

A Model Homepage

www.imaginationfarms.com provides residents with news, vendors and more

by DAVID VOLZ

You are looking for a good pressure cleaner for your home. Perhaps you need a new babysitter. Or maybe you want to get to know your neighbors a little better. For residents of Imagination Farms in Davie, the best place to look is the private community website at www.imaginationfarms.org.

Since the early 2000s, the 415 home community has been served by a custom website that enables neighbors to communicate about everything from social events to household service vendors. People can learn about new neighbors who are moving to the area or the name of a good calculus tutor. Or they can simply chat with old and new friends. A visit to the site shows

photos of Mayor Judy Paul being sworn in and local social events. There is information and extensive photos on all local parks and recreational opportunities. There is even a picture of a lost dog that will respond to his name if called.

Sharon Baron, the website's administrator, is pleased with how the site has brought the community together. The website reports a 94 percent login rate.

It may be that the Imagination Farms website represents a vanguard in neighborhood communication as it is used frequently and by nearly everyone in the community. Many of the residents live on one-acre lots and might not encounter each other in their daily lives. But by communicating on the website they can become friends.

"It saves money that we would have to spend on a newsletter," Baron said. "And people can send messages instantly. We can send e-mail blasts to the entire community. It has allowed neighbors to become closer to one another and has really helped the community come together."

Baron said the website allows residents to recommend vendors whose work they have been pleased with, and warn their neighbors about contractors who have not performed as well.

"This allows people to say what they want to about ven-

dors," Baron said. "If a vendor does a bad job, the rest of the community knows to watch out for that vendor. Also, people can alert others if their home is burglarized or if other problems are observed."

The website includes a chat section where people discuss a wide range of topics. One recent post discussed problems with tap water. Another offered solutions to prevent coconut trees from dying.

Imagination Farms residents use the private website for just about anything. There is information about local road closures. People will discuss experiences they have had with a school. They will mention a friend or neighbor who has done something newsworthy. A homemaker might advertise her willingness to babysit children. A woman announced that she is offering piano lessons. A gifted high school student will offer to tutor struggling students. People can post photos of good times they are having. Some residents simply want the chance to talk with other neighbors. And on and on.

Said resident Susan Jaison, "I use the website regularly to stay informed regarding what's going on in our community. These issues include construction, traffic and crime. I find it especially helpful when needing referrals for repair work around the house – remodeling and painting. I have used it to purchase a used television from a neighbor. It was the best deal I ever got – \$50 and it still works great!"

The website includes a section for new neighbors and people running home-based businesses. There is also a section offering homes for sale and apartments for rent.

Catherine Roberts, a resident of Imagination Farms, loves the website. "When I need a vendor for any service I check to website to look for recommendations on area vendors," she said. "I am one of the original home owners here and I use the website frequently. It is very helpful to me and my neighbors."

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