a Cabernet, a Chardonnay and a Pinot Grigio.

Over the long term, Mr. Seiler said that Slater's will develop a meal delivery service similar to Blue Apron that would provide custom,

ready-to-prepare breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

## The Hatchery

The Hatchery will be upstairs from the market and include a large, common working area with an open floor plan and private offices around the perimeter. It will offer different types of monthly memberships for entrepreneurs, independent workers, small business employees and others.

Natalee Burns, project coordinator of strategic initiatives for Kitson & Partners, is behind developing the unique space. It was first inspired by the idea of "encore careers," she said, when people develop new careers and businesses later in life, often at retirement age or after.

"It's a trend that's going on with (Baby) Boomers," Ms. Burns said. "When I started researching it, it became obvious that Boomers don't have a lot of support from their current companies, transitioning into a new career, or finding companies interested in hiring someone who was reaching retirement age."

"We came up with, why don't we have a space at Babcock Ranch, if you're retired from one career or thinking about retiring, there's a space where you can figure out what you want to do."

At the same time, she added, entrepreneurs and workers of younger generations will be able to work at The Hatchery as well.

"We saw there could really be a good balance from every generation," she said.

People interested in working at The Hatchery have several options based on monthly membership agreements. For instance, you could rent either a private office or else a spot in the common area. A business would also be able to buy a membership at The Hatchery that would allow up three of its employees to work there.

The space will include conference rooms, a small kitchen, a copy room, and a balcony with a view of Founder's Square. Ms. Burns said it would be designed to be "not too modern, but not too rustic. I want it to be really comfortable because you want people to stay there and work." ☺

# Rent a bike at Babcock with your smartphone

BY GLENN MILLER

Babcock Ranch Telegraph Correspondent

Your next or perhaps first Babcock Ranch bicycle ride is a mere app away. Sixteen rental bicycles are available, locked to bike stands in front of the Curry Creek Outfitters store in Founder's Square.

What will eventually become a 50-mile network of bike, equestrian and hiking trails and lanes is growing by the day.

Babcock Ranch project coordinator Natalee Burns and Michelle Churchill, the town's lifestyle director, recently met the Telegraph at Woodlea Hall, the structure that houses Curry Creek Outfitters and corporate offices. The bicycles are displayed in front of the store and all that is needed for an hour of cycling pleasure along the roads and a crushed shell trail and over a bridge through the woods is \$3. A mere \$3 spent through an app on one's phone magically unlocks a bicycle for a resident or visitor. Ms. Burns pointed out the bike share program is "open to the public."

Then, after a ring lock is disabled with the right code found through the app, it's off, pedaling away from Founder's Square and through the quiet of the woods and on lightly traveled and freshly paved asphalt or on a crushed shell trail. The wide-wheeled cruiser style bicycles Ms. Burns and Ms. Churchill rode featured baskets attached to the handlebars, places to store, perhaps, a sandwich or a new shirt purchased at Curry Creek Outfitters or a camera.

The Babcock Ranch bike share program is operated by Zagster, a company based in Cambridge, Mass. It has another office in San Francisco and operates bike share programs throughout the nation in cities, universities and corporate headquarters.

Babcock's bike share program is relatively new in this new town where nearly every



VANDY MAJOR / BABCOCK RANCH TELEGRAPH

**Cyclists using the Zagster bike rental program to cruise around Babcock Ranch.**

sunrise brings another sign of America's first solar-powered town evolving from concept to reality.

Ms. Burns said she recalls the bike share program was launched the second week of March. It isn't designed to be a moneymaker for Babcock, according to Ms. Burns.

"The money we receive from it is going to be put into the Babcock Ranch Foundation," Ms. Burns said, sitting in her Woodlea Hall office before taking a cycling break.

The Babcock Ranch Foundation was created last year and according to its website it will "support initiatives and partnerships that enhance, enrich and create projects and activities for the benefit of the greater Babcock Ranch community, Babcock Ranch Preserve, and the greater Southwest Florida region."

"The foundation is to help children," Ms. Burns said. "Specifically at-risk children

and it also helps raise money for the charter school we're going to have."

The school building near Woodlea Hall is nearly finished. Workers were on the site the day Ms. Burns and Ms. Churchill rode bicycles. The full Babcock bicycling experience isn't ready yet.

"We only have one trail right now," Ms. Burns said.

But other trail segments will open in the months and years to come.

"I know that the next phase of the trail we've been talking about, we have Curry Creek Lake Canal, which is like the canal that runs on the east side of the property," Ms. Burns said. "What that trail was, they dug a canal back there and all the spoil from that canal went on the other side of it so it kind of created its own little road."

Although Florida is generally considered a very dangerous place to bicycle, that won't be

the case in Babcock Ranch.

"All of our roads are going to have bike lanes," Ms. Burns said. "We're trying to be bike friendly and walker/pedestrian friendly."

Ms. Burns said Babcock officials have wanted for a long time to include some sort of bike share program in the community. But how does that work? Who could organize it? Who has experience doing such a thing?

"We're like it's a little bit complicated," Ms. Burns said. "So we thought why don't we just find a company that is already doing it."

Enter Zagster, a start-up that was launched in 2007 and now has more than 160 bike share programs in 35 states.

"They're willing to start really small with us," Ms. Burns said.

Jon Terbush, Zagster's communications manager, said the company has bike share programs in half the Ivy League schools.

Zagster is on other college campuses such as Ohio State and Texas A & M and in cities as far apart as Gainesville and Fort Collins, Col.

Babcock officials such as Ms. Burns determined Zagster was the best fit for the new town.

"We do everything," Mr. Terbush said. Everything, that is, except pedal.

That still has to be done by the customer with a smartphone and a mere \$3. ☺



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# BABCOCK TECHNOLOGY

## Babcock Ranch amps up its tech with new Apps

BY **NANCI THEORET**

Babcock Ranch Telegraph Correspondent

Want to know the name of that unusual tree along the Sunset Trail? There's an app for that.

Need to make reservations on the patio at Table & Tap? There's an app for that, too.

Trying to find your dream home or news at Babcock Ranch? You got it; there are apps for that.

Babcock Ranch has unveiled two new smartphone apps tailored to the town and all it has to offer — from the latest news and community events to home sales and hiking trails. Just download the Babcock Telegraph and Babcock Ranch town app and everything you need to know and want to do is right at your fingertips.

The Telegraph app allows users to scroll through business, entertainment and town news while the town app provides an immersive experience that will continue to evolve as users share information, said Al DiNicola, vice president of sales and marketing for Kitson & Partners which is developing the innovative Florida town.

"It's a guide to all things Babcock" he said. "It has maps, events, a list of activities people can do, a look at downtown life and provides real estate offerings so people can understand what Babcock Ranch is all about. It's like the town is on demand."

The town app is designed to create time-saving experiences and provide a know-it-all now understanding for Babcock Ranch residents and visitors. It's a logical step

for a town driven by technology, solar energy, autonomous transportation, big ideas and dedicated to sharing those experiences with the public.

"Babcock Ranch is going to have the most amazing technology," said Mr. DiNicola. "We think of this as the tip of the iceberg. What's really compelling about Babcock is its underbelly of fiber technology. It will have the greatest bandwidth on the planet. You'll never see a spiral saying the video is buffering. You can literally download and send 1,000 photos in three seconds. It's crazy fast."

The baseline version of the app will include a guidance system for the town's hiking and biking trails, a platform for making reservations at the Table & Tap restaurant as well as background about the town planning process and how front porches, parks and farmers mar-

kets foster community camaraderie. Users can tell their phone's intelligent assistant to have sidewalk cruisers delivered from the Discovery Center to their homes.

The app is only a shadow of its future self. As it evolves, it will provide a fully immersive experience allowing users to virtually explore the Founders

Square downtown area, park and lakefront in three dimensions.

Geo-sensing and beacon technology will identify specific stops along trails, answer questions about flora and fauna, and allow the public to share their experiences.

"Over time elements will become more detailed," Mr. DiNicola said. "You

can walk along Sunset Trail around Sunset Park and you'll know how the lake got there. You'll take a picture of a tree, find out what

type of tree it is and make a sticky to share the experience. There's a platform to share it on the app and on our Facebook page. Babcock is a public town and we want people to feel welcome and share with others what they enjoy about coming here."

And part of Babcock's engagement will be the polar opposite of technology: Nature and a communal experience.

"The idea is for people to know that technology is out there, it works and at Babcock it's only limited by the imagination," said Mr. DiNicola. "But it's

not in your face. 



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# Castle Harbour Homes starts its first model in Babcock Ranch

BY KEVIN CAFFREY

Special to Babcock Ranch Telegraph

Fort Myers-based Castle Harbour Homes has begun construction of its first furnished model homes in the Lake Timber neighborhood at Babcock Ranch. The award-winning homebuilder will begin construction of a second model in July. Both models are expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2018 and will feature interior designs by Lori Manning Designs. Plans for construction of two unfurnished, move-in ready homes are also in development.

Castle Harbour's floor plans were designed specifically for construction at Babcock Ranch and include the covered front and rear porches that are the signature of the new town and allow the home to live from front to back while encouraging interaction with neighbors. The Smart Homes by Castle Harbour will be situated on lakeside home sites on the banks of Lake Timber and Lake Bullhorn, the two lakes that envelope the Lake Timber neighborhood.

The furnished, 2,845 square feet under air Fort Davenport model that is slated for completion in January features a floor plan offering three bedrooms plus a study or four bedrooms, three baths, and a three-and-a-half car garage. The open-concept plan presents a spacious great room, dining area, and island kitchen that open to a stunning rear veranda and outdoor kitchen overlooking a pool, spa, and lake views. The master suite includes a private rear veranda as well as two walk-in closets and a master bath with a free-standing tub, shower, his and her vanities, and a separate water closet. The kitchen, the home's central hallway, and one of the private guest suites open to a unique interior atrium that offers an ideal place to relax in nature. Both of the guest suites include double doors



COURTESY IMAGES

**An artist's rendering of Castle Harbour Homes' furnished Fort Davenport model is set for completion in January in the Lake Timber neighborhood.**

opening to the home's deep covered front porch. The Fort Davenport presents a modern ranch style with a touch of Old Florida and is base-priced at \$745,000 including the homesite.

Scheduled for completion in March and base-priced at \$555,000 including the homesite, Castle Harbour's furnished Fort Casey model will include 2,328 square feet under air. The perfectly sized great room, dining area, and island kitchen open to a comfortable rear veranda with an outdoor kitchen overlooking a pool, spa, and lake views. A storage space for an electrically powered boat will be included. The master suite offers a private veranda, two walk-in closets, and a bath with double vanities, a free-standing tub, a shower, and a separate water closet. The Fort Casey plan also includes an open interior atrium that is accessible from the kitchen, primary hallway, and one of the guest suites.

The second guest suite opens to the home's engaging L-shaped front porch. Castle Harbour's first unfurnished, move-in ready residence will also feature the Fort Casey floor plan.

Castle Harbour also plans to build an unfurnished, move-in ready residence featuring its 2,582 square feet under air Fort Arbuckle floor plan. Base-priced at \$625,000 including the homesite, the floor plan and an architectural style that includes an L-shaped front porch and two rear verandas convey a homespun feeling. The spacious great room, dining area, and island kitchen open to a veranda with a pleasant conversation area and outdoor kitchen that feature lake views.

One of the home's two guest suites includes two sets of double doors opening to the front porch. The master suite features a private owner's veranda, a massive walk-in closet, and a bath with a free-standing tub, walk-in shower, and a separate water closet.

**Below: Castle Harbour Homes' team at the recent groundbreaking of its first model home in Babcock Ranch.**



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# Lennar joins list of Babcock builders; offers affordably priced homes

BY LAURA TICHY-SMITH

Babcock Ranch Telegraph Correspondent

If you've been intrigued by the idea of living in the world's first solar-powered, fully fiber-optic town nestled into a nature preserve, but you aren't someone who can afford a new home in the semi-custom price bracket, here's some good news. National builder Lennar, known for building over 60 communities in Southwest Florida alone, has come on board as Babcock Ranch's newest home builder. Kitson & Partners has announced an agreement for Lennar to build a mix of twin-villas and single-family homes at prices within reach of a broad range of homebuyers.

Unlike other neighborhoods at Babcock Ranch, where homes are being built by a variety of builders, Lennar is coming in big and building an entire neighborhood of 180 homes near the school and community park priced from around \$180,000 for the twin-villas to the \$220s for single-family homes.

"From the beginning, we have promised to make Babcock Ranch an inclusive hometown with a full range of housing options and price points," said Syd Kitson, chairman and CEO of Kitson & Partners. "This is just an important step in fulfilling that commitment and we look forward to adding more outstanding building partners over the next few months. We are excited to be working with Lennar to expand access to the environmentally-friendly, active lifestyle we are creating at Babcock Ranch."

So why is the company building in just the one neighborhood?

"They desired that," said Rick Severance, president of Babcock Ranch. "Their commitment was for a larger volume of lots, and they

wanted to be in a position where they could grow into additional land, so that was the right location for them."

Lennar has dedicated itself to providing the latest in home technology as well as environmentally efficient upgrades in order to expand the possibilities of homebuilding. It's found a like-minded partner in Babcock Ranch, a community dedicated to similar ideals.

"We're really excited with the collection of builders that we have," Mr. Severance said. "All have distinct characteristics and can add

value to the community as a whole, and Lennar just continues to add a different level to this collection that we already had."

Because of Lennar's "Everything's Included" approach, homebuyers never have to haggle or compromise their dream home because their desired features are already included. Such features include granite counter tops, wood cabinets, upgraded tile flooring, a covered lanai and a full stainless-steel appliance package. Because Babcock Ranch has been designed to be the self-sustaining, high-tech town of the future, the dream features that

come standard with every home also include a full gigabyte of fiber-optic connectivity and an environmentally friendly lifestyle powered by the town's own 75 megawatt Florida Power & Light (FPL) solar power plant.

"They've made a commitment to offer some additional products that we didn't have with our other builders in terms of sizing and entry-level price points," Mr. Severance said. "They're offering a split villa, which we didn't have, so they are offering a different product. They're also a nice complement to our other builders." 📍



The new Lennar neighborhood will be in the area marked Phase 2A, just south of the community park.



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# Babcock Ranch: Southwest Florida's most interesting city

BY **NANCI THEORET**

ntheoret@babcockranchtelegraph.com

Jennifer Languell has spent much of her professional life teaching builders, developers and businesses about green building and sustainable design. As part of the team at Babcock Ranch, Dr. Languell guided Kitson & Partners and town founders in creating the nation's first solar-powered city from dusty agricultural fields and rock-mined land. She knows the town that will someday be home to 50,000 residents elevates sustainable development to a level unrivaled in Southwest Florida. She understands the big things done at Babcock Ranch as well as the tiniest of details that make all the difference.

But she still has those pinch-me moments whenever she crosses the entry bridge for business meetings or family time and sees sustainability in action and a community channeling Norman Rockwell's iconic paintings of everyday life, complete with a town square and homes with wide front porches.

"It's just so different," said Dr. Languell who holds a Ph.D. in civil engineering and sustainable construction and is founder, CEO and president of Trifecta Construction Solutions. Instead of perfectly manicured landscaping and expanses of sod, Babcock Ranch welcomes with native vegetation, muhly grass fringing sidewalks and urban trails, architecture blending into the environment with an artist's palette dictated by nature.

"Babcock doesn't look like a typical planned community," said Amanda Staerker, a land planner for Kitson & Partners. "The native landscaping was done very well and we're working on ways to restore habitat."

Dr. Languell has been involved with Babcock Ranch for the past decade. Seeing the town leap from planning to its initial phase of residential and model homes, a downtown at Founder's Square and its own utilities — while adhering to



VANDY MAJOR / BABCOCK RANCH TELEGRAPH  
**Founder's Square's park-like green overlooks Lake Babcock.**

an unwavering environmental code — is indeed a major milestone, one that weaves an ineffable magic.

"Its feeling is what makes it so unique," she said. "Syd (Kitson) had a vision of a neighborhood like he grew up in. You let your kids go out and play. He wanted that feel and you go to an event and you have that feeling."

Babcock Ranch may be one of the most interesting cities on the books.

It was designed for the future while embracing the past. Its architecture was inspired by original Florida homes and pre-World War II neighborhoods in Southwest Florida. Signature Babcock red pays homage to the historic buildings of the working ranch at the adjoining Babcock Ranch Preserve. Founder's Square offers gathering spots

inside and out, some just begging for a grandfatherly type, a rickety old rocker and a front porch. Its parklike green overlooks Lake Babcock, which Ms. Staerker said attracts kayakers and paddleboarders, and has solar trees for recharging smartphones and other electronics.

State-of-the-art technology simplifies life, saves energy and water and will one day transport passengers via autonomous vehicles. Babcock Ranch's deliberate design respects the environment: Agricultural land is developed. Forested and natural areas are untouched and available for residents and visitors to explore on hiking, biking and paddling trails. There are community gardens, a community school and a true sense of community as natural as its setting.

There are also urban trails within natural habi-

"Its feeling is what makes it so unique, Syd (Kitson) had a vision of a neighborhood like he grew up in. You let your kids go out and play."

— **Dr. Jennifer Languell**, founder, CEO and president of Trifecta Construction Solutions

tat on each side of the main road and pedestrian connectivity from neighborhoods to Founder's Square, Ms. Staerker said. "We also intend to add public art along the trails although we don't yet have official plans."

Sustainability was built into the community's infrastructure, including FPL's 443-acre solar field to power homes and businesses, water and sewer treatment plants and a commitment from builders to create energy-efficient homes. Rain gardens are planted with native vegetation to filter and recycle storm water runoff — mirroring the qualities of natural marshlands. Water is also conserved by limiting water-guzzling grass and using reclaimed gray water for irrigation.

Dr. Languell is especially grateful shortcuts to sustainability and green design were never an option.

"What makes Babcock Ranch the most interesting in my experience is working with a team that had a vision of what could be and stuck to it," she said. "When the team sits down and says there's something we need to do and the cost comes up, you've got the support of the visionaries saying, 'Figure it out.'"

When Babcock Ranch officially opened earlier this year, its Table & Tap restaurant and Curry

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Creek Outfitters were already open.

“We were working on the commercial side right off the bat,” said Ms. Staerker. “The commercial is a draw and we had amenities ready from day one.”

Slater’s Goods & Provisions, a market and café offering grocery staples and fresh produce, will open later this summer along with the coffee and ice cream shop Square Scoops. Above is The Hatchery, a business incubator offering office and meeting space.

“Wow, it happened,” is how Dr. Languell describes the process of going from visioning and planning to seeing survey stakes then model home and private residences completed. “The scale is also something they did really well. I can stand in a model home, look and see the town center. I would let my kids walk there and get ice cream because it’s not far away.”

She’s just as excited about the feedback and the future.

“Look at the principal for the neighborhood school,” said Dr. Languell. “She had stable county



employment but wanted to come here because she saw it as an opportunity to do something impactful. I’m excited to see how the town is going to evolve. As the community grows out farther there will be more innovation.”

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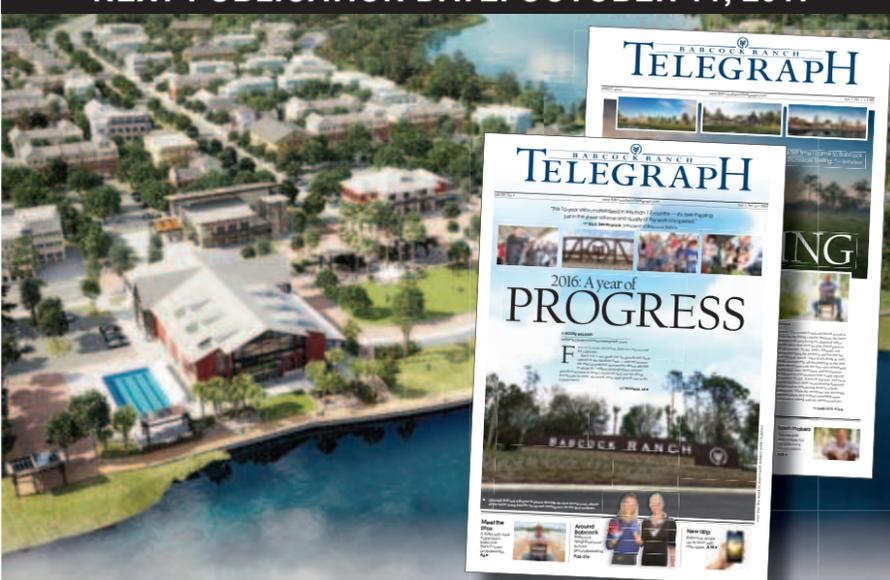
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# Public services and storm safety being put in place at Babcock

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

ewilliams@babcockranchtelegraph.com

As Founder's Square comes to life with new buildings and businesses, and planners look ahead to the arrival of the town's first residents, they are instituting public safety measures, including police, fire and storm protection.

Law enforcement and deputies will be provided by the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, and fire protection and ambulance services by the county's fire and emergency medical services department, said John Broderick, senior vice president of land development for Kitson & Partners. As Babcock eventually gets built out on the Lee County side, Lee will provide services as well. There are no current plans for a brick-and-mortar police or fire building on site, Mr. Broderick said, although that could change as Babcock grows to its anticipated size of about 50,000 residents in the years to come.

When it comes to protecting Babcock from the next big storm, every building in Founder's Square, including a wellness center, fine dining restaurant, market café and an elementary school, will be protected from a major hurricane. The structures are all designed to withstand up to a Category 3 hurricane with wind speeds that can reach 130 miles per hour. Being inland, east of Interstate 75, means that the likelihood of a stronger Category 4 or 5 hitting the town is nearly nil.

"That's big on Syd (Kitson's) list, is making sure everything's secure and we're a safe place to be for a hurricane and any storm out here, because we get high winds on any given day," said David Mercer, project manager for land development with Kitson & Partners. "That's something we'll carry out in the town for the life of the project."



VANDY MAJOR / BABCOCK RANCH TELEGRAPH

**The structures at Babcock Ranch are all designed to withstand up to a Category 3 hurricane with wind speeds that can reach 130 miles per hour.**

When it comes to flooding and storm surge protection, buildings are set at an elevation consistent with South Florida Water Management District standards.

Protections for buildings include impact-resistant glass that wouldn't be shattered by a projectile such as a large tree branch, as well as heavy-duty connections that keep windows, exterior walls and roofs in place.

"You can't just have the windows blown out of the building with such high (Cat 3) winds," said Rich Stange, director of vertical construction for Kitson & partners. "The way the window frame is secured to the buildings is just as important as the type of glass that you use."

Nearly all the other structures in Founder's Square are bolted down in a concrete base, Mr. Mercer points out, including benches, water fountains, the boardwalk, a band shell

and two shade canopies, "to withstand wind loads consistent with the (Charlotte) County standards and then some."

That would keep them from being turned

"Those benches are quite heavy so we don't want them picked up and going anywhere."

— **David Mercer**, project manager for land development with Kitson & Partners

into projectiles in a windy storm.

"Those benches are quite heavy so we don't want them picked up and going anywhere," Mr. Mercer said.

A few items that aren't bolted down, such as picnic tables, would be moved indoors.

The Babcock Neighborhood School will also include a storm and lightning detection system that alerts teachers or school personnel to get kids back in the building if there are strikes within a 10-square-mile area.

Founder's Square will also have security cameras that monitor public spaces such as parking lots and exit doors.



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# Bike it, hike it, however you like it: Babcock Ranch has a trail for you

BY **NANCI THEORET**

nthoret@babcockranchtelegraph.com

Visitors are already hitting the trails at Babcock Ranch. So, too, are Amanda Staerker and other onsite employees of Kitson & Partners, which is developing the sustainable community with more than 50 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails.

Sunset Trail, the town's first, offers a 2.5-mile looping adventure beginning and ending in Sunset Park. Covered with loose gravel and part of the old trail system on the Crescent B. Ranch, it passes pine trees and skirts wetlands before arriving at a water-spanning boardwalk with an observation deck. Visitors are likely to see wading birds foraging for dinner and fish performing those mysterious leaps fish are known to do.

"I see a lot of people who are checking out the development walking the trails in the evenings," said Ms. Staerker, a land planner who often bikes Sunset Trail. "Our intent is to leave as much of the trails as natural as possible while accommodating a range of needs and uses. They've done such a great job with native landscaping and the legacy tree program, even the more urban trails will appear natural over time."

Many of the town's multimodal trails will use existing cattle runs, fire breaks and logging roads created during the town's former life as part of the sprawling Crescent B, said Gary Nelson, senior vice president of planning and development for Kitson & Partners. "This minimizes the amount of disturbance to the natural environment."

"Our goal is to keep the trails as natural as we can, provide hidden spots, water overlooks and highlight the natural beauty we have here at Babcock Ranch," Ms. Staerker said.

Outdoor recreation at Babcock Ranch is



designed to encourage residents and visitors to abandon their cars and explore the community on foot or by bike and in the process promote health and wellness.

"You can get around Babcock completely on bike or sidewalks," Ms. Staerker said. "Pedestrian connectivity is everywhere."

"The trails will interconnect with all the neighborhood sidewalks creating a transportation network independent of the roads," Mr. Nelson says. "It will be readily accessible to everyone."

Educational markers will describe native flora and fauna seen along the pathways.

Ms. Staerker said plans are also in the works for the town's signature Curry Creek Canal Trail, a north-to-south town-bisecting path meandering through nature preserves with few signs of civilization or previous agricultural use. The five-mile greenway trail will offer observation platforms, picnic areas and link with other trails. Most of it already exists, created half a century ago when the waterway was dredged and dredge material was placed to one side, creating an elevated trail following the creek.

Visitors can bring their own bikes or rent four-person canopy bikes and off-road models from Curry Creek Outfitters in Woodlea Hall at Founder's Square.

"As promised, our trails have been open to the public since day one," Mr. Nelson said. "People

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blueways and considering the most suitable places for them," Ms. Staerker said.

For residents, the design of Babcock Ranch makes trail access as easy as a walk through the neighborhood, each offering a trailhead that will eventually link to the greenways. As the town grows, so too will its bicycle and pedestrian trails with plans for more rustic hiking paths and a likely tie-in to trails on the town's periphery and adjacent to the Babcock Ranch Preserve.

The town's hiking, biking, riding and walking trails also will eventually connect with the adjoining state-owned preserve, where the Florida Forestry Service is developing long-range plans to offer more recreational opportunities, expand its trail system and introduce horse trails. The preserve's existing Footprints Trail offers a trailhead on SR 74 and a series of long and shorter looping paths skirting rangeland, flatwoods and wetlands.

Babcock Ranch and the state property will also become part of a regional trail plan linking Fort Myers through Babcock to Punta Gorda and back to Fort Myers.

"Hiking and biking will be easily and quickly accessible and in many cases the easiest and healthiest way to get back and forth within Babcock Ranch," says Mr. Nelson. "Within a few years you will be able to take a trail ride or walk for as long a distance as you like."

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can come to Founder's Square, rent a bike and explore the neighborhoods and trails, and return to the square for lunch or a drink overlooking the lake."

Additional trails and blueways for paddling are also planned.

There's also a rental station for paddleboards and kayaks on Lake Babcock, currently just half of its planned 275 acres. Curry Canal will eventually open for paddlers as well.

"We're currently talking about more trails and



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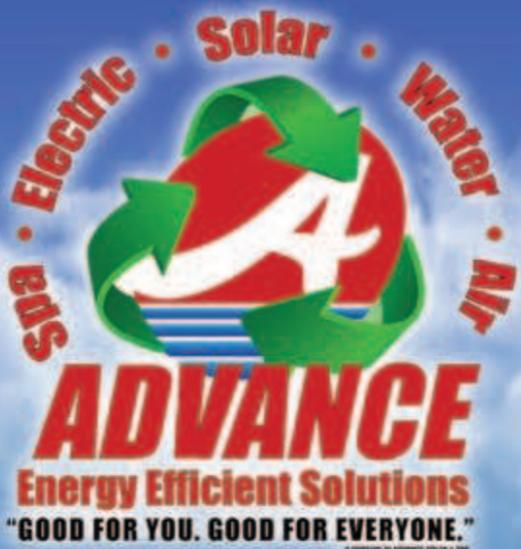
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## Rustic Lake House in Lake Timber

BY Nanci Theoret

ntheoret@babcockranchtelegraph.com

With its rustic exposed timbers, stone-clad accents and multiple pitched rooflines, the Lake House at Babcock Ranch not only makes a dramatic statement as the first building residents and visitors see, it also embodies town founders' emphasis on sustainability, history and community. The 2,400-square-foot building, a private clubhouse for town residents, is inspired by the Cypress Lodge on the neighboring Babcock Ranch Preserve and features thick structural insulated panels, or SIPs.

"The Lake House is really unique to this area," said Tyler Kitson, project manager for Kitson & Partners which is developing the nation's first solar city. "We wanted it to be an iconic building because it's the first you see when you drive into Babcock Ranch. It's also the most energy efficient building we have in the community right now."

Built in Buffalo, N.Y., by Timberbuilt then reassembled at Babcock Ranch, the rustic Lake House features exposed 24-by-24-inch beams and is constructed with walnut pegs.

"There aren't any nails," said Mr. Kitson. "It's kind of like a Lincoln Log set. You see some of the exposed timbers of the skeleton and exposed ductwork. The SIPs are very energy efficient and durable. From the moment the slab went down, the entire building skeleton was up in 23 days."

Inside, the Lake House will feature a sweeping main room serving multiple purposes under a soaring white-washed



tongue-and-groove ceiling. Designed as a gathering area for residents, the building offers a two-sided inside-outside stone fireplace, a kitchen with a free-

standing bar, a gaming area with a billiards table and two card tables, and a family room setting at the fireplace with two flat-screen TVs and water views of

Lake Timber.

"The building is designed for a variety of functions — cooking lessons, little gatherings, event presentations

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and movie nights,” Mr. Kitson said. “Residents can also have potluck dinners and even weddings.”

The décor will feature rustic finishes including wood-look tile flooring, denim upholstery and the darker red tone known as Babcock red. The space flows outside to 2,000 square feet of wraparound decks offering additional gathering spaces, a covered lanai and a dock on the water for kayak, canoes and sailboats. Many of the alfresco areas focus on the pool, lake and fireplace.

The Lake House will also offer a barbecue area with a grill, a playground and bathhouse.

“The building is a real wow when you drive into Babcock Ranch,” said Mr. Kitson. “With landscaping around it we want to create a sense of a cabin, a hidden clubhouse. We want to recreate the feeling of Cypress Lodge.”

Each neighborhood at Babcock Ranch will offer a community garden and a resident clubhouse, fostering the town’s social fabric as gathering places for families, friends and neighbors. 🌳



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# Curry Creek Outfitters, the first stop on a Babcock adventure

BY EVAN WILLIAMS

ewilliams@babcockranchtelegraph.com

With Babcock Ranch opening its gate to the world comes a slew of firsts, including the town's first retail store, Curry Creek Outfitters. Named for a canal and trail on the ranch, it is located downtown in Woodlea Hall, Babcock's civic and information center.

The Outfitter store is designed as a first stop for exploring the natural playgrounds of the Ranch: conservation lands, lakes and trails that sprawl across oak hammocks and dry prairie, palmetto flatwoods and cypress dome forests and pastures under endless sky.

"We want it to be the hub, the place people come and ask questions about the paths, places to walk, bike and go fishing," said Mike Serfozo, Kitson & Partners retail shops manager.

The opportunities begin just outside the front doors of the shop where the 268-acre Lake Babcock will be kept stocked with fish, including bass.

"We hope to have a lot of people fishing in this lake," Mr. Serfozo said.

The 1,750-square foot store itself is well stocked with items for rent or to purchase, including fishing rods and tackle, kayaks and stand-up paddle boards.

There are clothes for hiking, fishing shirts and



The 1,750-square-foot Curry Creek Outfitters has everything you need to explore Babcock Ranch.

COURTESY PHOTOS

hats, and sundry items such as sunscreen and bug spray, blankets and folding chairs for enjoying a concert or event in Founder's Square. And the distinctive Curry Creek Outfitters logo, the initials of the shop made into a compass, adorn an array of clothing, mugs, cups, bottles and other items.

On a recent Friday morning, Mr. Serfozo and his staff greeted customers as they stopped in to see the store, curious about what this new solar-

powered place is all about.

"We fully believe in the Disney philosophy," he said. "When someone comes into the shop they're going to know they're special."

Outside on the sidewalk, a worker assembled a surrey bike with its cloth awning, which families can rent and ride. The shop will have a bicycle mechanic for maintenance and repairs, and the store will rent and sell fat-tire bikes for riding the ranch's off-road trails. It will offer children's

bicycle rentals as well. Adults can use the town's bike share program to get on two wheels if they plan to ride on the street or commute to work.

While Babcock will eventually offer some 50 miles of trails that range from dirt to boardwalk, one of the first available is Sunset Park, a three-mile unpaved loop. Curry Creek Canal trail itself was created when the canal was dredged years ago.

Mr. Serfozo, who lives in Alva with his wife, was hired in January and helped the Babcock team turn a shell of a building into a fully functioning shop.

"I can't believe how much we've accomplished in such a short time," he said.

Originally from Ohio, he was an engineer and quality assurance manager. Prior to arriving at Babcock, he owned Del Sol retail shops for 15 years in Ohio, Michigan and Naples.

"When I saw an ad for this position in the fall, it was like

they defined me," he said. The thing that got me excited about (Babcock Ranch) is the fact that it's something no one else has done. This had a specialness to me."

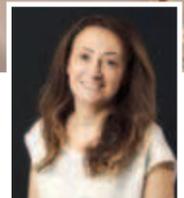
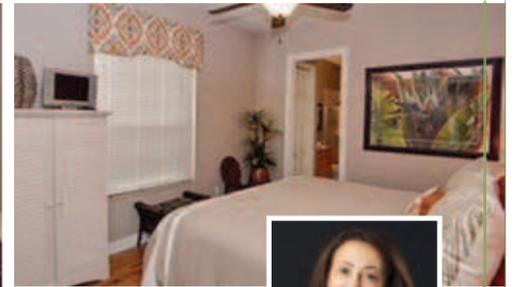
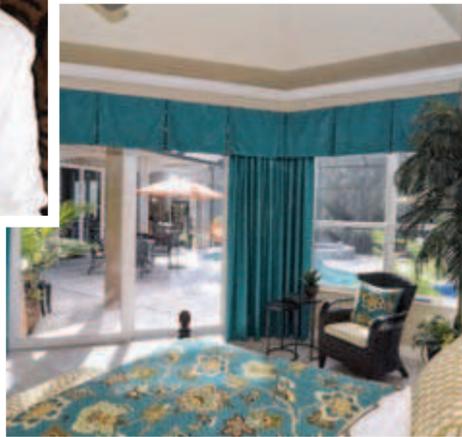
He has the store well thought out, all the way down to a scent machine that creates a very mild outdoorsy smell in the air.

"The biggest compliment that somebody can give us is they mention the place has a nice feel to it," he said. "The idea is if we help them have a

Brenda Smith



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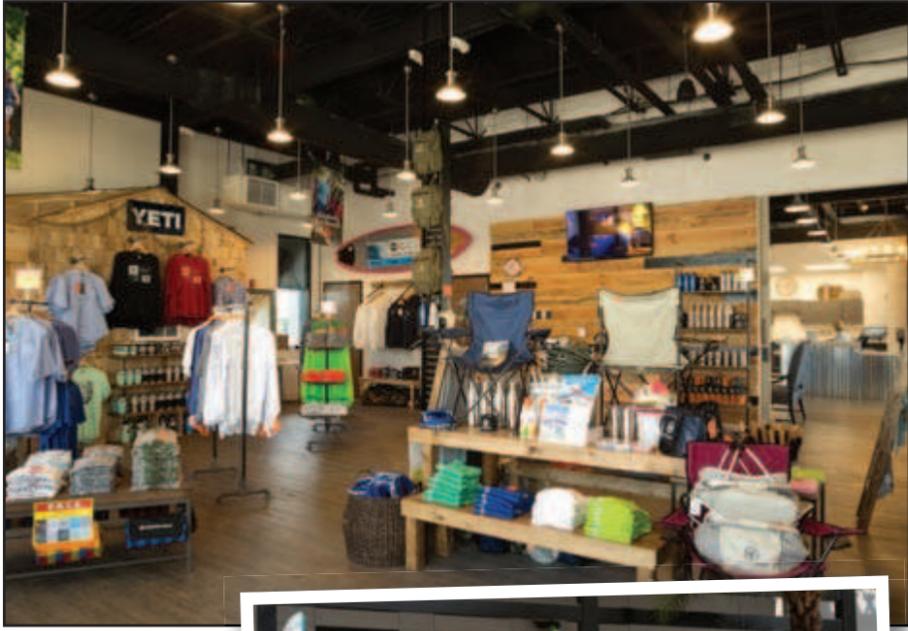
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The store is stocked with items for rent or to purchase, including fishing rods and tackle, kayaks and stand-up paddle boards.



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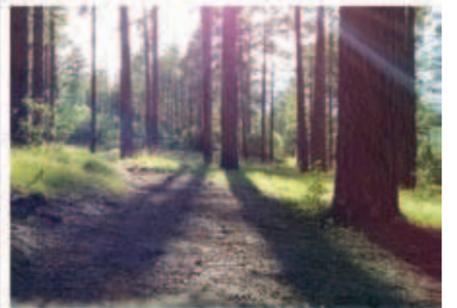
With a soft opening at the beginning of March, the Outfitters store got a taste of the business to come at the Founder’s Festival on the weekend of March 11 and 12, when an estimated 20,000 people showed up to get a look at the beginnings of this unique place. The store went through about \$6,000 worth of merchandise and had about 90 people using the kayaks and paddleboards.

As the town continues to grow, the Outfitters store plans to offer further goods, services and events such as sunset cruises on the lake. Paddleboard yoga classes are now being taught.

“As our town grows, Curry Creek Outfitters will grow along with it by offering more products and services to our guests,” Mr. Serfozo said. 📍

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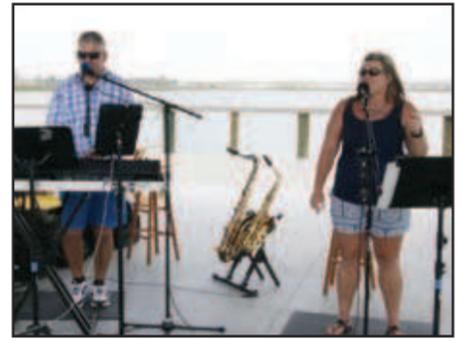
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## Babcock Ranch's community gardens let you grow your own

BY GLENN MILLER

Babcock Ranch Telegraph Correspondent

Babcock Ranch's first community garden is a short walk from the back door of Table & Tap, the town restaurant nestled in Founder's Square and operated by executive chef David Rashty.

The garden is bordered by a white picket fence and is roughly 50 feet by 100 feet. Beds were seeded June 1 with white peas, red peas, benne, black rye, sorghum as well as types of rice and barley. So what Table & Tap patrons will soon eat will be grown right outside the back door, perhaps a few hundred yards away.

This modest start heralds another distinctive feature of Babcock Ranch — community gardens. They will not only provide produce for Table & Tap but will also be available to residents to plant fruits and vegetables.

Eventually the small garden near downtown will be replaced by something larger.

"I'll have five acres to play with," Mr. Rashty said.

That's not all.

"There will be a community garden in every neighborhood," Mr. Rashty said. "So really the ultimate goal on the property is to utilize everything in that garden. Eventually my hope is that everybody who lives in that specific neighborhood to maintain their garden. ... Eventually for them to take it and run with it. I have five acres to figure out what to plant."

And future residents will also have garden decisions to make.

This mission of real foods grown steps away from hearth and home is one of the facets of Babcock Ranch that appeals to Mr. Rashty. So is sharing his knowledge with students at the Babcock Neighborhood School.

"Teach kids how to grow, how to plant. ... and eventually we'll teach them how to cook," Mr. Rashty said.



Mr. Rashty is also president of Slow Food Southwest Florida, which is the local chapter of Slow Food International. Slow Food Southwest Florida, according to its website, "promotes local growers and chefs by hosting events in their fields, kitchens, and markets."

Soon, Babcock Ranch's community gardens will bloom with its own fruits and vegetables. Julie Glenn, a Slow Food Southwest Florida member who has a master's degree from Slow Food's University of Gastronomic Sciences in Colorno, Italy, likes Babcock Ranch's community gardens concept.

"I like the idea of a community garden because it gets people outside, away from screens, face to face with one another where their focus is on creating something that will nourish," Ms. Glenn wrote in an email to the Telegraph. "When you think about eating something, it is really an intimate act. That food item will become part of your body. So having a hand in how it's brought to your plate is very

empowering, and doing so in a way that brings the community together is that much better."

She cited one common item available in grocery stores.

"Take the tomato," wrote Ms. Glenn, who is the host of WFCU's "Gulf Coast Live."

"When you go out to your garden and pick a tomato off the vine, chances are it's ripe and ready to eat. It has done all its ripening out there under the sun while attached to a vine that's bringing nutrients up from the earth for the production of nutrients within the fruit (yes tomatoes are a fruit).

"That extra hang time allows for more natural sugar development too, so not only is it higher in micro-nutrients, it's far better in flavor than tomatoes hauled across the country and gassed so they turn a shiny red color."

This quest for more nutritious and tastier food drives Mr. Rashty in a personal way, one that will fuel the growth of Babcock Ranch's community gardens.

In 2006, his father, Aziz, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He died four months later at the age of 78. Mr. Rashty said his father never smoked or drank.

"I really think it has a lot to do with the food system," Mr. Rashty said one morning sitting in his restaurant before it opened.

During his father's final four months Mr. Rashty moved in with him and became a caregiver and chef. His father encouraged him to move from being a hobbyist who liked to cook to pursuing it as a career.

Now, his professional career has taken him to Babcock Ranch, where he not only is creating a new restaurant but community gardens. What will be grown in the gardens? What will work best? What won't work so well?

"We have to see what works and doesn't work," Mr. Rashty said. "Kind of like an open slate right now. Open canvas."

It's an exciting time for Mr. Rashty as he contemplates what he'll try with his five acres.

"We're looking at so many different items," Mr. Rashty said. "Everything from pickled green tomatoes to different varieties of grapefruit. So I'm looking at fruit trees. We're going to do a butterfly garden. I'm also looking at hydroponics but really things need to be grown organically in the soil and that's where the flavor comes from, that's where the nutrients come from."

There is something magical about growing one's own food. Ms. Glenn knows that already.

"I don't have an in-ground garden," Ms. Glenn wrote. "However, my front yard is covered in colorful pots of peppers, tomatoes and herbs."

Residents of Babcock Ranch will have their own gardens, ones they'll share with neighbors, places where they can pluck tasty and nutritious fruits and vegetables right out of the ground or off a tree and carry them into their kitchens. ☺



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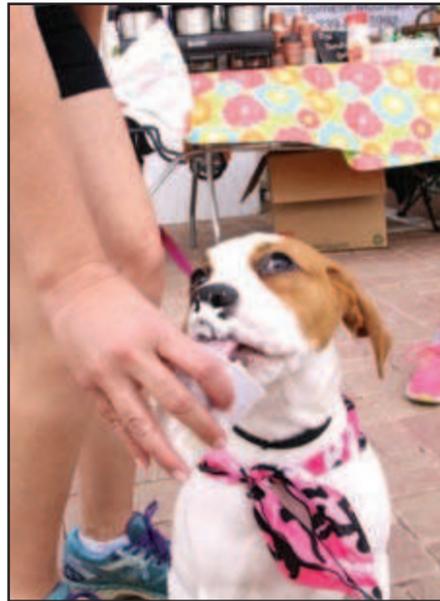
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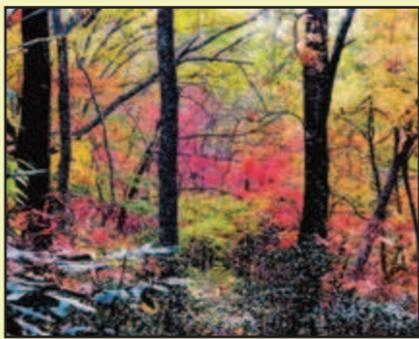
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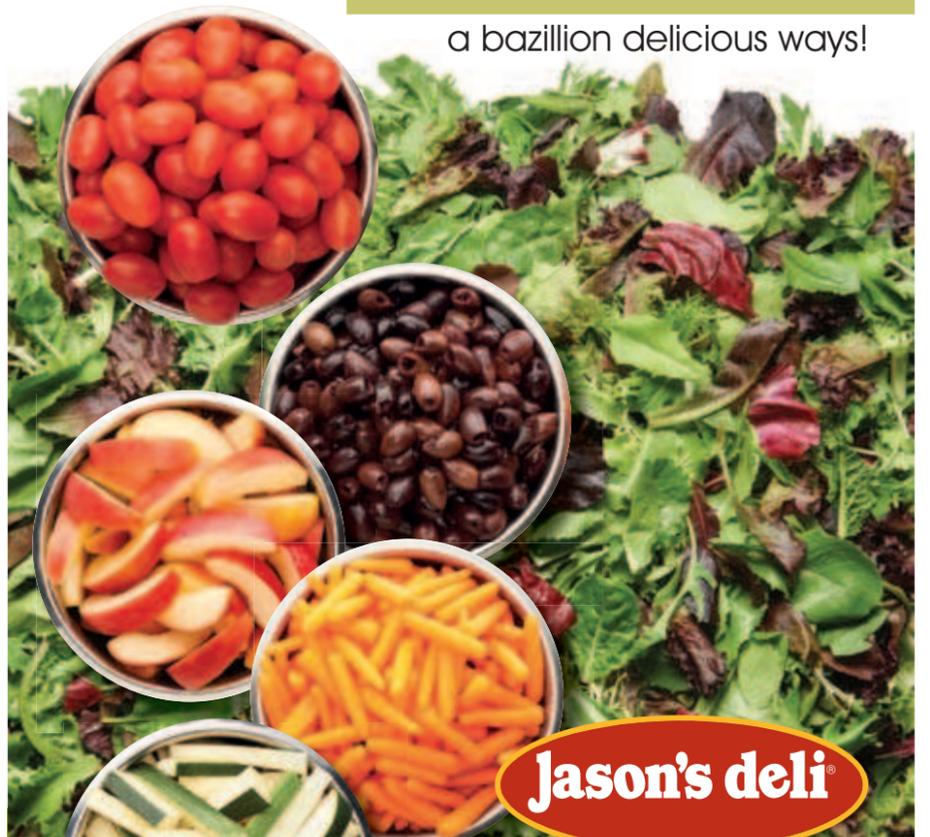
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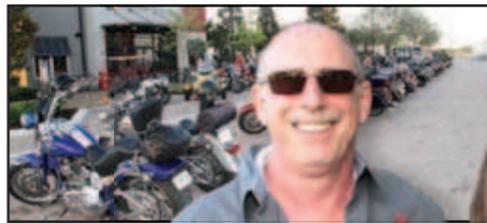
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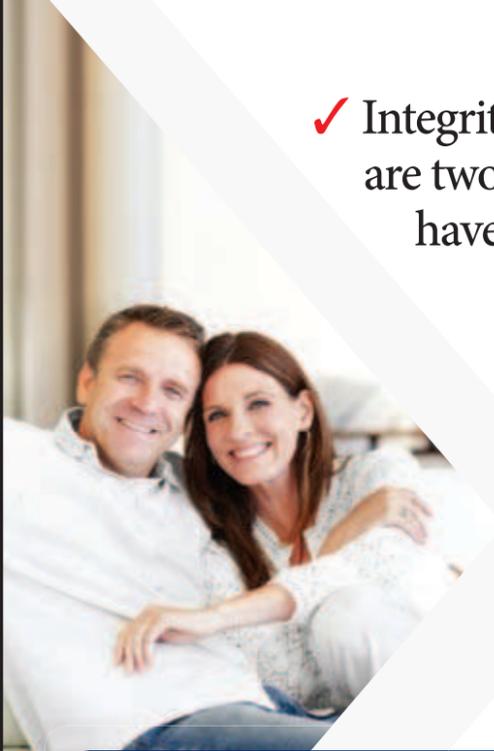
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