

## **Destin Bids Welcome** to Another Year in Paradise

### By Lori Leath Smith, Publisher

As the new year is now a reality, I have been thinking about our city's rich heritage and how it influences our local lifestyles today. It helps to know some of our history in order to appreciate our piece of Paradise and how far we've come. I wonder if early Destin pioneer Leonard Destin had any idea his small fishing village would one day become an iconic haven for locals and visitors.

We're located on the east side of our main waterway, the picturesque East Pass, which connects the Gulf to Choctawhatchee Bay, 30 miles long and four to six miles wide - a peninsula that was originally an island before hurricanes changed it over time. The East Pass was formed after a hurricane caused major flooding around the Choctawhatchee Bay in 1926, and to remedy this, locals began digging a path from Choctawhatchee Bay to the Gulf of Mexico.



The flood waters then rushed through, creating it.

Our history dates back to the 7th century A.D. Artifacts confirm early Native Americans lived here due to the abundant seafood in our Bay and Gulf. Then Spanish explorers arrived approximately 900 years later. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, while Florida was still under Spanish rule, the Destin area was known as Moreno Point, named after Don Francisco Moreno.

In approximately 1845, Leonard Destin, who moved from New London, Conn., settled here after the first settlers, the McCullom family.

> PARADISE continued on page 3

## kwench **Cafe** DESTIN Breakfast | Lunch | Espresso 985 Highway 98, Destin (850) 424 6777 | CafeDestin.com

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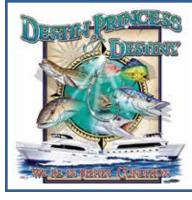
## Hometown Heroes: Still **Teammates** After All **These Years**

By Kenneth Books

In the late 1990s, three teenagers ran their hearts out as members of the Fort Walton Beach High School cross-country team. Today, all three - Mike Lowe, Ken Dwyer and Austin White – are colonels in the armed forces. Lowe and White are in the Air Force, while Dwyer is in the Army.

"Austin was the fastest by far," said Dwyer. "Mike was the smartest.

> **TEAMMATES** continued on page 3



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## Community

## PARADISE

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(Leonard later married Martha McCullom.) An avid fisherman, for decades, he and other settlers fished and navigated the only channel passage to the Gulf of Mexico between Panama City and Pensacola, which continues to be an important part of our present-day community. Back then, they fished close to shore with seine nets from small boats. (You can see the oldest seine fishing boat on display at the Destin's History & Fishing Museum, The Primrose, a restored, 1920s-era boat.) Moreno Point became a federal military reservation in 1842, and in the 1850s, more settlers arrived.

At that time, our area was known as East Pass. In 1896, William Marler, who would eventually become the local postmaster, filed an application with the Post Office Department for a post office at East Pass on the western edge of our modern-day Destin. However, they wanted a single-word name. So, William, who had worked for Leonard, resubmitted the application with the name "Destin" after our early pioneer, and that's how we became Destin.

The original US-98, now much of it designated in our area as "Scenic 98," was constructed west from Panama City into Destin in the mid 1930s, and a bridge was built in 1936 across East Pass from Fort Walton Beach to Destin. With US-98 and the bridge, Destin became easily accessible, allowing the first tourists who loved to fish and enjoyed the crystal, white beaches to arrive. The first passenger-carrying fishing boat went into business in 1939.

By the way, our unique sand is among the whitest and most homogenous in the world. According to destinfwb.com, "At the end of the last Ice Age, the world's temperatures began warming, icecaps began melting and large volumes of water were carried by rivers to the world's oceans. The rising Apalachico-

in special operations, flying var-





la River, originating in the Appalachian Mountains, carried quartz particles down into the Gulf of Mexico and deposited them along the coast. Over time, the sea level rose, and the quartz sand formed the shoreline. The beautiful white sand remains cool to the touch, even in the heat of summer, and gives the water its trademark emerald



PHOTOS: DESTIN FISHING & HISTORY MUSEUM; FLORIDAMEMORY.COM

color by reflecting sunlight back up through the surf."

Eventually, we became known as "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village!" In 1956, the governor of Florida, Leroy Collins, was on his way to open

the Pensacola State Fair. Encouraged by locals to visit the Destin Harbor, the governor complied; his staff was hoping for a few press photos and, so, he went. The way I understand it, the boat Captain Reddin "Salty" Brunson invited Collins to hop on for a boat ride. The governor said he didn't have time, but Captain Salty insisted and ensured that he could have the governor back on the docks in 15 minutes. Collins gave in and Captain Salty took Collins out the mouth of the pass and had him back to the docks in less than 15 minutes. Not only did Collins pose for photos that day, he actually reeled in a 29lb. king mackerel after only a few minutes! A reporter teased him about it being hard to believe he could catch that big fish in such a short time. But, Collins reportedly replied, "Not if you're fishing out of Destin. Destin's the world's luckiest fishing village!" To this day, that has

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## TEAMMATES

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I was average."

Lowe,  $4\overline{5}$ , the oldest of the trio as a 1994 graduate, works



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Destin Life assumes no financial liability for errors or missions in printed advertising and reserves the right to reject/edit advertising or editorial submissions. © Copyright 2023 Destin Life ious aircraft, including the Talon 2, which is his current ride. He's served tan, Iraq, the Philippines and South America. "I deeply love to fly around Asia," he said. Born to a military family, and growing up in the area, serving in the military seemed almost a no-brainer, so he joined shortly after earning a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Florida. He now serves as the Vice Wing Commander of the 919th Special Operations Wing.

He and his wife, Rebeca, have been married for 17 years and have a daughter, Sarah, a junior soccer player at Niceville High School.

White, 45, also comes from an Air Force family, although he didn't enlist right away. After his graduation from the University of Alabama, he spent a year as a stockbroker before he realized that life wasn't for him. So, in 2001, he joined the Air Force Reserve and says his favorite station is right here at Duke Field. "My family is here; my son is here," he said. His son, Roland, 14, is a freshman at Fort Walton Beach High School.

Dwyer, 46, joined the Army as an infantry officer in 1999. But after four or five years, he said, he switched to Special Operations. He spent four tours in Afghanistan, where, on his third tour, he was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade, costing him his left arm and left eye. The Special Operations crest is embedded in his artificial left eye to remind him that it's all about the team. He married Jennie in 2000, and has a son, Tim, 19, at Appalachian State, and a daughter, Julia, who is a sophomore at Niceville High School.

But the tie that bind these three colonels comes largely from their high school cross-country coach, Don Henderson, who instilled many values in them, along with Assistant Coach Keith Jowers.

Every physical event, he'd tell anyone who's cutting corners, "You're only cheating yourself," Dwyer said. "He definitely influenced all our lives."

Henderson died last year. Many cross-country runners from many classes attended his memorial.

"He taught teamwork," said Lowe. "He was almost a father figure.

While their military careers have taken each colonel to a variety of places, some enjoyable and others merely tolerable, growing up in Fort Walton Beach was a major factor in their military service.

"Growing up in a community that supports the military, seeing kids whose parents are military,



From left: Cols. Mike Lower, Austin White and Ken Dwyer.

you could just tell," Lowe said. Lowe and White plan to retire from the Air Force early next year, while Dwyer said he's in it for the long haul, although he has no plans to try to get a general's star. Currently, he speaks to soldiers on building resiliency through adversity. "All of us in our lives are going to suffer speed bumps and obstacles," he said. "How you handle it shows what kind of character you have."

Don Henderson would agree.



The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience. Community

### 38th Annual Destin Christmas Parade "Elf on the Shelf' 2022 Winners:

Noel Award/Band Award: Fort Walton Beach High School and Destin Middle School Bands

Elf Award/Children Service: Destin Middle School Cheerleaders

Santa's Helper Award/Children Commercial: Studio6twenty5

Angel Award/Religious Award: Destin United Methodist Church

Chamber Award/Commercial: Legendary Marine Service Department

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Civic Club/Civic Award:

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## Miss North Florida Scholarship t Pageant t

Crowd Pleaser: Destin Water Users

## Hospice 101: Dispelling the Myths

The Friends Guild of the Destin Library will host an afternoon informational workshop about Hospice Care and Dispelling the Myths about such care on Tuesday, Jan. 10, at 2 p.m. at the Destin Library (Calhoun Room). Amanda Middleton, a RN Clinical Liaison, and Suzanne McCarthy, a RN Hospice Care Consultant, from the Emerald Coast Hospice at Miramar Beach, will be on hand

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to outline what hospice care entails and to answer questions for family members as they learn to navigate the journey of care and transition while experiencing a life limiting illness.

Around Town

The 7th Annual Mardi Gras Golf Scramble to benefit the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida will be held at Regatta Bay Golf Club on Sunday, Feb 26. Shotgun starts at 8:30 am. A buffet lunch, holein-one opportunities courtesy of Step One Automotive, raffles, prizes, a silent auction and the chance to WIN A CAR will be included. Call The Heritage Museum to register at 850-678-2615 OR visit online at heritage-museum.org. Sign up as an individual player or in teams of four. Regatta Bay Golf Course. 465 Regatta Bay Blvd, Destin FL. 32541



Tickets are on sale for the Ascension Sacred Heart Foundation's 2023 Emerald Ball to benefit Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. Celebrating the 20th anniversary of th hospital, the event is Saturday, Feb. 4, 6 p.m., at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Resort Golf and Spa and is presented by Howard Group, Grand Boulevard and Silver Sands Premium Outlets.

Proceeds from this year's event will go toward purchasing a new computerized tomography (CT) scanner for both adults and kids. This is the third year



for the event, with the previous

two events each raising approx-

imately \$200,000. A new CT

scanner will improve diagnostic

image quality and save patients

time during the scan. The hos-

pital plans to install the scan-

ner next year. Tickets are \$150,

which includes reserved seating,

dinner, two drink tickets, live

music and dancing. Sponsor-

ship opportunities at all levels

are also available, with a special

reception for sponsors before

the main event. Guests clad in

shades of emerald will enjoy a

wine and bourbon pull, a photo

booth and an opportunity draw-

ing for a \$5,000 shopping spree

tickets or sponsorship, contact

Lisa Wainwright at lisa.wain-

wright@ascension.org or by

phone at (850) 278-3702.

**Okaloosa Airports bring** 

The Florida Department of

Transportation (FDOT) recent-

ly published its Florida Aviation

Economic Impact Study, which

highlights aviation as an eco-

nomic engine and determined

the industry is responsible for

a total economic impact state-

wide of \$336 billion. The three

combined airports in Okaloosa

County bring over \$2.9 billion

of economic impact annually to

the area. This represents a 67%

increase over the estimated \$1.7

billion reported in FDOT's 2019

study. Airport activities in Oka-

**\$2.9** billion economic

impact to the area

at McCaskill and Company. For more information on PHOTO BY ROGER COOK OF FT. WALTON BEACH

loosa County are responsible for the creation of over 18,500 jobs and \$785 million in payroll annually that largely flows back into the local economy.

Join the **Destin Chamber** for its upcoming **Tourism & Hospitality Lunch: Focus on Ecotourism** with Alex Fogg, Wed., Jan. 18, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. at The Palms Coffee House & Sports Lounge. Okaloosa County's Coastal Resource Manager Alex Fogg will talk ecotourism and his work with lionfish, artificial reefs and more. To register, visit destinchamber.com.

On Thursday, Feb. 2nd, **Choctawhatchee Audubon** hosts Fred Bassett of Hummingbird Research, Inc., who has been studying hummingbirds in the Southeastern U.S. for over 20 years. Fred will discuss ruby-throated hummingbirds in depth and introduce many species of western hummingbirds that winter in Florida. Room 800 on the 2nd floor of the Chandler Center (NW door of 519 Helms St.) at the Crosspoint Church in Niceville. Signs will lead you in from where Partin Drive South connects to Helms Street. Socializing with refreshments begins at 6:30 PM, and the program begins at 7:00 PM. Admission is free and open to the public. To see a full schedule of bird walks, please visit choctawhatcheeaudubon.org.



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## Community

## PARADISE

continued from page 3

become Destin's tagline and our commercial fishing fleet is reportedly the largest in the U.S. Many feel the governor's visit was the beginning of Destin's charter fishing industries.

Though still a quiet fishing village with a population of about 1,000 in the 1960s, in the 1970s, a few condos began to pop up with even more coming on the scene in the 1980s. Tourism then became Destin's economic driver. The city of Destin was formally incorporated in 1984 and has become a beach tourism destination known all over the world.

As locals, we enjoy its offerings year-round – water activities such as boat charters, snorkeling, deep sea fishing, dolphin-watching, sunset cruises and sailing. Our Choctawhatchee Bay is loaded with fish and shellfish, and we enjoy one-of-a-kind Destin events such as the Destin Fishing Rodeo, lighted boat parade, Blessing of the Fleet and the Destin Seafood Festival.

Our local favorite gathering spot is Crab Island, which is not really an island, but a shallow sandbar on the north side of our Marler Bridge, where the tide creates a gentle current from the Gulf, yet it's protected from the large waves that roll onto most of our beaches. Our own Destin Harbor, just north of the East Pass jetty, is protected by Norriego Point, which has recently doubled in size to prevent beach erosion.



Today, there are approximately 14,482 full-time Destin residents, according to U.S. Census estimates in 2020, but untold thousands who visit each year to enjoy the water sports, white sands, emerald green waters and our "Destin" lifestyle. According to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, more than 80 percent of the Emerald Coast's 4.5 million visitors each year visit Destin. Numerous celebrities visit Destin, too.

Some folks say they can remember when the Destin Mc-Donald's closed for the winter. Today, Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) is America's fastest growing airport; Destin-Fort Walton Beach is home to six sites along the Florida Panhandle Shipwreck Trail; we're home to nearly 200 fishing charters and eight area championship golf courses. Destin's Henderson Beach State Park is a 200-acre gem with 60 campsites and a winding nature trail that provides a rare view of some of the last remaining endangered coastal scrub communities in Northwest Florida.

As we move into 2023, I encourage you to take in and truly enjoy the people, the fishing, the visitors and just the plain beauty of our home, and, perhaps, continue to help make history in Destin. What will our next chapters look like?

Sources: Destin Fishing and History Museum, DestinFWB.com, worldpopulationreview.com, Destin Chamber of Commerce, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Wickepedia.com, Floridamemory.com.



## Community

## Cali's To Do In Destin! JANUARY 2023

Trivia | 7 p.m. | Lucille's Kitchen Bachata / Zouk Classes | 7 p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB Latin Dance Lessons | 7 p.m. | The Block FWB **Open Comedy Night** | 9 p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB Ladies Night | 10 p.m. | McGuire's Destin ••• 6 •

Free Beach Bonfire | 5 p.m. | Roval Palm Grille Karaoke | 7 p.m. | Destin American Legion Latin Dancing | 9 p.m. | Bric a Brac

Farmers Market | 9 a.m.-1 p.m. | Grand Boulevard Winter Wonderland | 9 a.m. | Village of Baytowne Wharf .... 8 ...



Beach Church Service | 7:30 a.m. | Crab Trap Destin Sunday Breakfast | 8:15 a.m. | Destin American Legion Melodies & Mimosas | 2 p.m. | Harborwalk Village

## Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5 p.m. | Royal Palm Grille

Bingo Night | 6 p.m. | Destin American Legion 10 ••••••

Music Bingo | 6 p.m. | Fatboys Destin

Salsa Lessons | 7 p.m. | Enlightened Studios Trivia | 7 p.m. | World of Beer Bachata Lessons | 8 p.m. | **Enlightened Studios** Open Jam Night |9 p.m. |

Enlightened Studios

Legally Blonde | 7:30 p.m. | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

Bonfire on the Beach | 6 p.m. | The Bay SRB

Darts & Music | 6 p.m. | Destin American Legion Open Mic Night | 7 p.m. |

Enlightened Studios FWB Country Line Dancing | 7 p.m. | The Block FWB

### ••••• 12 . . . . . . . . .

Destin Chamber YP Sunset Social | 5 p.m. | Beach Liquors Game Night | 5 p.m. | **Enlightened Studios** Trivia | 7 p.m. | Lucille's Kitchen Bachata / Zouk Classes | 7 p.m. | Enlightened Studios Latin Dance Lessons | 7 p.m. | The Block FWB **Open Comedy Night** | 9 p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB Ladies Night | 10 p.m. |

## McGuire's Destin •••• 13

30a Songwriters Festival Multiple Times / Locations Free Beach Bonfire | 5 p.m. | Royal Palm Grille Karaoke | 7 p.m. | Destin American Legion Latin Dancing | 9 p.m. | Bric a Brac

### • • • • 14 • • • • • • • • . . .

Birds & Brews | 11am - 3 p.m. | E. O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport

30a Songwriters Festival | Multiple Times / Locations 30A Farmers Market | 8 a.m.-1 p.m. | FWB Landing Farmers Market | 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

| Grand Boulevard Women's Climbing Circle | 9

a.m. | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin

## ••••• 15 •••

30a Songwriters Festival Multiple Times / Locations 30a Beach Church Service | 7:30 a.m. | Crab Trap Destin Melodies & Mimosas | 2 p.m. | Harborwalk Village •• 16 •

## 30a Songwriters Festival | Multiple Times / Locations 30a

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5 p.m. | Royal Palm Grille Bingo Night | 6 p.m. | Destin American Legion

## •••••• 17 ••

**FPRA Rise n Shine** Networking Breakfast | 8 a.m. | Sunset Bay Café

Music Bingo | 6 p.m. | Fatboys Destin

Salsa Lessons | 7 p.m. | **Enlightened Studios** Trivia | 7 p.m. | World of Beer Bachata Lessons | 8 p.m. | **Enlightened Studios** 18



Bonfire on the Beach | 6 p.m. | The Bay SRB Darts & Music | 6 p.m. | Destin American Legion **Open Mic Night** | 7 p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB Country Line Dancing | 7 p.m. | The Block FWB

•• 19 Bubbly Baytowne | 5 p.m. | Village of Baytowne Wharf Game Night | 5 p.m. | **Enlightened Studios** Trivia | 7 p.m. | Lucille's Kitchen Bachata / Zouk Classes | 7 p.m. | Enlightened Studios Latin Dance Lessons | 7 p.m. | The Block FWB Open Comedy Night | 9 p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB

Ladies Night | 10 p.m. | McGuire's Destin • 20

## The Odd Couple | 7:30 p.m.

| Emerald Coast Theatre Co. | Grand Blvd. Miramar Beach Free Beach Bonfire | 5 p.m. | Royal Palm Grille Karaoke | 7 p.m. | Destin American Legion Coastal Fashion Week | 7 p.m. | The Island Resort

The Odd Couple | 7:30 p.m. | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. | Grand Blvd. Miramar Beach Latin Dancing | 9 p.m. | Bric a

### Brac • 21 • • • • • • • •

Get Happy: A Judy Garland Centennial Celebration | 7:30 p.m. | Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center | FWB

Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra presents Stars of Tomorrow: "An Invitation to Dance" | 7:30 p.m. | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville Farmers Market | 9 a.m.-1 p.m. | Grand Boulevard Best of the West Jazz Competition | 11 a.m. | Harborwalk Village ••• 22 ••

Beach Church Service | 7:30 a.m. | Crab Trap Destin Melodies & Mimosas | 2 p.m. | Harborwalk Village

### •••• 23 •• **Grace for President** | 9:45

a.m. | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night

| 5 p.m. | Royal Palm Grille Bingo Night | 6 p.m. | Destin American Legion

••••••• 24 •••••• Music Bingo | 6 p.m. | Fatboys Destin

Salsa Lessons | 7 p.m. | **Enlightened Studios** Trivia | 7 p.m. | World of Beer Bachata Lessons | 8 p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB •••••• 25 •

Bonfire on the Beach | 6 p.m. | The Bay SRB

Darts & Music | 6 p.m. | Destin American Legion Open Mic Night | 7 p.m. |

Enlightened Studios FWB Country Line Dancing | 7 p.m. | The Block FWB

## • 26

Crescendo! Kick Off Lunch 11 a.m. | Bijoux Destin Game Night | 5 p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB Ladies BUNCO Night | 5:30 p.m. | Destin American Legion Trivia | 7 p.m. | Lucille's Kitchen Miramar Beach

Bachata / Zouk Classes | 7

p.m. | Enlightened Studios FWB Latin Dance Lessons | 7 p.m. | The Block FWB **Open Comedy Night** | 9 p.m. |

**Enlightened Studios FWB** Ladies Night | 10 p.m. | McGuire's Destin

••••••• 27 •••••• Free Beach Bonfire | 5 p.m. |

**Royal Palm Grille** 

### Karaoke | 7 p.m. | Destin American Legion Latin Dancing | 9 p.m. | Bric a Brac

••• 28 ••••••• Panhandle Travel Show 2023 | 1-4 p.m. | Santa Rosa Mall | Mary Esther CALM Chili cook off | 5 p.m. | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville Farmers Market | 8 a.m.-1 p.m. | FWB Landing **Pink Walk 5K** | 8:30 a.m. | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Farmers Market | 9 a.m.-1 p.m. | Grand Boulevard Fort Walton Beach Gun Show

| 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. | Northwest Florida Fairgrounds

Sip & Science: Mardi Gras | 6 p.m. | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB

### ••••• 29 • **Beach Church Service** | 7:30 a.m. | Crab Trap Destin Fort Walton Beach Gun Show | 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. | Northwest Florida Fairgrounds



Melodies & Mimosas

Melodies & Mimosas | 2 p.m. | Harborwalk Village Gala 2023 - Mardi Gras on the Coast with FWB Woman's Club | 6-10 p.m. | Hilton Garden Inn | Okaloosa Island ••• 30 ••

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5 p.m. | Royal Palm Grille

Bingo Night | 6 p.m. | Destin American Legion 31 •••

Music Bingo | 6 p.m. | Fatboys Destin

Salsa Lessons | 7 p.m. | Enlightened Studios Trivia | 7 p.m. | World of Beer Bachata Lessons | 8 p.m. | **Enlightened Studios FWB** 





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## It's a Mardi Gras Celebration and a Gumbo-Lovers Paradise this Winter at The Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Gumbo Anyone? Pursue the Roux at the 34th Annual Sandestin Gumbo Festival!

Friday, Feb. 24, 5 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 25, 12-4 p.m.



### Kick-off the Party at Hammerhead's Bar & Grille Fri. Feb. 24, 5-7 p.m.

Mark your calendar for the official kick-off of the Sandestin Gumbo Festival weekend with a traditional seafood boil at Hammerhead's Bar & Grille with live music starting at 4 p.m. Hammerhead's Bar & Grille will serve boiled potatoes, corn on the cob and sausage.

Then tantalize your taste buds at the **Sandestin Gumbo Festival—the Best Gumbo Cook-Off** on the Emerald Coast! Yum! Yum!

Known as one of the largest and most popular winter food events along Florida's Emerald Coast, this foodies' favorite Gumbo winter festival is back for its 34th year! Gulf Coast restaurants will feature their top-secret gumbo recipes and compete for your vote. Sample the variety of gumbos and vote for your favorite as the "People's Choice" winner. Dark or light roux? Chicken, sausage or seafood? Celebrity judges will name the "Area's Best." This festival's atmosphere is so fun, with live music from Dikki Du and the Zydeco Krewe while you taste, free kids' activities, and restaurants from all over our area vying for your coveted vote.

And, the popular bloody mary competition is back again this year, featuring the best bloody marys at the beach! Taste some of the finest local bars' and restaurants' bloody marys and you get to judge those, too. Vote for your favorite and help contestants win the title of "Best Bloody Mary at The Beach."

Visit www.SandestinGumboFestival.com for tickets and details, including a daily schedule of events and entertainment. General admission tickets are \$45 before Feb. 24 and allow tastings of all gumbo and Bloody Marys; \$55 at the door. If you're interested in entering the event, visit baytownewharf. com. The event will happen rain or shine.

### Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler! Mark Your Calendar for the Annual Mardi Gras Parade! Sunday, Feb. 19, 2 p.m. No Cost to Attend.

Mardi Gras is bigger and better than ever at The Village of Baytowne Wharf! This year, the Fat Tuesday Baytowne Bash Parade and the Mardi Gras Dog Parade will join forces for one festive event. The Village streets will be filled with costumed dogs and their humans along with unique and colorful floats, golf carts, vehicles, pick-up trucks and Mardi Gras cheer. Let the good times roll with dressed-up marchers in their Mardi Gras best and Mardi Gras music filling the air as four-pawed friends and parade participants shower parade-goers with a barrage of beads, moon pies and other trinkets.

Baytowne is looking for Krewes to join in the Mardi Gras festivities. To participate, register by Friday, Feb. 17, at 5 p.m. at baytownewharf.com. Participants who register by Feb. 6 will receive five points added to their score.

### Baytowne Mardi Gras Street Pardi Tues. Feb. 21, 6-8 p.m. No Cost to Attend

Break out the beads and get ready for a night to remember at the Baytowne Mardi Street Pardi. Starting at 6 p.m., join the Village of Baytowne Wharf for a festive Fat Tuesday celebration complete with music from Boukou Groove, street performers, entertainers and more. The post-pardi celebration continues into the night with parties at various Baytowne establishments.

### There's still time to have your Winter Fun at Baytowne On Ice

Now a family tradition, lace up those skates and continue the magical winter spirit at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Baytowne on Ice. For locals and visitors who miss the cold and ice, Baytowne's seasonal ice rink is the perfect opportunity to share some of your favorite winter traditions. The ice rink is open through Sunday, Feb. 5. Hours vary daily. \$13 for a 90-minute skate; \$3 skate rentals. Rent the





rink for private parties and functions starting at \$300. Call (850) 428-2736 or visit baytownewharf.com for more information.

### Other January events include Bubbly Baytowne and the Pink Walk & 5K:

On Thursday, Jan. 19, 5 p.m., join Baytowne Wharf for an evening full of free champagne and shopping during its Bubbly Baytowne. Sip and shop through the Village streets. Stop in various retail merchants as you enjoy a selection of premium champagnes.

\* This event is free and for 21 and up only. The village will be open to the public during this event.

Walk or run with friends and family at the Pink Walk & 5K Benefiting Fore Her on Saturday, Jan. 28, at 8:30 a.m. Wear your pink and have fun while raising funds for breast cancer patients in financial need. Register at www.foreher.org/pinkwalk5k.







## Community

## **Heroes for the Homeless**

## By LISA WOODRUM

In a world where we are bombarded with negativity and bad reports, I invite you to pull up a front row seat with me to witness your community's compassionate heart toward the down and out

In 2006, community leadership met to ask the question, "What are we going to do to assist those who are down on their luck?" What culminated over the next 14 years, through unity, perseverance and evolving vision, is what we have come to know as "One Hopeful Place (OHP)," where peoples' lives are rescued and transformed. Its pivotal philosophy is, "Give a Hand Up, Not a Hand Out." After you read this incredible account, may you be inspired to join the ranks of the "heroes" who serve the demographic of our community!

OHP's mission is to break the cycle of homelessness through collaboration of service entities, resource providers and our community in Okaloosa County. OHP is Okaloosa county's largest shelter, yet it is in the process of expanding even further since the need is so great! The women's shelter is adding eight more beds. The cold night shelter is currently in the process of adding 50 more beds.

Because of OHP's success, there have been area shelter administrators who have toured the facility and asked the question, "How have you been so successful ?" Ted Corcoran, President and CEO of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, the central figure in driving this vision, responded, "The government tries to solve the homeless problem with the

assistance of the community; but this community is solving homelessness with assistance of the government." This community has taken ownership of the problem of homelessness.

For varying reasons people experience homelessness, of which, a miniscule percentage have chosen this lifestyle. Especially in the current societal circumstances with lack of affordable housing and inflation where people live "hand to mouth," it does not take much to push people/families into this catastrophic category of homelessness; people are more vulnerable than ever. It has been an ongoing concern in the Okaloosa County area.

But our community and nearby ones have risen to the occasion! Sherry Jones, OHP Community and Public Relations Director, recognizes this. "I don't know what we would have done without the community's generosity!" she expressed with deep gratitude, citing numerous nonprofits, churches, businesses, donors and volunteers. "It was a well-oiled machine."

Walter Arrington is one of OHP's resident success stories. A native of Fort Walton Beach and a Marine Corps veteran, Walter became homeless for almost five years. He had intermittently stayed in various facilities which offered more regimented programs. He struggled with trust under this type of approach, thus moved back on the streets numerous times. Eventually, he came to OHP where, in contrast, they used a "low-barrier" model which gradually enabled him to develop trust and feel at ease. ("Low-barrier shelters emphasize welcoming

people in as they are [no sex offenders], while having clear and simple behavioral expectations that apply to anyone residing in the shelter. These expectations are narrowly focused on maintaining a safe environment for all.)

In a phone interview with Walter, he shared that this dynamic allowed him six months to decompress-become mentally stabilized, heal emotionally and transition out of survival mode. He explained, "The stress of life on the streets damages the psyche, because of the constant state of survival mode." But in the OHP dynamic, Walter thrived and found an internal motivation to make good life decisions. Eventually, he was able to move to transitional housing.

Homeless was not a "period" in Walter's life-it was a "comma!" Walter was inspired by how his social worker impacted him and decided he wanted to serve people likewise. So, he pursued this vocation and completed his Associates degree, then his Bachelor's degree in Social Work. He will soon graduate with his Master's Degree in social work with hopes to be accepted for a PhD program next year. His passion is to bring healthcare and social services to the impoverished. Currently, he works at Community Health Northwest Florida in Pensacola as a Homeless Health Navigator. He also serves on various boards of directors and has received numerous awards.

His "battle" became his victory and it fashioned a warrior in him to fight for others in the arena of homelessness. Congratulations, Walter! We celebrate your new life and the multitude of lives you will change! OHP is producing more like you!

But OHP cannot continue to change lives without the ongoing presence of "heroes" staff, volunteers and those who donate funds and items. As they say, "It takes a village to raise a child." Well, some homeless are in that place-adult children needing attention (as Walter did for a season), but through OHP, are being raised again as contributing citizens.

Ted and Sherry recognized a key partner in the success of OHP was Bridgeway Center, Inc. (BCI). In 2020, Bonnie Bar-

low, BCI President and CEO, was invited to assist in the management and programming of OHP. Bonnie accepted and they now provide primary care, mental health, psychiatric medicine and substance abuse services, along with two 24/7 staff on site. This partnership has brought OHP to a new level of service.

Bonnie agrees there is a small population voluntarily living on the streets. However,she acknowledged, the greater truth is that most residents have fallen on hard times, such as lost jobs because of the economy, those who flee from abusive homes, veterans with PTSD or unaware of their benefits, scarcity of affordable housing and those who have records who are rehabilitated, but landlords turn them away (keeping them in a the homeless cycle).

BCI employees, Donna Morgan, Program Manager, and her assistant, Jennifer Prorock, Shelter Coordinator, play key roles in the day-to-day activities. They are dedicated leaders in guiding the residents in areas such as life skills, social skills and participating in the care and operations of the facility as a team on a daily basis. They also connect them with community services such as education and work.

Your "front row seat" allows you a vantage point of witnessing your amazing community. Would you like to join the OHP winning team at some level? Visit OneHopefulPlace.org and www.facebook.com/OHPFWB where you can find out how to get involved, view further photos, learn the details of the programs and meet the staff.



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ORTHODONTIST

Our daughter just completed her second phase and had her braces removed today, what a milestone!! This experience has been amazing. We love Dr. Stubbs and her staff. Always friendly and always went above and beyond for my daughter's comfort. ~ Micha K. Trends & Treasures

## The community



Create Fine Stationery Featuring Your Home Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

Frill Seekers Gifts, Destin's popular gift and stationery design studio, not only creates beautiful save the dates, invitations, wedding programs and traditional thank you notes, but it also creates custom house rendering stationery sets. "Some residences take your breath away or conjure up nostalgic feelings. We find that homeowners really enjoy having fine stationery featuring a place they hold dear," said Heidi LoCicero, founder and designer at Frill Seekers Gifts. "By adding the home rendering to a set of custom fine stationery, you are creating your very own "house stationery." The shop uses exquisite double thick paper stock in elegant ecru or winter white to imprint the image on, in raised ink thermography. Created in sets of 200, fold over note cards and matching envelopes, this makes for a memorable housewarming gift from a friend, family member or realtor. You can even use your builder's or architect's drawing of the home to create the notecard set. Once the rendering of the property is created, the image can also be used on shatterproof cups, beverage napkins, neoprene koozies, stir sticks, hats, bags or even a charcuterie board. This image will quickly become known as your very own "house brand!"

To learn more, visit the shop in City Market Bayside or visit FrillSeekersGifts.com. Open Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 5



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### New Year! New Pampering! Pure & Couture Salon

Does your "love" desire a beautiful, colorful, trendy transformation for the new year? Treat them to a new hairstyle and look to begin 2023 with "pure" confidence. Or do it for yourself! Pure and Couture Salon's team of stylists are sought after, because they listen to what you want your hair to look and feel like and suggest options that work with your skin tone, face shape, lifestyle and budget. Pure and Couture wants a relationship with you and to help you enter the new year feeling fab! Book services for weddings, special events, consultations and trial sessions including airbrush makeup, blowouts, lash extensions, spray tanning and hair extensions. Customized just for you - cuts, colors, blow outs, trims, highlights, and much more! Don't forget to grab your gift cards, shampoo, conditioner and other beauty staples. Curbside pick-ups and online ordering, too! Valentine's Day? No problem. Give her or him a gift certificate from Pure and Couture and watch their affection for you soar; they'll more than appreciate this mighty makeover.

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Buying In A Competitive Housing Market Brian K. Locicero, REALTOR<sup>®</sup>, BeOntheCoast.com

The pandemic ushered in a wild housing market, and many would-be home buyers are feeling the effects of the rapid pace of local real estate. Having a REAL-TOR® in your corner will help you navigate the home buying process.

Here Brian shares insider tips to help his buyers get the home of their dreams:

1. Be ready to make a decision. 2. Get prequalified for a mortgage or be prepared to make a cash offer.

3. Scout out new listings on BeOnTheCoast.com. New properties are added every single day at midnight, so you'll have access to the most up-to-date properties, as they hit the local Multiple Listing Services.

4. Bid competitively; if you go too low in a tight market, you will likely lose out.

5. Keep contingencies to a minimum. For example, restrictions such as needing to sell your home first, make your offer unappealing.

"Just because there's competition for a home doesn't mean you should buy it," said Brian. "And don't neglect inspections that help ensure the house is a sound investment. Purchasing a primary, second home or third home is a decision that needs to be strategically planned for, not rushed into." Ready to buy or sell your home? Contact Brian at the Be On The Coast Real Estate.



### Welcome the New Year in Exquisite Style! Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Do you love diamonds? You have come to the right place! Specializing in diamond, gemstone and precious metal jewelry pieces, the Beyond Measure Jewelers' showroom, in its new location at The Market Shops, is full of diamond and gemstone bracelets, rings, necklaces and earrings. Owner Ashleigh Woolly is passionate about exquisite and custom-designed jewelry. Celebrating all things jewelry, she especially is passionate about selling engagement rings, wedding bands and working with couples, because "it is truly special to help people celebrate one of the biggest moments of their lives! Beyond Measure had the honor of designing hundreds of custom projects this year! Congratulations to everyone who got engaged and married and thank you to everyone who trusted their custom projects to us," said Ashleigh. "I am grateful beyond measure." No matter what your taste, plan to be amazed. Stop by and create your own list in this new year. At Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry, a one-on-one exquisite jewelry experience is waiting.

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It's time to get those New Year's resolutions and routines in gear... eating better, exercising more and a wellness routine. CRYO850 offers exciting technologies to prioritize your health. CRYO850's six-service Wellness Circuit is a great way to add routine wellness to your life. The Infrared Sauna detoxes the body to fight off infection. Red Light Therapy enhances sleep quality and focus and increases testosterone for men. Compression and Vibration Therapies move the lymphatic and circulatory systems. The Cocoon Fitness Pod provides full body muscle relief, relaxation and weight loss. For serious health seekers, Pagani<sup>®</sup> Detoxification removes the layer of brown fat built up from years of sugars, alcohols and processed food flushing the body of unwanted toxins. While its services are primarily focused on wellness, pain management and athletic recovery, all have aesthetic benefits to improve skin, lose calories and shape the body. For those focused solely on Esthetics, WILD ICE® Collagen Enhancement Treatments and Cryo Express Facials revive dormant collagen and elastin to rejuvenate aging skin. Membership options start as low as \$99 a month with military discounts of 10 percent, spousal discounts of 20 percent and students always get 30 percent off!

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## Community

## **Destin Chamber Awards Outstanding Members**

Destin Chamber members celebrated the holidays and the Chamber's most outstanding individuals and businesses Dec. 13, during the Annual Holiday & Awards Party Presented by Trustmark. Amid poinsettias, twinkling lights and Christmas trees at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, 2022 Chamber Chairman Jennifer Gutai Comella of Hand Arendall Harrison Sale and Destin Chamber President & CEO Shane A. Moody, CCE, FCCP led the awards presentation.

Alan Gieseman, CEO of White-Wilson Medical Center, was named the 2022 Business Person of the Year, sponsored by Trustmark.

"We chose to sponsor the Business Person of the Year Award because it lines up with our core values of integrity, service, accountability, relationships and solutions," said Christian Carlee, Assistant Vice President & Commercial Relationship Manager with Trustmark, while presenting the award.

Gieseman's "steadfast selflessness and forward-looking mindset have resulted in the strengthening of an essential healthcare organization. Each year, one in four Okaloosa County residents walk through our doors as a patient and many

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more as employees. All benefit from his leadership and commitment," stated his nomination form.

Okaloosa Gas stresses the importance of community involvement and service, so it was a natural fit to sponsor the Ann Gibson Community Service Award. Before announcing Terry Watkins as this year's winner, Jenni Brunson, Public Relations Specialist for Okaloosa Gas, who made the presentation shared that he has been doing great things for the community since 1963. Some of the accolades mentioned included Destin Volunteer firefighter from 1973 - 1996, serving as

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2022 Destin Chamber Chairman Jennifer Gutai Comella (center) of Hand Arendall Harrison Sale congratulates the award winners, including the Ann Gibson Community Service Award Sponsored by Okaloosa Gas winner Terry Watkins (left) and the Business Person of the Year Award Sponsored by Trustmark winner Alan Gieseman of White-Wilson Medical Center.

fire chief for 14 of those years; recipient of the Ross Marler Destin Citizenship Award in 1987; promoted to captain of the Okaloosa Sheriff's Posse in 1989; Destin Chamber Board of Directors from 1992-1998; President of the Destin Chamber in 1995; Presidential Volunteer Service Award for more than 15,000 hours of volunteer service to the Okaloosa Sheriff's Posse and Okaloosa County; Okaloosa Sheriff's Posse member of the year in 2009; and National Sheriff's Association Reserve Deputy of the Year in 2019.

Bernard Johnson, FPL's regional external affairs manager serving Okaloosa and Walton counties, received the Business Person of the Month Award for October.

"His name is synonymous with community service," said Comella, as she presented the award. "He has served on probably every board for every community service organization in our area. He and his company are involved at all levels of education and business development, and he's a great friend to Destin and to the Destin Chamber."





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## Community

## Make a Holiday Visit a Health Visit, Too

By Teresa Halverson

The holidays are a time for family gatherings, visiting those we haven't seen in a while and looking to the future. As we enter into 2023, many of us may have had the opportunity to visit our family members who we haven't seen in months or perhaps even a year. While our community is blessed to have such a growing retiree population, it is unfortunate that often these individuals are not able to be visited by family members on a regular basis due to location. Family visits are most important as they provide us a time to reconnect and share the joys of the holiday season. It also provides us with a valuable opportunity to check on our parent's status.

If you had the opportunity to check in on your loved ones, did you notice any changes in



their status? As we age, there are certain signs that our loved ones may need help but are either too proud to ask or actually do not realize they need some support. As we visit our loved ones, it is important to look for signs that indicate they possibly need help.

First of all, did you notice any health or hygiene concerns that were different from your last visit? Any unexplained bruises, weight loss or change in behaviors observed? Weight loss could possibly be related to an underlying illness. Do they display any concerns or needs with grocery shopping, or attending physician appointments?

How did the home look? While no-one expects a spotless home all the time, did you notice that their housekeeping and maintenance has slipped? Are things in disarray? Check the refrigerator for spoiled food. Are they dressed and performing their activities of daily living (bathing, etc)?. Did you notice any signs of depression?

Memory lapses are normal as we age, but if you notice your parent's forgetfulness is interfering with daily life and activities, it may be time to step in. Missed medication doses and doctor appointments, getting lost, failing to pay bills, and falling victim to a scam are all common warning signs. If you notice any of these, talk to your parent about getting a memory screening after the holidays.

Our area is blessed with great health care providers. Skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, home health, companion support, and senior independent living facilities are available for help and support and referrals. It takes a great community to help make a difference in the lives of others, especially those who cared for us.



## Mark your Calendars for ECCAC's Signature Gala in the Garden and Golf Weekend

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (EC-CAC) is putting on their annual signature Gala in the Garden and Golf Weekend, this year presented by George and Janice Hendricks. The Gala features a cocktail hour starting at 5:30 p.m., with dinner being served at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 10, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Guests will enjoy dinner and live entertainment by popular local musicians, The Will Thompson Band, live auction, as well as a featured guest speaker. The Gala is an energetic, yet important ECCAC fundraiser to benefit children by providing services at no cost to help identify, treat and support child victims in abusive situations.

The Golf Tournament, also to benefit ECCAC, will take place on Sunday, March 12, at Kelly Plantation Golf Club with registration and a cookout meal from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. for a tournament shot gun start at 12 p.m. Tournament cost is \$400, which includes two tickets to the



ECCAC's 23rd Annual Gala in the Garden and Golf weekend will be on March 10, at the Hilton Sandestin for the Gala, and March 12, for the golf tournament at Kelly Plantation.

Gala. Gala tickets only are \$250 per couple. Please make reservations on-line at eccac.org. Sponsorships are still available. Contact Lee Curtis at at 850-684-4422, or email her at Lee@ eccac.org.

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Community

## National Singers, Songwriters to Converge on 30A

The Largest Gathering of Nationally Recognized Songwriters on The Florida Coast Perform This Month at 14th Annual 30A Songwriter's Fest, Jan. 13-16

For the past 13 years, the 30A Songwriters Festival has attracted thousands of dedicated live music fans from around the country to hear songwriters spanning many genres of music perform their songs. The beach resort towns along Highway 30A in Santa Rosa Beach feature 30 venues, presenting more than 200 songwriters and 300-plus solo, band and in-theround performances throughout the weekend.

Grand Boulevard's Town Center main stage will host headline performances by renowned artists Lyle Lovett, Gin Blossoms, Rickie Lee Jones, Steve Earle, Yola and Morgan Wade.

The festival welcomes for the first time to 30A Amy Grant, Tom Rush, Brian Vander Ark (The Verve Pipe), The Black Opry Revue, Beth Nielsen Chapman and John Craigie.

Returning to perform two shows each throughout the weekend are songwriting legends John Paul White (The Civil Wars), Shawn Mullins, Kathleen Edwards, Tinsley Ellis, Darrell Scott, Adia Victo-



ria, Chuck Prophet, Livingston Taylor, Abe Partridge, Lilly Hiatt, John Fullbright, Sarah Lee Guthrie, Paul Thorn and James McMurtry.

Reasons to Attend: 175-plus songwriters and 300-plus shows in a single holiday weekend; catch Morgan Wade ("Wilder Days"), a star on the rise, while you can, because the rest of her 2023 cross-country tour is nearly sold out. Venues are built out for the extended weekend with state-of-the-art sound systems presenting bands and in-theround performances through-

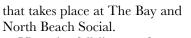
out the weekend, supporting the arts, including Benmont Tench and his Steinway Grand Piano, a founding member of Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers who has recorded and performed with Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and just about every artist in between. Party on a Monday for "The Late Check-out Party"

2023

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View the full lineup of confirmed artists at 30asongwritersfestival.com. Listen to the Top 50 on Spotify at 2023 30a Songwriters' playlist.

Festival Weekend Passes

are currently available at www.30asongwritersfestival.com. For a full description of each ticket package including VIP mainstage and transportation packages for groups of 2 up to 12, visit www.30asongwritersfestival.com.



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Why is the Medicare Open

## Community



By GREG DURETTE Now that the Medicare Annual Election Period (AEP) is over, you can finally take a breather from all those ads, phone calls and mailers. Come Jan. 1, you will have a chance to try out your new Medicare Advantage, Supplement and/or Prescription plan.

If you suddenly discover the plan you selected during the AEP is not right for you, all is not lost. You will get one more bite at the apple to make changes to your plan.

As with many situations, in order to get a good outcome, you first have to ask the right questions. In this case, the questions you should ask first are:

**Enrollment Period Important?** 

Did you sign up for a new Advantage Plan or a standalone Part D prescription drug plan during the last Annual Enrollment Period?

Do you have an existing Advantage Plan or a stand-alone Part D prescription drug plan that renewed with a Jan. 1 effective date?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then the Medicare Open Enrollment Period (OEP) is very important to you.

The OEP runs annually from



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Jan. 1 to March 31. During this time, Advantage plan holders are given the option to make certain changes to the plan they selected in the AEP.

These allowed changes are: • Cancel your stand-alone Part D prescription drug plan

• Drop your Medicare Advantage Plan and return to

Original Medicare (A & B only) • Enroll in a stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plan

• Elect to change from one Medicare Advantage Plan to another

Let's look at each option a bit deeper. First, why would someone elect to cancel their standalone Part D prescription plan? The only reason one could have would be it was being replaced by other qualifying coverage. If you cancel without replacing, penalties will accrue and be waiting for you when you do put this coverage back in place at a later date. Plus, those penalties will be with you for life!

Second, there are a few rare circumstances when it makes sense for someone to cancel an Advantage plan and return to Original Medicare known as Part A and Part B. Usually this would have something to do with provider networks which are insufficient for the beneficiary. Again, this rare circumstance would require you to also enroll in a stand-alone Part D prescription drug plan in order to avoid accruing the future penalties I just mentioned.

Again, enrolling in a standalone Part D prescription drug plan is a requirement if you do not have qualifying coverage elsewhere and want to avoid those penalties. If you neglected to get that done during the AEP, now is the time to take care of this.

Last, some folks have a change of heart once they see the detailed materials of the Advantage plan they enrolled in during the AEP. Perhaps you find your HMO plan does not have the providers you need but a PPO plan does. Or, perhaps the terms of coverage are better in a plan different from your current plan. Maybe, another plan costs less (or even \$0!).

You don't need any reason to switch plans, provided you do so before the OEP expires on March 31. Just remember, you only get one chance to make this change. Once you do, you will have to keep that plan until the next AEP, which begins on Oct. 15 of each year.

The best options for your particular situation should be thoroughly discussed with your insurance agent/broker to make sure you have all the facts about the choices you may be thinking about and get all your questions answered.

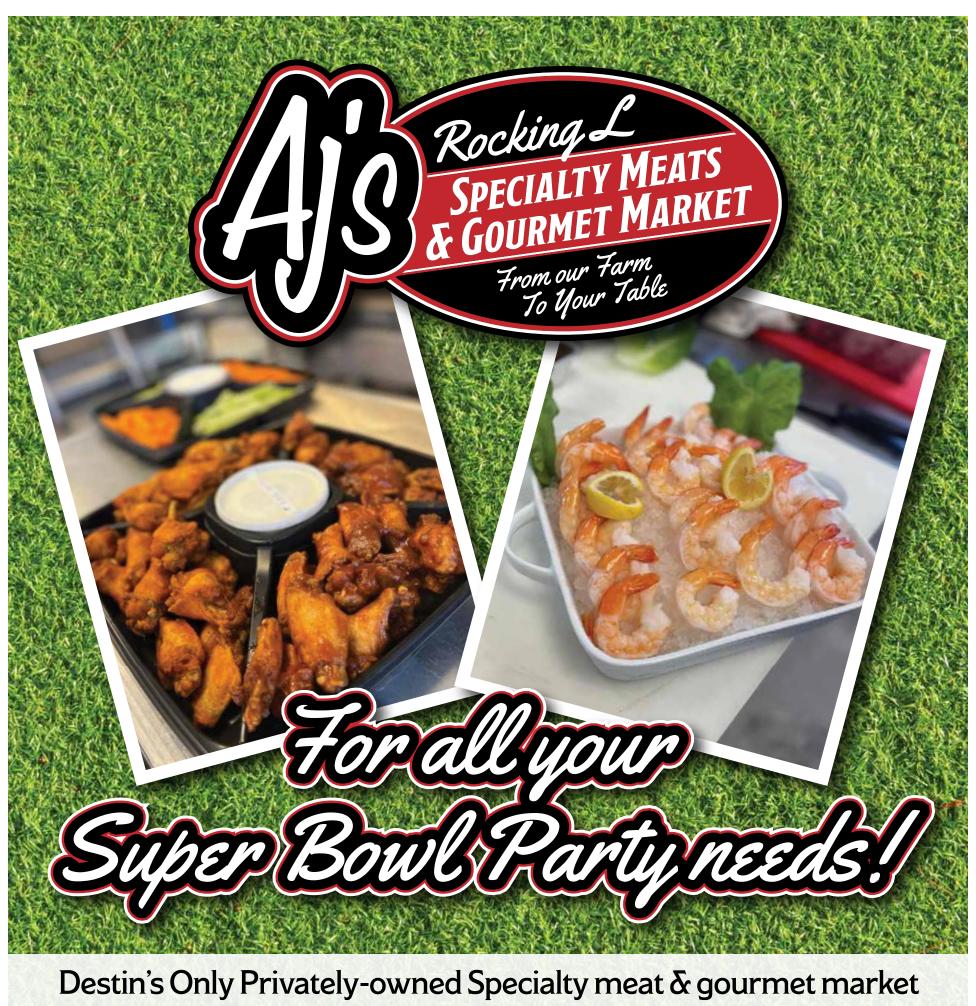
Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the State of Florida and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for over 39 years and can be reached at his office at 850-842-2400 or his mobile at 978-509-2941.



## Medicare Questions? We've Got Answers. GREG DURETTE 842.2400

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## ( Community



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report they expect a lot of vol-

## Community



By MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL Advisor and Branch Manager

As 2022 ended, investors saw the year bring a 400% increase in interest rates and a \$400 billion liquidity draw down by the Federal Reserve. Despite that, homeowner spending on mortgage payments, as a percentage of their monthly costs, was at a 60-year low. Housing makes up over 20% of the economy and accounts for about a third of inflation (based upon CPI). Stocks and bond values both saw significant drawdowns, or negative returns for the year. Housing has been in descent recently, but nowhere near the drawdowns of those. At least not yet. The demand for housing is as strong as ever; it is the affordability that brings values into question now. Finally, the U.S. Dollar (USD), had one of its strongest years on

(D) TheFirst

against almost all foreign curmight be on investors' minds?

First, let's look at some recent developments: The passage of the Secure Act 2.0 means that mandatory distribution ages will be extended from retirement accounts and contribution limits will be increased. This is to compensate for the burden of retirement saving moving away from the assurances of pension plans to the shoulders of the individuals to save and plan for their retirement.

Liquidity is slowly drying up. The Federal Reserve continues to slowly draw down all the excess or extra liquidity, or cash assets it created over the past few years. That means that there is not as much money chasing assets be they stocks, bonds, real estate, crypto, NFTs, or art. Perhaps the markets are coming back into reality where investors are paying for growth and profits more than from having excess or extra liquidity. That could prove to be a good thing for assets in the long run.

Contrarian investing times like these: Does it make

RAYMOND JAMES

record. It had significant gains rencies. Going forward, what

(Raymond James among them) atility in the sector (made up mostly by banks) over this next

year. We note that some of the larger banks in the nation see higher rates as an opportunity for them to earn on their own cash assets even as they pay more for deposits. When the Fed raises the Fed Funds, or overnight rate, banks earn more on their excess assets that they park at the Federal Reserve or other banking institutions. Nonetheless many investors worry about shrinking margins on bank loans and of course if the economy goes into recession, that could increase the potential of losses on loans. We come down on the for side that these higher rates will ultimately boost the Financials sector and suggest investors look

> to increase holdings in this area. Innovations needed and therefore arriving in the Energy Sector. Take a look at what is emerging when it comes to cleaner energy. That means the nuclear sector. Professional investors are increasing their investments in nuclear technology, and it is showing in asset valuations. October was one of the strongest months for nuclear type energy stocks.

Next, consider the happenings with microprocessors, or computer chips. The drawdown on these stocks has well exceeded the drawdown of the broad market and we think they could offer some value for interested investors. The innovations being worked upon now are extraordinary (and might take years to be seen). We read and see things such as an entire data center (think the cloud) being placed upon one chip, one day. Most innovation and design work are done in the USA while the manufacturing is primarily taking place overseas, but not in China. China, as we understand it, is highly reliant upon the import of advanced chips to



go into the things it assembles or manufactures for export. There is no design or manufacture of advanced chips there. The USA is taking measures - along with its allies – to limit China's access to this technology. Taiwan is quite vital for China, and they may be reluctant to upset their supply chain (as well as their global business partners) by trying to overtake Taiwan.

The case for cybersecurity and defense stocks (in the Industrials sector) is something we are taking note of as well. The advances in technology provide for higher standards of productivity and living but also the risk of cybercrime and cybersecurity. There are companies that are leaders in this technology through their innovation and creativity. We think investors should have a look there.

There are two types of investors: Institutional investors and individual or retail investors. On any given day institutional investors make up the bulk of trading both in dollar and share volume. Institutional investors are typically mutual funds, pension funds, endowments, banks, insurance companies or other similar type entities. When the media talk about what investors did on any given day, they most often are talking about institutional investors. The retail or individual investor is the person, or anyone acting on their own for their own account. It is interesting to note that as 2022 came to a close, individual investors were more apt to buy stocks or bonds vs institutional investors. Institutional investors were somewhat bearish late in the year. The big question is: Do institutions get it right? The world is replete with reports and opinions. Institutions would seemingly have the edge with vast research resources and perhaps lower costs. We leave it up to the reader to decide. However, our opinion, with some historical

input, is that individuals can do just as well or perhaps better.

Other things to watch as 2023 progresses:

We suggest investors (individual investors that is) keep an eye on the strength of the dollar. Might foreign central banks (and the Bank of Japan being one recent example) be raising their rates and therefore become more competitive with the dollar? Will foreign central banks start to decrease their U.S. dollar holdings? International investments can benefit when exchange rates lead to a cheaper dollar. Should the dollar get cheaper by the way, that is what typically makes gold and other precious metals rally. U.S. companies who rely at least in part on overseas sales or revenues would most likely see an impact should the dollar decline in value vs. other currencies A weaker dollar makes them more competitive. The dollar's strength, however, has proven beneficial for the U.S. as it has not been forced into raising rates more aggressively.

Inflation waned in the 4th quarter of 2022. We see that disinflation is accelerating and expect that trend to continue. Supply chains are opening again. There is little to no back up in cargo off the U.S. coasts now. The Federal Reserve has stated that it needs to get inflation to 2% (that is based upon PCE vs CPI by the way). We wonder if that is attainable in 2023 and if the Fed will be satisfied, at least for the time being, with a moderated rate of inflation closer to 4-5%. If so, we think interest rates are likely to stabilize. We see inflation and rates in that range.

Wage inflation has proven to be one of the most resilient factors of the cost of living over the past couple of years. Fewer and fewer workers have been the

**Maurice Stouse** 



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Up, down or sideways: Keep your

head on straight when markets move.

Some investors have learned how to ride out the most stomach-churning market cycles. Others follow the urge to jump out mid-ride. So what can you do

to play it smart in a roller coaster of a market?

For starters, you can turn to us. We can help you find a clear way forward

before fear or concerns take over with a strategy tailored to your situation. In our experience, perspective is the ticket to helping endure the ups and downs as you pursue your financial goals. Contact us to learn how we can help.

The First Wealth Management

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## **Insights for Investors**



## BY GAIL PELTO, REALTOR

What I and other professional real estate agents are noticing is that many residential buyers have been shying away from making a purchase and many have said it's because of the rise in mortgage interest rates. However, what we forget is that the average interest rate over the last 40 years has been around 7 percent — which is exactly

## **Relax! The Sky is NOT Falling** in the Real Estate Market

Contrary to what many believe, it is still a great time to buy or sell real estate.

where they are now. In my opinion, this is actually a great time to buy! Why, may you ask? For one, you're probably not going to compete with multiple offers like buyers had to do over the last two years (and many of them paid over market value to win the bid). So, if you are in a place where you can afford the mortgage payment, then buy the house! Think about it, what could happen if the interest rates have a significant drop? Will you be competing with multiple buyers again? Will that drive prices up, again? Maybe.



Instead of going through all of that, buy now and when interest rates come down, you can refinance!

And for all the sellers out there, if you're wanting to sell, it's still a great time to sell. The

inventory of available houses may have gone up. However, it is still lower than pre-pandemic times. Also, the number of days that a residential property is on the market for sale before going under contract, albeit longer than the last two years, is still significantly lower than the pre-pandemic average in 2019 which was a great real estate year! In 2019, the average CDOM (Cumulative Days On Market) was 91, in December 2022 it was 62. Property is still selling and the median sales price in December 2022 was 5

percent over the same time period in 2021.

We've had a wild real estate ride over the last two years and the real estate market is still good in our area. We just have to get used to the good "norm" and not the recent craziness.

The real estate sky is still... not falling.

If you have any questions, or wish to chat with me about real estate, then give me a call at (850) 374-0454. I'm here to help!

## **INSIGHTS**

continued from page 18

main culprit. Worker participation rates were reaching decades low levels in the last two years. Prior to the pandemic, worker participation rates (we see that as eligible workers 18-65 years old) were reaching significant highs.

## That was in part due to many Americans working longer than the retirement age of 65. The Social Security Administration now sees Full Retirement Age (FRA) closer to 70 than 65. During the pandemic the number of more senior workers who

were retiring almost tripled. We see that as temporary as the

number of older workers is beginning to increase again. Many Americans are choosing to work beyond age 65 or perhaps they have retired from one career and now are having an encore career. That, too, can have implications for investors.

The rise of technology and affluence drive some people to

work longer as they seek to build their assets through income, increased saving and investing be it in stocks, bonds or real estate (second homes being one example). Also, younger workers are on the rise again. Many of them stayed home or extended time in college and many are now out and in the work force. What this

all adds up to is greater labor supply and less pressure on wages, that key driver of inflation. In other words, the economy might solve for inflation just as quickly if not quicker than the Federal Reserve. So, as we see it, disinflation is accelerating in

Continued on next page



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## The Ever-Changing Insurance Marketplace in Florida



By Joe Capers, Insurance Zone

It has been two years since we wrote about the changing insurance market place in Florida. Because we are nearly surrounded by water with the possibility of storms and other natural disasters so evident, the cycles are much more pronounced.

Typically, insurance industry cycles will last anywhere between two to ten years. The market cycles rely on the way the nation, and for that matter the world, is operating, in addition to storms and other natural disasters, COVID has impacted the marketplace. In this edition we will take a condensed look at what factors are driving these market shifts, the differences of a hard and soft market, and the effect on your personal and business insurance programs.

In a **soft market**, there will be an increase in competition and pressure on lowering premiums. This cycle is usually followed by a hard market because carriers are underpricing coverage to secure market share. In a soft market you can usually find lower insurance costs, broader coverages and more liberal underwriting guidelines. This is an advantage for anyone who is purchasing insurance. With increased capacity, the consumers have more Insurance carriers and enhancements to choose from to design their insurance program. A soft market increases the amount of competition between insurance companies.

A **hard market** is a time when premiums increase while capacity or the ability to write more premiums is diminished. These past two years for the Florida insurance market have certainly been one for the records. Higher premiums, more stringent underwriting and less competition is playing into the advantage of insurance carriers, and make it difficult on consumers. This is a good time to have a comprehensive insurance review.

COVID has definitely impacted the insurance industry as well. The pandemic has certainly highlighted coverages that are included in contracts. Insurers have seen an increase in insurance claims while suffering investment losses. But there are other factors that should be mentioned that have added to the creation of the hard market that we are currently experiencing.

Florida's hard insurance market is tougher than any other market cycle in most other states. The challenges are exacerbated by other "unique" market conditions such as natural disasters, litigation, fraud and increase in claims frequency and severity.

Many carriers are still working through their losses from the natural disasters, and the major storms of Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Michael in 2018. These two events had a major impact on the rising reinsurance costs. Reinsurance is an essential product, purchased by insurance carriers to mitigate catastrophic exposures.

Fraud is another factor impacting the insurance market. The more prevalent schemes are related to assignment of benefits from some roofing contractors and mold remediation companies. Another factor impacting the Florida industry is the escalation of litigation in our state. There are some public adjusters teaming up with personal injury attorneys to file frivolous claims creating unnecessary litigation. One recent study shows that 8% of all homeowners' claims nationwide are in the State of Florida, but 76% of all homeowners' claims lawsuits are in the State of Florida!

Whether you are seeking personal or business insurance, navigating the market can be challenging. The bottom line for the Florida insurance market right now is that the industry is on life support and consumers are facing double digit rate increases. Policyholders are paying more money for less coverage. Regardless of what you're after, it's important to find an insurance professional who can help you manage your insurance program during the market cycles. An independent agent with multiple carriers should be of great assistance in any market.

Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is now Abora Insurance Group, a full-service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach. Visit the Video Library on www.ins-zone.com and watch several informative videos on 'Homeowners, Condo, Business and Umbrella' or call (850) 424.6979.





## INSIGHTS

continued from page 18

goods, in services and in wages. To sum it all up for our read-

ers, these scenarios would prove to be beneficial to stock and bond values. We suggest investors, regardless of how 2023 unfolds, always take into account the big three: 1) Investment objective - IO, 2) Time Frame - TF, and 3) Risk Tolerance -RT. Once those are defined, we suggest you then begin to put together that combination of investments for you to reach for and to attain your goals in this life.

Maurice Stouse is a Financial Advisor and the branch manager of The First Wealth Management/ Raymond James. The main office is located at The First Bank, 2000 98 Palms Blvd., Destin, FL 32451, phone 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymondjames.com.

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## Is Hiring a Designer Worth It?

### BY KIM SCHNEIDER

I hear so many people say they've created mood boards, wandered the isles of their favorite home stores, thumbed through countless magazines, searched online for hours on end and still can't decide how to move forward with their project. Is this you too? If so, you're probably overwhelmed and your vision may be vague. Need clarity? Hire an Interior Designer!

Interior Designers are trained to do everything from space planning, furniture layouts, fabric selection, color consultations and so much more. Some designers specialize in particular areas, such as kitchen and bath. If you've never worked with a designer you might find it intimidating, but I'm certain you'll find the benefits are well worth it. Below are a few reasons you'll want a designer as your "teammate":

\*Designers can keep you on BUDGET and SAVE you time and effort. A designer has countless resources and can save

On Christmas

Deputy Corporal

Ray Hamilton was

killed in the line

of duty while at-

tempting to arrest

a man suspected of

domestic violence.

Hamilton served

Okaloosa

Sheriff's

ton, and in accordance with a

memorandum from the office

of Gov. Ron DeSantis, Oka-

loosa County lowered the flags

to half-staff at County-main-

tained buildings from sunrise

to sunset on Saturday, Dec. 31,

"Our deepest condolences

Eve,

2022

County

you endless amounts of time researching products and prices.

\*Designers not only have resources but they have home improvement contacts. They have the potential to save you time by identifying reliable contractors, electricians, plumbers, painters and other trades for your project. A designer can also help you avoid costly mistakes that may help you save money and increase the value of your home.

\*Designers are able to "bridge a working relationship" between you and your architect or contractor. They may head off design misses in your overall plan. It's important that lighting and furnishing needs are addressed before construction. For example: if your living room sofa is floating in the room you'll want to ensure you have floor outlets in the construction plan. This is critical in managing time and money.

\*Designers offer an extra set of eyes. Their eyes are trained to notice things that you may not see. They can give you a professional assessment and provide you with an action plan. A design plan is key in determining what can be repurposed or eliminated. This will help you to spend your money more efficiently.

\*Designers can help bring the "WOW Factor" you've been hoping for. They envision the overall picture that clients often cannot.

Thinking outside and inside the box is what a designer does.

\*Interview more than one designer. Ask questions. Ensure they are qualified to do the job. Are they certified? Do they have insurance? What's their experience? Most of all make sure



you connect with them and can see yourself working along side them.

Overall, hiring an Interior Designer will help streamline the design process, help you take more risks (in a good way), they'll sweat the small stuff for you, keep you from wasting time and making costly mistakes, and you'll get the result that's right for you and your space. These are all good reasons to hire an Interior Designer!

Coastal Design by Kim is located in Destin and proudly serves the beautiful Emerald Coast. With 18 years interior design service, Kim prides herself in creating a beautiful, functional space for YOU! Schedule your appointment today at at (850) 904-6622 or via email at kim@coastaldesignbykim.com. Visit our website at: www.coastaldesignbykim.com



"When designing, I feel it's important to balance functionality and gesthetics while considering the unique qualities of each space. My inspiration comes from listening to YOU!" ~ Kim Schneider

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- **Custom Window Treatments**
- Lighting Designs
- Color and Wall Coverings
- Fixture & Finishes • Patio Furniture & Cushion Replacement
- **Furniture Selection**
- Furniture Reupholstery
  - Art & Accessory Selection



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as a Special Response Team (SRT) member with the Okabered for his service and sacriloosa County Sheriff's Office. fice to the citizens of Okaloosa To honor the memory and County. sacrifice of Corporal Hamil-Corporal Hamilton, a five-

year veteran with the agency, had received two lifesaving awards and been commended for his excellence.

Please join Life Media in praying for the family, coworkers and friends of Corporal Hamilton as they deal with this tremendous loss.

this difficult time," Okaloosa savs Board of County Commissioners Goodwin.

"He will always be remem-

To Honor Corporal Ray Hamilton go out to the family of Corporal Hamilton and the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office during

Chairman-elect Trey

## 🐲 Travel

## Let the Traveling Begin: Family Travel Around the World



By JODELL HAVERFIELD, HAVE TRAVEL MEMORIES

Clearly, travel is back in most of the world and the majority by far is family travel. I suspect

it's because it took a pandemic to make families miss each other. While it's no surprise parents missed their grown children and grandchildren living more than a short drive away, it's a fact that even siblings missed each other. Family dinners, birthday parties, weddings - even funerals were not an option. We couldn't visit one another in the hospital, much less church. All these events we took for granted. Many of us put off traveling to do later, when we have the time. However, far too many ran out of time. Covid 19 was a bitter

lesson indeed. On a brighter note, travel says, "Hello, I'm Back!" Group and multigenerational travel has finally taken off! Every part of the travel industry has opened its doors to families, from grandparents to teenagers and parents with young children. Who would have thought a decade ago cruise ships would have roller coasters on them? Whether parents and grandparents are looking for activities they can enjoy with younger family members, or the kids just need a place to be kids, it's all out there.

I always believed taking kids to experience unique locales and far-flung cultures was equal to, if not better than, time spent in the classroom. I argued with my husband that our children could take their homework with them, but they couldn't take the actual experience of the journey to class. Even if you stay close to home, the kids will love it.

Here are a few of my picks for family adventures around the world.

Beaches in Jamaica or Turks and Caicos - Everything's included for everyone! At Beaches Resorts, adventure and excitement give kids the freedom to have a vacation of their own and parents the luxury to relax and enjoy themselves too, featuring every land and water sport, 5-star Global Gourmet, as many as 22 restaurants and 14 bars. With live entertainment and family size accommodations, when it's all included. All you have to do is pack!

Vacations well suited for family travel might be the Brit-



ish Isles - There are so many options that are great for families. Customize an itinerary that fits your families interests, like visiting a real castle with highly experienced tour guides who can highlight their towns and regions in ways that can really keep the interest of all ages. Do a self-drive and travel at your own pace. Visit the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland.

Nicaragua's over the top adventures - Nicaragua might not jump to mind immediately when thinking of family fun, but that would be a shame. Your family will want to lay claim to this hidden treasure. Rancho Santana, set between the Pacific Ocean and Lake Nicaragua, is a surfer's paradise with ocean view homes, villas and casitas. all with access to kids club, monkey viewing tours, sand-boarding adventures and much more included. Rancho Santana is just one family-friendly property, the type of place where you can build memories that will last a lifetime, where five beaches and a large forest blend to create a unique destination.

Family fun in Tampa - We all know that Florida is a perennial favorite with families. However, Tampa Bay offers endless waterfront activities. From exhilarating roller coasters to the local culture, Tampa is a premier destination and the perfect place to find adventures for all ages. Several of Tampa Bay's top attractions include Busch Gardens, where wildlife preserve meets theme park, including North America's tallest and the world's fastest and steepest hybrid coaster. Another amazing stop would be the Florida Aquarium or ZooTampa at Lowery Park, with its new Roaring Springs water ride that plunges visitors down a 30-foot drop or the Glazer Children's Museum and Lost Pearl Pirate Ship, a one-and-a-half-hour interactive experience that includes swashbuckling activities and water cannon fun.

Cruise Lines Cater to All in the Family - If variety is the spice of life, when it comes to planning family and multi-generational vacations, it is an essential ingredient in the recipe for success. On a cruise there is something for everyone, from rock climbing to ice skating, surfing, golf, go karts, bowling, cooking lessons and even Broadway shows. I haven't even mentioned family-friendly tours and accommodations, and all of this is easy on the pocketbook too! What more can you ask for when it comes to planning your friends and family cruise?

Don't put it off. Spend time with the ones you love because you just don't know when you won't have the option anymore. Vacations make memories that will last!

Thanks for Travelin with JoDell CEO and Luxury Travel Advisor at Have Travel Memories Vacations





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## **Destin's Best Places to Watch Your Favorite Teams!**

By Scott Miller

## AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

AJ's Seafood & Öyster Bar loves football fans and boasts the one and only Jumbotron, on the Harbor in Destin. Be sure to come by and watch your favorite teams play all season long.

Serving up delicious daily specials, mouth watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month, make AJ's your game day destination and let the games begin.

Check the Facebook page for info on live music & events. *116 Harbor Blvd.* 

110 **11**0/00/ Dica.

## Austons on 98

Offering a raw bar and the best happy hour in town, Austons is the place to be and home of the 102-foot bar, including 32 beers on draft. Some of the spe-

freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail. With big screen TVs all around, there's no bad seat in the house and with football season upon us there's no better place to be. Happy Hour Specials include 2 for 1 on All draft beer, well liquor and house wine Mon.-Fri from 11-6 and \$6 Off raw ovsters Mon.-Fri 3-6. Game day is every Sat and Sun, with Football Bucket Specials, drink specials and \$3 pints of Auston's Lager and PBR. Auston's on 98 is open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. and features its own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce." See full menu at austonson98.com.

(850) 842-3200 125 Poinciana Blvd., Miramar Beach Austonson98.com

### cialties include little neck clams, **FATBOYS - Destin/** freshly shucked raw oysters, **Miramar Beach**

Craving a delicious burger or some tasty wings and an ice cold beer? But the game is on and you won't miss even a single play. FATBOYS has you covered. Fully staffed and ready to serve you, the obvious choice is easy to see. Game Day and FATBOYS go hand in hand. So, hustle down for some of the best, most delicious gameday football watching food around. Be sure to enjoy a tall glass of FATBOYS Lager, too. Oh, and bring the crew with you. There's always a great seat waiting for you at either of our two convenient locations, Destin and Miramar Beach.

Happy Hour Mon-Fri 3-6pm Half off Beer, (bottle, can, draft). Football Season Specials include Sat., Sun., Mon. (All day long) 1/2 off beer (bottle, can, draft). Daily Lunch Specials are Mon-Fri 10am-3pm—ORIG-INAL FATBOY or CLASSIC CHICKEN (crispy or grilled) w/Fries and a drink. Daily Specials: Mon-BOGO <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> off Any Burger or Sandwich entree, Tues-BOGO <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> off Any Appetizer, Wed. Kids eat FREE with purchase of an Adult Entree. Visit Fatboys' Facebook page for exciting updates.

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### Landshark's Pizza

Hungry? Thirsty? Maybe a little of both? Come in and visit Landshark's Pizza. Owners Brian and Sue Hassmann have created the locals' favorite pizza, buffalo wings and sports pub and bar that serves great pizza and awesome wings, plus many other scrumptious eats for folks of all ages. There's plenty of seating for everyone and TVs galore, plus fun and games all week long. Football fans from all over come and watch all their favorite teams on countless regional and national sports networks. With a fully stocked bar serving up 95 different bourbons and 30 beers on draft, it's no secret why the locals love Landshark's Pizza Company.

(850) 424-6743 300 Harbor Blvd., Destin landsharkspizza.com

## **Tailfins Waterfront Grill**

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast? Start your day off

Continued on next page



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## **DESTIN'S BEST**

continued from previous page

Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mimosas and right with Tailfins Breakfast from 8-11 a.m., seven days a week. bloody marys. Watch Tailfins' Enjoy a classic breakfast with sushi chef create right in front

bacon and eggs, a seafood or

of your eyes. Enjoy some of your favorite food and drinks, including sushi rolls and sake bombs, scrumptious early bird dinner specials Monday to Friday, 4-6 p.m. Happy hour from 4-6 p.m.







Monday through Friday, featuring \$20 domestic bottle buckets, \$5 house wines and well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas. Live Music on the Docks all week long. Football fans, Tailfins is your go to destination featuring over 70 Big Screen TVs. Be sure to check out our new Video Wall upstairs, possibly the largest indoor TV on the harbor.

DAILY CRUISES: Introducing Tailfins Island Adventure. Departures seven days a week aboard "Always Workin," Tailfins' brand new 45-foot-long cruiser. Enjoy the Destin Harbor and Crab Island like never before. Choose between The three-hour tour, sunset cruise or Thursday night's spectacular fireworks cruise. Book online, tailfinsislandadventure.com.

(850) 842-3333 On the Harbor in Destin, 172 Harbor Blvd. tailfinsdestin.com

**Tequila's Sports Bar & Grill** 

Did someone say margaritas? Tequila's Sports Bar and Grill has quickly become a local favorite, with world class, jumbo-sized margaritas, Mexican food favorites inspired by years of tradition and authentic spices such as the Tequila's Plate, Chili Con Carne, The Three Amigos and the new Master Parrillada – a unique fusion of sports bar food and delightful Mexican dishes. Football season is here so don't miss a game all season long. Celebrate Taco Tuesdays with 2-for-1 margaritas. Lunch specials are offered Monday-Friday for \$8.99. "Our love lies in the food we make and the connections we create with our customers every day," says Oni, Tequila's owner. "Our goal is to have the widest selection of tequila brands in town. You're sure to find your favorites here." Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner or call ahead to place your take out and to-go orders. EAT. DRINK. FIESTA! (850) 279.6402

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**Pro Football Schedule** 

## **WEEK 17**

Thursday, Dec. 29 Dallas Cowboys at Tennessee Titans, 7:20 p.m., Amazon Sunday, Jan. 1 Arizona Cardinals at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, Fox Pittsburgh Steelers at Baltimore Ravens, Noon, CBS Chicago Bears at Detroit Lions, Noon, Fox Jacksonville Jaguars at Houston Texans, Noon, CBS Denver Broncos at Kansas City Chiefs, Noon, CBS Miami Dolphins at New England Patriots, Noon, CBS Indianapolis Colts at New York Giants, Noon, CBS New Orleans Saints at Philadelphia Eagles, Noon, Fox Carolina Panthers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Noon, Fox

Cleveland Browns at Washington Commanders, Noon, Fox

San Francisco 49ers at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., Fox New York Jets at Seattle Seahawks.

3:05 p.m., Fox Minnesota Vikings at Green Bay Packers, 3:25 p.m., CBS

Los Angeles Rams at Los Angeles Chargers, 7:20 p.m., NBC Monday, Jan. 2

Buffalo Bills at Cincinnati Bengals, 7:30 p.m., ESPN/ABC

### **WEEK 18**

Saturday, Jan. 7 or Sunday, Jan. 8 Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Atlanta

Falcons, TBD, TBD New England Patriots at Buffalo Bills, TBD. TBD

Minnesota Vikings at Chicago Bears, TBD, TBD

Baltimore Ravens at Cincinnati Bengals, TBD, TBD

Detroit Lions at Green Bay Packers, TBD, TBD

Houston Texans at Indianapolis Colts, TBD TBD

Tennessee Titans at Jacksonville Jaguars, TBD, TBD

New York Jets at Miami Dolphins,

TBD, TBD Carolina Panthers at New Orleans Saints, TBD, TBD New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles, TBD, TBD Cleveland Browns at Pittsburgh Steelers, TBD, TBD Dallas Cowboys at Washington Commanders, TBD, TBD

Los Angeles Chargers at Denver Broncos, TBD, TBD

Kansas City Chiefs at Las Vegas Raiders, TBD, TBD

Arizona Cardinals at San Francisco 49ers TBD, TBD

Los Angeles Rams at Seattle Seahawks, TBD, TBD

The 2023 NFL Playoffs start with Wild card games on Jan. 14, 2023, and continue through to the AFC and NFC Conference championships games which will take place on Jan. 29, 2023.

### **NFL Playoffs 2023 Key Dates**

Wild-card rounds: Jan. 14-16, 2023 Divisional playoffs: Jan. 21-22, 2023 AFC-NFC Conference championships: Jan. 29, 2023 Pro Bowl: February 5, 2023 Super Bowl LVI: Feb. 12, 2023

### **Wild Card Round**

Saturday, January 14 TBD vs TBD 3:30 PM NBC TBD vs TBD 7:15 PM CBS Sunday, January 15 TBD vs TBD Noon FOX TBD vs TBD 3:30 PM CBS TBD vs TBD 7:15 PM NBC Monday, January 16 TBD vs TBD 7:15 PM ESPN/ABC

The 2023 NFL divisional playoff games will be played on Sat., Jan. 21, and Sun., Jan. 22, 2023. Saturday, January 21 TBD vs TBD 3:30 PM CBS TBD vs TBD 7:15 PM FOX Sunday, January 22 TBD vs TBD 2:00 PM NBC TBD vs TBD 5:30 PM CBS

### Conference Championships

The 2023 AFC conference championship game start time is set at 3:05 p.m. ET on the CBS TV channel location to be determined, and the NFC championship game will start at 6:40 p.m. ET venue to be decided on the FOX TV channel

Sunday, January 29 TBD vs TBD 2:05 PM CBS

TBD vs TBD 5:30 PM FOX

The NFL playoff games will be televised on ESPN, ABC, CBS, and NBC Sports networks. However, FOX has exclusive broadcasting rights for the upcoming NFL championship game on Feb. 12 at State Farm Stadium, Glendale. AZ.

The 2023 Pro Bowl between AFC at NFL all-star game will take place on Feb. 5, 2023, at Citrus Bowl in Orlando. The game will be televised on ESPN, ABC and Disney XD; kickoff at 2 p.m. ET.

### Super Bowl 57 2023! Sunday, Feb. 12 5:30 p.m. ET at State Farm Stadium, Glendale, AZ

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## Destin Dining, Entertainment, Specials

### **Boathouse Oyster Bar**

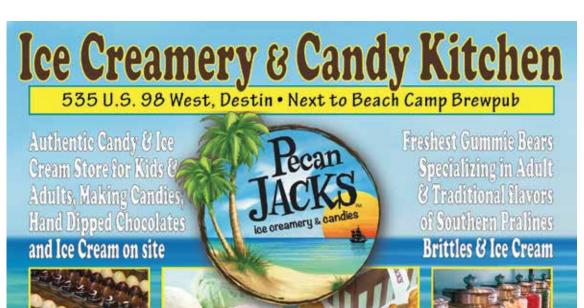
Oysters, Live Music and a Local's Vibe... Destin's best kept secret - the Boathouse is where the locals go, with live music every night. Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, the Boathouse specializes in making oysters a delicacy. Boathouse's gumbo recipe was written by Mama Gumbo herself. And, of course, the oysters are raw, steamed or baked, just the way you like 'em. The first Friday of each month The Boat-

house hosts locals on the Destin Harbor from 5-7 p.m. Listen and move with live entertainment daily. See ad for bands and times. Music schedule subject to change. Follow on FaceBook for updates. (850) 837-3645

288-B Harbor Blvd., Destin Boathouseoysterbardestin.com

### **Café Destin**

Looking for dining the entire family can enjoy? Looking for a place to work with free WiFi while enjoying your cup of coffee? For breakfast and lunch, Café Destin offers an expanded menu serving breakfast staples, such as pancakes, waffles with Nutella, omelets, eggs benedict, biscuits and gravy and more. For a lighter take, it also has a variety of fancy toasts (avocado, salmon and more), along with pastries and muffins. For lunch, choose from a variety of burgers, sandwiches and salads. You will love the full-service coffee shop, offering everything from hot or iced fresh, local Amavida coffee



to espresso and lattés. And there are diverse fresh fruit smoothies and a variety of tantalizing teas.

Check out the special kids menu, too. Indoor and outdoor seating on our large covered patio are both available. You can also book after-hours for private events or special occasions. Open for breakfast and lunch seven days a week from 7 a.m.-2 p.m.

(850) 424-6777 985 US-98 E, Destin cafedestin.com

### Oasis

A heartbreaking fire a few months ago temporarily halted in-restaurant dining. So, until the Oasis restaurant can reopen, Chef Divaldo and Chef Amy offer private dinners, bringing the Oasis experience to you. Choose from their sample menus or they'll create a custom menu

clean-up. You enjoy your time and food with your guests," says Amy. "We can also offer cocktail service to go along with your dinner." Contact Amy, (850) 401-9149, to arrange your dinner party. (850) 401-9149 306 Bald Eagle Dr. theOasisSRB.com or @theOasisSRB on FB **Ovide at Hotel Effie** 

> An elegant, culinary adventure led by acclaimed Georgia chef Hugh Acheson, Ovide brings together classic Gulf Coast flavors and impeccable classic French technique. Every dish is fueled by a passion for sustainability and seasonality that gives each bite incredible flavor unlike anything you've tasted before. Multiple James Beard Award-winning chef Acheson is owner of several acclaimed restaurants and is a Top Chef Masters competitor, Top Chef judge and celebrated cookbook author.

for you. Be it a romantic eve-

ning, a birthday celebration or

a family get together, Oasis will

offer you a unique way to enjoy

a meal. On the day of the din-

ner, Chef will buy the ingredi-

ents, cook them at your house,

serve the meal and leave every-

thing spotless. Dinners typically

include anywhere from three to

five courses on average. "We do

all on-site cooking, serving and

1 Grand Sandestin Blvd. Miramar Beach 32550 (850) 351-3030 HotelEffie.com

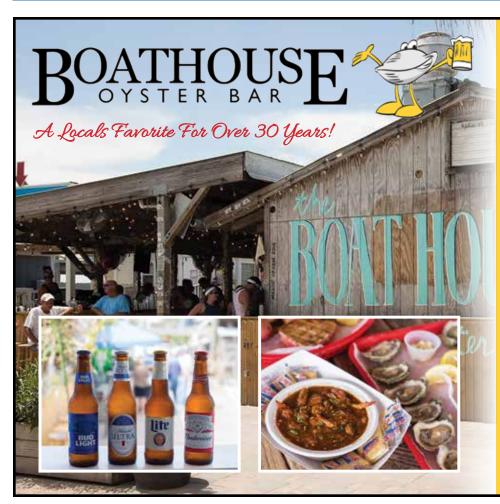
### **The Melting Pot Destin**

New cocktails are comin' in hot at locally-owned Melting Pot Destin! Come sit by the fire (AKA Melting Pot bar) and enjoy new festive drinks such asTiramisu Martini, Snowfall Margarita, or Winter Bourbon Cranberry Bramble. Wow! Also enjoy several fondue cooking styles and a variety of unique entrées, salads and unforgettable desserts. Slow down and talk while you "play" with your four-course choice of six classic cheese dish appetizers, unmelted in a hot, six-inch melting pot. You get to cook your main entrée. For dessert, choose a warm fondue bowl of fresh melted chocolate of your choice.

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Wednesdays:	4pm Hunter & Tony
	9pm Squeely Dan
Thursdays:	4pm Shane Curle
	8pm Austin Jennings
Fridays:	4pm Jason Findley
	8pm Airavata
Saturdays:	12pm Kelly Byrd
	4pm TBD
	8pm Gunner
Sundays:	12pm Kelly Byrd
	4pm TBD
	8pm TBD

Open Daily from 11 am-2 am Lunch Specials M-F for \$9.99 Slacker Sunday Oyster Brunch 11 am

## 288 Harbor Blvd, Destin

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## Destin Diving, Entertainment, Specials

As the familiar sounds of rock and roll from decades past begin to seep from the speakers and the lights slowly rise to bring to life four rock gods that command the stage with a prowess uncommon in today's music industry that leaves the crowd begging for more.

Hailing from Louisville, Ky., the world-famous Velcro Pygmies travel the country from the Emerald Coast to the Great Lakes to share the sights, sounds stage presence. His personality captures and captivates while his ability to take audiences back to their youth keeps bringing them back time after time for a dip in his rock and roll fountain of youth. Eddins also keeps fans enthralled with his unique ever entertaining wit, style, and antics, and wields the drumsticks like a samurai wields a sword. He cuts through the heart and soul of a song with gifted precision and emotion

and stain-washed denim and big hair that's synonymous with the '80s while schooling audiences of all ages on the difference between a rock band and rock show. Simply put, the Velcro Pygmies treat audiences to a genuine, undiluted rock and roll energy that unites every race, creed, age and gender.

Having grown weary of seeing nearly identical bands just staring at their shoes and boring audiences, the Pygmies - comprised of Cam Flener (Vocals), Chris Eddins (Drums), Chase West (Guitar), and Max War (Bass) - decided to bring back the performance elements of rock music that have since been forgotten. From an energetic frontman, pounding drums and loud guitars, to audience participation complete with glitter and blow pops, the Velcro Pygmies deliver a one-of-a-kind show that could be considered the old Van Halen for a new generation.

As the lead vocalist, Flener is the face of the Pygmies who's adored and revered for his onthat can be felt throughout the house. West is known as a guitar god, but he's also known to melt hearts with his charming smile and hunger for a cool buzz, fine women, and tasty licks. He will definitely have you screaming your heart out all night long. And finally, War brings a unique look and feel to the Pygmies, rounding out the foursome.

In addition to the high-energy rock show that only the Pygmies could deliver, they also bring a sense of patriotism that's rarely found in today's rock arena. For nearly a decade, the Pygmies have honored military veterans at each show by displaying flags from those wounded in Afghanistan.

Many may say that the Velcro Pygmies are more than just a band, they are a way of life. With well over a thousand shows under their belt and an army of adoring fans, the Pygmies have set the stage to be one of the most sought-after rock and roll cover bands in the country. Their combination of four-part harmonies, catchy songs, and musical skill and talent is something that can't be missed.

The Velcro Pygmies take the stage at Seaside School's Taste of the Race on Friday, Feb. 17, 2023, on the Seaside Lyceum to kick off the Seaside School Half Marathon & 5K Race Weekend. This year's race is themed "Rockstar Run," and the Pygmies' performance is sure to get everyone in the spirit. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit runseasidefl.com.



Call Today to Book Your In-Home Private Dinner! | **850.401.0149** Visit www.OasisSRB.com for Menus.



Page 28

## Off the Hook: No Boat? No Problem!

By Cali Hlavac, To Do In Destin

Each year at this time, we offer options for fishing in this season that don't necessarily require a boat. In our lucky little fishing village, it may seem that a boat is necessary to catch certain kinds of fish, or a multitude of fish. However, without access to a boat, there are still some great ways that anglers can take advantage of our local fishery (even some who will rent rods if you don't have your own!) Grab your gear as we head out to explore some active spots to fish in Destin.

Probably the most popular and first thought of a fishing spot without a boat is our white sand beaches. With miles stretching across the Emerald Coast, there is no shortage of spots to fish, but a few key factors could help you be more successful. When searching for a spot, look for a more secluded area where there are fewer swimmers. Also, check the water for color changes and wave breaks, as that will signify better feeding spots for the fish. Try to find a spot where two sandbars meet and post up in the middle of them. Popular fish caught off the beach include pompano, redfish, bluefish, ladyfish and jack crevalle.

Pier fishing is another hot spot in our local area, and we have two within driving distance – the Okaloosa Island Pier and the Navarre Beach Pier. Both piers stretch almost a quarter mile into the Gulf of Mexico and anglers of all skill levels can



PHOTO: DESTINFWB.COM

try their luck. Most frequent catches from the pier include Spanish mackerel, whiting, sheepshead, ladyfish and bluefish, but some noteworthy fish have been caught there as well. Cobia, king mackerel, tuna, even tarpon weighing more than 100 pounds and a few sailfish have been pulled up from the water. Redfish and pompano are also frequent catches in this area. Both piers have a tackle shop on site that will also rent rods and reels, so even the novice angler can spend a day trying his luck.

Our county is also working to provide adequate parks for public use, including Thomas Pilcher Park, located under the 331 Bridge. There is plenty of parking, bathrooms, and a variety of spots to cast a line. There is a bait shop down the road before the bridge where you can pick up tackle, bait and anything else you'll need to get started. This is also a good spot to launch a paddleboard or kayak if you want to try fishing the shallow water along the shoreline, around the docks and grass flats.

In any of these locations, the best time of year to fish is from March-November, but fish will bite all year long if we have a warm winter. The bite is also always best when the tide is rising or falling and it's common to see fish start to school up along the beaches.

If you are looking for a little more guidance while fishing, there are a variety of private charters or party boat options available to book in our area. Private charters are a flat rate small group fishing, whereas a party boat is more affordable and priced per person. There are so many affordable ways to enjoy fishing in our lucky fishing village!

### Harvest of Red Grouper and Lane Snapper

Harvest of red grouper and lane snapper reopened in Gulf state waters on Jan. 1, 2023, after early season closures. The Florida Wildlife Commission is collecting critical recreational harvest fishing data to inform management of popular reef fish, including red grouper. The State Reef Fish Survey provides the FWC with a clearer picture of stock health. So, please make sure you are signed up as a State Reef Fish Angler. This designation is required for recreational anglers and spearfishers who intend to fish for or harvest certain reef fish species from a private vessel in Florida. To learn more about the State Reef Fish Sur-

## **Fishing News**

vey, visit MyFWC.com/SRFS.

## Tired of Your Boat? FWC Can Help

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is now accepting applications for a recently approved and newly created Vessel Turn-In Program, a key component of Florida's derelict vessel prevention program.

VTIP is a voluntary program designed to help owners dispose of their unwanted at-risk vessels before they become derelict. Upon approval of an application, VTIP will take a surrendered vessel and dispose of it at no cost to the boat owner. Removing the vessel before it deteriorates into a derelict condition will prevent legal ramifications for the vessel owner and will protect Florida's valuable seagrass resources, marine life and human life, safety, and property.

A derelict vessel upon waters

of the state is a criminal offense and can carry serious penalties and fines or possible jail time.

To qualify for VTIP, a vessel must be floating upon waters of the state of Florida and cannot be determined derelict by law enforcement. The owner must have at least one written at-risk warning or citation and possess a clear title to the vessel.

To apply for or view program guidelines, call the FWC Boating and Waterways Division at (850) 488-5600 for more information.





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## National Recognition for Destin's Personal Rescue Watercraft Program

The Destin Fire Control District (DFCD) has been awarded the Personal Rescue Watercraft Agency Certification by the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA), America's nonprofit professional association of beach lifeguards and open water rescuers. This certification is for agencies that can demonstrate that their personal rescue watercraft programs operate in accordance with the USLA guidelines for Using Personal Watercraft as a Rescue Tool.

The USLA works to reduce

the incidence of death and injury in the aquatic environment through public education, national lifeguard standards, training programs, promotion of high levels of lifeguard readiness, and other means.

For this agency certification, DFCD submitted its application to the USLA National Board Certification Committee Chair for review and was then selected for national accreditation for its Personal Rescue Watercraft Program.

The application was selected



due to DFCD's strenuous standards, as the program not only complies with current USLA guidelines, but exceeds them.

Not only can the employees at DFCD be certified in the use



of Personal Rescue Watercraft, but DFCD can also develop and certify new instructors for a fully sustainable program for years to come.

DFCD was the first agency in

the area to use Personal Watercraft for rescue and, currently, is the only nationally accredited program in the area.

Retired Encinitas Lifeguard Captain Larry Giles, who in 2006 helped the District get started in its PWC program in 2006. Chief Joe D'Agostino and Captain Felix Romero of the Destin Fire Control District have been training employees on the ski's and the arduous tasks of attaining this certification.

### White-Wilson Community Foundation Provides Special Olympics Athletes With Free Sports Physicals

The White-Wilson Community Foundation partnered with Special Olympics Florida to provide free sports physicals to local athletes throughout Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton Counties recently at White-Wilson Medical Center's main campus in Fort Walton Beach.

Volunteers from White-Wilson Medical Center conducted the routine physicals for nearly 30 athletes in need of renewal to ensure they may continue to benefit from Special Olympics training and competition. "The Foundation is thrilled for this opportunity to provide support to members of our community with intellectual disabilities," said Teresa Halverson, Chair of the Board of Directors. "By providing these physicals, we're ensuring that Special Olympic athletes in our area can share their talents and practice active, healthy lifestyles."

Halverson continued, "We strive to provide meaningful opportunities to bolster the health and wellness of everyone in our community. Thanks to Special Olympics Florida and White-Wilson Medical Center, we were able to make that happen today."

Cydnee Parsley, Director of Health, Fitness and Inclusive Strategies at Special Olympics Florida said, "Special Olympics serves children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We offer more than 20 different Olympic-type sports that athletes are able to train and compete in year-round."

Parsley continued, "This is an incredible service to the community, and we're very grateful for the support of The

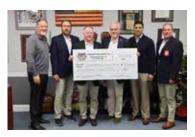
Sport Shorts

This was the first partnership between Special Olympics Florida and The White-Wilson Community Foundation, but the Foundation aims to offer similar events moving forward.

For more information about The White-Wilson Community Foundation and to stay up to date on future events, visit whitewilsoncommunityfoundtion.org or call 850-863-8204.

### All Sports Association Donates \$50,000 to Support Okaloosa Student-Athletes

Since 1970, the All Sports Association (ASA) has supported and honored the "best of the best" High School, Collegiate, Amateur, Professional, and Special Olympic athletes and recognized individuals who have fostered youth activities in Northwest Florida. The ASA, made up of dues-paying volunteers, has donated their time and raised money for non-profit organizations emphasizing local youth sports programs. This year, the ASA has made a generous donation of \$50,000 to the Okaloosa County Public Schools Foundation to improve school-sanctioned sports activities for high school and middle school athletic programs in Okaloosa County. "On behalf of the members of the All Sports Association and its many sponsors it is our pleasure to be able to provide funding to help the many sports programs in the Okaloosa County School District. We look forward to continuing this support in the years to come," stated Gary McCoy, All Sports President. In partnership with the ASA, the Public Schools Foundation has been able to secure \$15,000 in additional matching



funds to support health and fitness among our student athletes.

As a result of these generous donations, each of the district's middle and high school athletic programs will receive \$4,642.86 to use in areas of greatest need as determined by the leadership at each school. "We are grateful for the continued support of the All Sports Association who continually make a difference and positively impact the lives of our student-athletes, our community, and beyond," stated Superintendent Marcus Chambers.



## Page 30

## Wellness



By Lisa Turpin, Health & Wellness Coach

According to the American College of Sports Medicine's annual international survey of 4,500 health and fitness professionals, released Dec. 28, **Wearable Technology** will be the top global fitness trend in 2023. The fitness professionals were

## Going into 2023, Wearable Tech #1 and In-Person Fitness Grows

polled on 42 potential trends, and ACSM reported on the top 20.

"Wearables are certainly not going anywhere," ACSM Past President Walter R. Thompson, who served as the lead author of the survey, said in the media release. "Not only are these devices becoming more affordable, but wearable data is increasingly being used in clinical decision making so they are continuing to hold their appeal."

According to the survey, as the COVID-19 pandemic decreases in severity, **Online Training** 



850-974-2005

**f** LisaTurpinFitness has decreased in popularity, falling off of this year's list. In 2020, online training came in at No. 26, but it jumped to the top trend in 2021. However, in 2022 it dropped to No. 9, and the 2023 survey put it at No. 21. The decline of this trend is tied to the fact individuals are returning to the gym,

and in many cases abandoning their home gyms. According to ACSM, the Home Exercise Gyms trend dropped in the ranks to No. 13 in 2023 from No. 2 in 2022. Exercisers seem to be returning to the basics in a more post-pandemic world, based on other surveys as well. **Strength Training with Free** Weights is No. 2 this year and Body Weight Training is No. 3. Core and Circuit Training still make the top 20 at Nos. 11 and 12. Variety is always a great idea and it's great to see these trends stay important.

**High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)** remained relatively stable, regardless of the changes brought by COVID-19. For example, HIIT was the No. 1 trend in both 2014 and 2018, and now No. 7 in 2022 and 2023. This shows HIIT is still very



popular and effective. Fitness **Programs for Older Adults** has been an important trend for years. These active agers are entering retirement and adopting a lifestyle that focuses on fitness. In 2018 it was No. 9, No. 4 in 2019, No. 8 in 2020, No. 9 in 2021, No. 11 in 2022 and now No. 4 in 2023. Doctors are encouraging physical fitness for older adults to increase quality of life, joint mobility and strength. Personal **Training** remains stable in the top 10 also, as I have experienced first-hand; exercisers are taking their health and exercise safety more importantly post pandemic scare.

### The top 20 global trends for 2023, according to the survey are:

Wearable Technology
 Strength Training with Free



### Weights

- 3) Body Weight Training4) Fitness Programs for
- Older Adults 5) Functional Fitness Train
  - ing
  - 6) Outdoor Activities7) High-Intensity Interval
  - Training (HIIT) 8) Exercise for Weight Loss
- 9) Employing Certified Fitness Professionals
- 10) Personal Training
- 11) Core Training
- 12) Circuit Training
- 13) Home Exercise Gyms
- 14) Group Exercise Training
- 15) Exercise Is Medicine
- 16) Lifestyle Medicine
- 17) Yoga
- 18) Licensure for Fitness Professionals
- 19) Health/Well-Being Coaching
- 20) Mobile Exercise Apps

The full list of top 20 trends is available in the article "Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends for 2023." You can also access key takeaways from the global rankings for Australia, Brazil, Europe, Mexico, Portugal, Spain and the United States in "2023 Fitness Trends from around the Globe."

Lisa Leath Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach and consultant who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the body and mind of others. With over 20 years' experience, Lisa has a B.S. degree in Sports & Fitness Management from the University of Alabama, developed and managed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Health & Wellness Facility and programs in Huntsville, Ala., is board certified by the National Board of Fitness Examiners and possesses certifications from AFAA, Polestar/ Balanced Body, Reebok U, SCW Fitness and American Heart Association. She is currently a group exercise leader at Destin Health & Fitness and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, diversely and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation. Have a fitness question for Lisa? Email BeActive850@gmail.com.



Get the Smile You Deserve Smile with Confidence Again

- · Are you embarrassed about smiling in front of people?
- Do you ever put your hand up to cover your smile?
- Do you dislike your smile in photographs?
- When you look through magazines, do you envy the models' smiles?
- Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
- Would you like to change the way your teeth or gums are shaped?Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?
- If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, you

may be a good candidate for A Smile Makeover.



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BY RICHARD CHERN M.D.

There seems to be a misconception that testicles are supposed to work forever while ovaries go through menopause. Unfortunately, this is not true. Men routinely ask me what they can do or take to naturally bring their testosterone levels back to normal. There is NOTHING

over-the-counter and NOTH-ING you can do on your own to increase testosterone to optimal levels for health and symptom relief.

Men eventually go through ANDROPAUSE which is basically male menopause. This typically occurs between age 35 and 55 but can occur earlier. This process occurs slowly and symptoms creep into our lives unnoticed until they begin affecting those around us. Symptoms include weight gain, lack of energy, irritability, fatigue, loss of libido, erectile dysfunction, loss of muscle mass, reduced exercise tolerance, weight gain, impaired memory, poor concentration, nervousness, depression, insomnia, sweating and the feeling that you are past your prime. Is it any wonder that men go through a midlife crisis?

**Hormone Therapy for Men** 

Testing is easy. We can provide a lab order for you to take to your lab or we can draw your blood at any of our offices. We look at testosterone and other labs that are often affected by low testosterone levels.

Treating low testosterone can reduce or eliminate every symptom discussed above; but not all treatments are the same. Some treatments improve symptoms and improve health.

Some treatments improve symptoms, but increase the risk for disease and death. For example, research shows that testosterone shots can increase risk for heart attacks, strokes and death from heart disease. The risks are not the same for every form of testosterone replacement. We use bio-identical testosterone replacement that can help reduce the risk of aggressive prostate cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, muscle loss, osteoporosis and much more.

In addition, estrogen levels are vitally important in the proper treatment of andropause.

Unfortunately, many physicians forget to consider this issue or some incorrectly block estrogen production which increases the risk for disease and death.

There are many considerations when treating low testosterone in men; treatment MUST be individualized. Treating testosterone properly should not only resolve your symptoms, but also improve your health. We do this every day and are certified in the use of bio-identical hormones in men and women for the treatment of andropause, menopause and many other conditions.

## Fore Her Announces Expanded Annual Pink Walk & 5k

The Pink Walk Benefiting Fore Her is back and better than ever! The event, which takes place on Saturday, Jan. 28, at The Village of Baytowne Wharf, will introduce a timed 5k race in addition to the Survivor Stroll and annual Walk.

The community is invited to walk or run with friends and family, wear pink and have fun while raising funds for breast cancer patients in financial need. Attendees will enjoy an after party with music, a photo booth, prizes and food samples. All registered breast cancer survivors can enjoy the VIP Survivors' Lounge featuring special treats including hand massages, and more.

"For the first time, this will be an actual 5k along with our annual Survivor Stroll," said Jennifer Crawford, vice president of Fore Her Board of Directors.

Registration for the Pink Walk & 5K is now open online at ForeHer.org/PinkWalk5k.

Early Bird 5k registration starts at \$50 through Dec. 31 and then increases to \$60 in the new year. Those who register through Dec. 31 will receive a free Pink Walk T-shirt. Fore Her offers a discounted rate of \$45 to register for breast cancer survivors and the Survivor Stroll is free to participate for survivors.

Packet pickup will be at The Village of Baytowne Wharf on Friday, Jan. 27, from 3 to 5 p.m. and Saturday, Jan. 28, starting at 7 a.m. Day of registration will also be available from 7 to 8 a.m. The 5k will start on Saturday at 8:30 a.m.



"To our local community, we need YOU!," adds Crawford. "We are looking for sponsors, donors, walkers, and runners looking to have fun and raise funds to help breast cancer patients along the Emerald Coast."

For more information, and available sponsorship opportunities, visit pinkwalk5k.org or email ali@weilhousecreative.com.

Founded by Amy Walsh after her mother and aunt lost their battle with breast cancer, Fore Her was initially conceived as an annual golf benefit to assist local women battling breast cancer with the financial burden of the disease, but as the need grew, the nonprofit expanded to host three an-



Restoration Center

Look Healthy, Feel Alive

nual events to raise funds to continue to support those affected in Northwest Florida. Funds raised are used to provide temporary assistance with bills such as mortgage or rent payments, utilities or helping pay for auto repairs so patients can get to treatments.

Fore Her offers resources, hope, compassion and education for all who are affected by breast cancer. Find additional information about volunteering, available resources, and how you can help, visit www.ForeHer.org.

## Remember feeling young? Feel it AGAIN!

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Thank you Destin!

**Dr. Richard Chern, MD** 12889 Hwy 98W, Suite 107B Miramar Beach, FL 850-837-1271

thehormonerestorationcenter.com

## 🔅 Wellness

### By Kay Leaman, Health Architect

Welcome to 2023! Now that our holiday celebrations are over, we're falling back into the routines of daily life. However, I'd like to challenge you to start something new.

Let's digress. The mind is amazing and it will give us exactly what we focus on. A speaker at a conference I attended told us "Stop telling yourself I can't because it's not true. What you're really saying is I won't." Ouch!! That definitely created some serious internal truth telling to everyone within earshot.

Take someone who has a gluten allergy (celiac disease). They tell themselves they can't but in reality they do have the choice to eat gluten or avoid it. They can eat it and experience the consequences or choose something else. This is also true for those with other health issues, and in many other areas of our life. In regards to health, we can eat whatever we want. It's not about I can't stop, or I can't do, or I don't have – it's about asking ourselves if we''ll be happy with the consequences of our choices.

Let It Go in 2023

Now, back to our topic. Our resolutions are usually filled with goals but how many of us sit down and draw out a plan of how we're going to accomplish them? How many keep those resolutions in plain site and revisit them on a regular basis? It's time to start a fire and celebrate as we burn our resolutions. Bring out a new piece of paper and title it "Let It Go."

What do you want to let go of this year? Think about:

Letting go of resolutions and create a list of possibilities.

Letting go of "I can't" and start with "I choose."

Self-Care Corner



Letting go of "I don't have time" and find the spaces in my 16 hour days.

Letting go of "I hate exercise" and embracing "exercise multiplies my benefits." It feels really good to let go and even better to take charge.

So, are you ready to let it go and start something new? Here's to health!

HealthyDay HealthyLife succeed.hdhl@gmail.com



## By Krisy Whitely Anderson

Did you get a Beverly Hills Day Spa gift certificate for Christmas? If so, winter is a great time for Microneedling.

What is that you say? Also known as collagen induction therapy (CIT) and percutaneous collagen induction (PCI), microneedling is a cost-effective, minimally-invasive treatment for a number of skin conditions. In the past few years, it has increased in popularity due to its ability to improve skin texture and firmness, and diminish scars, pore size and stretch marks. One of the greatest benefits of microneedling is that it can be used anywhere on the body to improve texture, reduce scarring and diminish the look of discoloration. Even areas such as the delicate skin around the eyes can be treated (carefully!) as well as on sunken areas of the skin such as acne scars. It's also safe for treating fine lines, wrinkles and scars. Because the epidermis remains intact, the procedure can be repeated safely and is also suited to skin areas where laser treatments and deep chemical peels are not typically performed, such as around the eyes and mouth, hands and chest. These controlled injuries trigger the skin's natural repair processes, stimulating collagen and elastin production. The technique involves a

series of small needles passed over selected treatment areas, creating tiny "micropunctures." This minor "injury" to the skin generates a healing response producing collagen and other skin building blocks that can improve color and texture.

The pores created by the microneedles can make more effective other topical therapies such as antioxidants and lightening creams. Because it keeps the skin's protective barrier essentially intact, treatment with micro-needling has less risk of adverse effects than other skin resurfacing procedures and is safer to use in patients with naturally darker skin types.

Treatments are quick, with only mild discomfort. Recovery time is minimal; return to school or work next-day with only mild redness. As with most in-office procedures, microneedling will increase your skin's sensitivity to the sun; so this is a great time to do it.

I use a pen with a new head for each client and recommend a series of three sessions at time when sun exposure will be minimal. You'll see gradual improvement after each session.

Visit www.beverlyhillsdayspa.com or call me at (850) 654-8544 to book your skin-tightening treatment. 114 Palmetto Dr., Suite 6, Destin, 32541, on Tuesday – Saturday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.

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## A Different Approach to The New Year

By TODD CRAIG, JOURNEY BRAVELY

The journey from November to January can leave us feeling emotional whiplash from mixed messages of one celebration to the next. November is spent reflecting on gratitude. In December, we receive messaging that life is better if we give or receive the perfect gift. After opening gifts and receiving the "thing we've always wanted," our attention turns to the new year and ways to make it different or better than last year.

This year, I am taking a different approach. I have spent much of my adult life striving for more and believing satisfaction and joy were right around the corner blinded to the reasons for joy I already have. This year I am choosing to live from a place of "enough." I am beginning each day believing, "I am enough. I have enough. There is nothing to prove, there is only to enjoy."

### **7 Practices for Growing Contentment & Enjoying Your Present Life** The problem with "good enough"

The words we use with others and ourselves matter. When someone says, "Oh, that is good enough," it can sound like settling or resignation. Being con-

tent is not the same as settling. There is a difference between saying life is "good enough" and saying, "life is good, and it is enough." I will pay attention to the words I say to myself and others and the affect they have on my view of life.

### The importance of gratitude

We often spend energy striving to attain something we already have. Satisfaction, inner peace, joy, and contentment don't require us attaining anything other than gratitude for what we already have. I will actively develop the discipline of gratitude.

## **Comparison is a thief**

Comparison causes us to focus on what we don't have at the expense of enjoying what we already have and creates a race without a finish line. Comparison only robs us of joy and positive energy in our present life. I will live my own life and not judge it in comparison to others.

### **Quiet the noise**

We are bombarded with messaging from Hollywood, Wallstreet, and social media that we aren't enough and don't have enough. Social media originates from neighbors and "regular"

people making it difficult to discern projection from reality. I will turn off or unfollow messaging that makes me feel inadequate or bad about myself or my life so I can live the life I want, not the life others say I should want.

### What if you have nothing to prove?

Our culture invites us into competitions we can't win. Immediately after championship games, talking heads begin comparing this year's championship team to those of the past. But, the powerful truth is we get to decide whether we will compete by culture's rules or whether we will decide we have nothing to prove. In sports, when there is nothing to prove, we get to enjoy the game. In business, when there is nothing to prove, we get to enjoy creating and serving others. And, when there is nothing to prove in life, we get to enjoy every day and breath as a gift. When there is nothing to prove, there is only to enjoy. I will develop the discipline of celebrating and enjoying every step on the journey rather than waiting for my arrival at some arbitrary destination.

## **Everyone is limited**

Life is often spent trying to live beyond limitations. We be-

gin repetitiously saying or thinking, "I don't have enough time," or "I don't have enough energy." Eventually this becomes "I am not enough." In truth, we are all limited beings. This is not a flaw; it is part of being human. Acknowledging our limits may be what frees us to a better life and a better version of ourselves. defeat because of them.

## Begin from a

Living from a place of enough isn't the same as settling. Contentment and growth aren't mutually exclusive. As we look for

opportunities to grow, the question becomes: Is our journey beginning from a place of scarcity and discontentment or a place of abundance? Discontentment can be a short-term fast-burn fuel for growth, but it may soon lead to disappointment. Contentment and believing you are and have enough is a long burn fuel for growth that won't run out. I will continue to grow and improve, not because I must but because I can.

As you pursue more contentment in life, connect with us for support along your journey at Journeybravely.com.





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I will joyfully live within my limitations rather than resigning in

## place of abundance

## Wellness

## What Do Teenagers Want?

### By Michelle Ruschman

Teenagers in this era are called "snowflakes," being but to resort to name calling is dismissive of their very real modern-day challenges and overlooks the depth of their compassion. Policymakers, the entertainment industry, and social media influencers have also worked to downgrade parental authority, and this has created further divide. Not knowing where to turn for leadership, it's no wonder our kids feel misunderstood, confused, scared, stressed and depressed. More than ever, it's imperative we don't give away the authority entrusted to us as parents and guardians.

While we understand that there are universal teen struggles that cross all generations, Gen Z is growing up in a period of such rapid technological innovation that information is more accessible than any other time in history. And this information is being accessed faster than the wisdom to manage it can be attained. With this in mind, parents are not just raising kids to become adults. Communities are raising future neighbors, teachers, corporate leaders, spiritual shepherds, and consumers.

So how can we help them launch well? We start by finding out what they want us to know.

Teens from 13 to 18 are invited to fill out a survey that has been published through Google Docs. The survey asks participants a variety of questions about relationships, communication, and how they view their place in the world, with all answers being submitted anonymously. Over a series of articles, these responses will be quoted and summarized as each question is shared in upcoming publications. My hope is these answers will provide an opening to critical conversations that help build stronger bridges between all generations. If you have a teen who would like to participate, there will be information at the end of the article for them to do so

Question 1: What do you wish adults were aware of about your experience as a teen?

Not everyone is the same. To make sense of our world, there is a tendency to lump together groups of people, not only by generation but based on single-word identities. Like all of us, our teens want to be seen as individuals and understood for who they are in their totality. A common frustration was being treated in ways that were based on comparison. One participant shared, I am not my parents or siblings and another elaborated, I wish that they (parents) understood that our experiences are



not universal, and we are all trying to navigate them in our way. I know others may make bad decisions, but that doesn't mean we all will.

People need help sometimes. Our kids are dealing with so many hard issues. On top of the pandemic, drugs are more insidious, sex and sexuality are relentlessly built into media and marketing, our culture exalts high achievers and there is access to news and people 24-7. As one teen put it, Mental health issues are more common than you think, especially with social media and pressure from school and college and just everyday life. Another shared, Yes, I have grown up early but at the expense of my mental health. Something really good that has come from the last couple of decades, however, is the awareness of mental health needs, the growing support to seek out help, and the growing number of resources. Many teens are more comfortable about accepting help when it's offered. Par-

ents are also realizing they don't have to have all the answers and can build a community of people these kids can turn to, in whatever combinations are best for the family. These can include more one-on-one time with a parent, interaction with a variety of family members, traditional counseling, youth groups at church, coaches and teammates, co-workers or sponsors and club members. What the kids are asking for the most is an outlet to process out loud, ask questions and get some guidance.

I don't feel like I can ask about serious things. It is especially hard when they know these conversations could be content for their parents' posts and social media reels. One participant wants us to know how to approach teens about topics like suicide, rape, drugs, sex and adulthood but goes on to mention that how we respond is just as important as being available. I wish they would react to my questions and concerns in a non-demeaning way and help. Don't broadcast it or make me feel lesser than you because I don't know. I don't want to be treated differently or put down for asking.

We don't always know how to respond well at the moment, especially if our initial reactions include fear and anger. If it's a particularly hard conversation, it's okay to say you need a moment to think about their question, as long as you go back to the conversation. An additional note would be to remember that these hard conversations aren't necessarily coming from exposure or participation. Just as many will come from what they've observed or heard, curiosity, or a need for clarity. Questions will serve you much more than statements.

Teens must be teens. This one was interesting because the common theme for these answers centered around freedom and their willingness to go through the consequences of mistakes. Teen years encompass this paradoxical place of being under the dependence and authority of guardians, but with the expectation of being more capable and independent. The teen spirit wants to explore and expand while still being able to land in the safety net of an adult's ultimate responsibility. As the authority in the home, you get to decide what you're able to take responsibility for, what freedoms your teen has

Continued on next page



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Environment

## **ECES Partners With Awning, Screen Manufacturer**



## BY CHRIS BALZER, ECES

ECES (Emerald Coast Energy Solutions) has announced it has partnered with SunPro products out of Bradenton, which is a top manufacturer of motorized awnings and screens. I'm not a very excitable person, however; when it comes to increasing comfort, I get excited.

I personally have gone through several 10-foot hand crank umbrellas in my backyard. They are expensive, take up space and you can never find that perfect color. We have a solution. Our motorized aw-

## **ENERGY TIPS** by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

nings have hundreds of colors to match any design and several custom lengths to fit any lifestyle. We also include built in dimmable LED lights to enhance the outdoor nightlife, integrated cassette housing, I call it the garage, which protects the awning fabric from weather damage, extending the life of the fabric and looks sleek when retracted. Each awning comes with a wireless remote and builtin wind sensors. Wind sensors are a necessity; once triggered, the wind sensor retracts the awning automatically, ensuring the awning and your home stay protected. With a touch of a button, you will enjoy your outdoor space day or night. There are also many add-on options available, but most just enjoy the features which are included in our packages.

Another option to create an outdoor escape are motorized screens. With a custom motorized screen you can increase your comfort and style, indoor and out. Lifestyle options include insect protection, weather protection that creates an attractive defense to the elements without hindering your view, privacy protection, which maintains superior ventilation, outward visibility and the ability to retract the screens with the touch of a button. If your home is located on a golf course or close to your neighbor and





you want to enjoy relaxing in your pool or backyard without the world watching, just a click of a button, instant privacy. Or if you wanted to upgrade that garage space with a motorized screen which allows that breeze to come in and creates privacy, just a click of a button. Wouldn't that be incredible? So if you are looking to create or enhance your outdoor escape with a custom motorized awning or screen, give us a call and we can explore the options together.

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions which is a Smile Provider Company. We provide smiles to our customers after installing our high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save and become energy efficient, schedule an appointment by calling (850) 588-2870, visit www.trusteces.com or email wecare@trusteces.com and Beat the Heat.

## TEENAGERS

continued from previous page

earned through previous decisions, and what experiences you want them to have to go into the next chapter.

I wish they would keep in mind what their life was like when they were my age, and treat me the way they wanted to be treated. When I was a teen, I spent a lot of days just wanting to scream into a pillow. I had so much stuff in me and nowhere to put it. One teen had this advice and I relate, even as an adult. Some days we aren't ourselves. Just take a deep breath and please give us second chances to become better.

There are also several of us yelling in the home, including yours truly. It's never a proud mom moment for me but when my daughter calls me out for raising my voice, I reply, "Then respond when I'm not!" Does anyone else relate? Many teens agree with my daughter though as one said, Yelling is never the right way to discipline your children and another shared. I would rather be talked to calmly when I'm in trouble, so I won't feel the need to ignore what my parents are saying. Oof. If yelling makes our kids shut down or retreat, we're not going to be

School is stressful and hard. For the kids who are going to public and private schools, these answers encompass both the academic and social stress that our kids are having to navigate. One answer reminded us how many worlds they have to live in. Balancing school life, social life, online life and just pure mental health life IS HARD! You have to try to stay balanced

bridge builders by getting louder.

belong. As we raise these kids there is always the temptation to keep pushing for more but what if they're already at capacity? School is hard. Just because I'm not doing fantastic, it doesn't mean I'm lazy and it doesn't mean I'm not trying. Maybe a B is the best I can do. Amid all the noise, our teens long for grace, guidance and encouragement. There is a lot of pressure, and one (positive) word can make a difference. In future articles, you'll hear more about the heart of our teens as they discuss music, communication, feelings, relationships, and look to the future. For the teens who have already participated, thank you. You're amazing. For those who would like to participate, you can go to the questionnaire by using the QR code below.

You can also use the link, shorturl.at/npr79. For any questions, please email me at michelleruschman@gmail.com.





## 🐲 Pets

## **Reasons for Runaway Rovers**

By STEVE KOTOWSKE

The news feeds are fraught with stories of missing, run away dogs lately. There are many reasons why dogs run away, so I wanted to share some tips to help keep your dog safe at home. Not one of those tips involves a toy filled with peanut butter!

I found some interesting facts while studying this subject, including which breed runs away the most... the beloved labrador retriever. There is no single reason or even top 10 reasons why a dog runs away that everyone can agree on. It is different for every dog, and since they cannot tell you why they took off, we are left with making assumptions. While every dog is different, there are some key things that will help with most dogs.

If we assume correctly, we can start with **boredom**. Dogs can become quite bored and look for attention elsewhere. You probably have seen this while walking your dog through your neighborhood. They pull the leash seeking attention from others or sniffing everything.

Dogs have powerful noses and an instinct for hunting. They can become enticed to follow their nose just by the change of wind direction that carries a scent they become interested in.

They also have prey drive, which, in simple terms, is about something moving. They decide to uncontrollably chase something of interest to them. Some enjoy the chase by itself, while others enjoy the kill. They are dogs, after all. Some become distracted by the next odor or squirrel or bicycle, and now they are lost, unable to get back home. Then they find something to engage with and their play drive takes over. This is fun! All the while drifting further from "home", and feeling satisfied at the same time. Three simple drives... hunt, prey, and play. Did you know you can satisfy these drives safely at home by playing games with your dog?

Fear and anxiety is another major reason dogs run away. Loud, unexpected noises are the top reason that July 4th is the greatest night of escaping dogs. This is because those dogs don't





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feel safe. Fear blocks out reasoning skills, which dogs have far less of than you might think. It is about self-preservation, and should not be taken lightly. Some dogs just hide under a bed, while others take to flight to avoid facing the fear. You've heard "fight or flight," and some dogs lack the ability to fight their fears. You can help your dog immensely by not loving the confidence out of them and by playing games to help them adapt to noises. Correct socialization is largely about exposure, teaching your dog how to not react to changes in stimuli.

Hormones are another reason dogs leave your yard or home. They get worked up and want to breed. It is hardwired into their system just like humans. And like humans, some have more desire than others. Some dogs cannot control those desires because they lack impulse control. The easy answer is to spay/neuter, but it is definitely not without some cost. Those same hormones help your dog with adaptability and overcoming fear and even lend

themselves to strengthening impulse control. Data on early spay/neuter is also shown to create more problems with fear of strangers and other dogs, so you might be compounding a problem. Everyone has to weigh out the risks and benefits for themselves. It is a hotly contested topic, filled with misinformation and the myth that it will "fix" your dog. It eliminates procreation, but is not the blanket fix most people are hoping for.

There is an interesting fact about stray dogs becoming feral that you should take note of. After 28 days of a dog not having a connection with a human, it begins to cycle backwards into a feral state. "Feral" means to fear humans, to not rely on them, to revert to a wild natural state. This really happens and is why so many strays are afraid of people. Rescue groups often assume abuse, but the reality is many dogs are just rolling back time. Neglecting a dog by not spending quality time with it, satisfying its needs and drives can also trigger this anti-domestication impulse in dogs. Since dogs are

not highly intelligent animals, this is just a natural regressive response for survival. It hardly looks like survival through human eyes, but it is what they are wired with.

Training your dog for impulse control, crating your dog for keeping it **safe**, **playing** with your dog properly to satisfy drives, building confi**dence** in your dog rather than creating more anxious behavior are the keys to keeping your dog safe and at home. There is no single "fix." It is multi-faceted. Dogs may not be the smartest creatures (although we tend to wrongly believe they are), but they are still very complex. You must meet their needs. They were not always domesticated, YOU must create a relationship with them. YOU must lead them. YOU must maintain the relationship to keep it healthy.

We all seek a "loyal companion" in our dogs. Loyalty comes with a price in any relationship - love is not enough, it takes AC-TION! Now that will preach!

www.whatsupdogfl.com

## VISIT MYDESTINLIFE.COM TO READ THIS ISSUE ONLINE



### Let's Get Growing with Larry

BY LARRY WILLIAMS, UF/IFAS EXTENSION AGENT, OKALOOSA

#### Care of Freeze-Injured Citrus Trees

Recent widespread hard freezes more than likely resulted in damage to many of the citrus trees in Northwest Florida. Cold damage will become more evident as we move into the spring and summer.

It is best to take a "wait and see" approach and delay pruning and fertilization until new growth occurs the following growing season. Here is sound advice taken from the UF/IFAS Extension publication Freeze Damage Symptoms and Recovery for Citrus

"The true extent of freeze damage to branches may not be clear within the first few months following a freeze. No attempt should be made to prune or even assess freeze damage until the new spring flush gets fully expanded and mature. Therefore, no pruning should be done until late in the spring or during the summer after a freeze. In early spring, freeze-damaged trees often produce new growth that soon dies back. Sufficient time should be given for the dying back to cease and for the new healthy growth to take place and fully expand."

Twigs and branches may continue to die for up to two years following a severe freeze.

This was an early hard-freeze. Temperatures fluctuate throughout our North Florida

winters, which can extend into March. Be careful to not do anything to stimulate new growth too soon, while winter is still with us.

Unless the soil becomes dry, be careful not to water cold injured citrus trees during warm periods that often follow freezes. Later on, in spring when the damaged tree is putting on new growth, it's okay to give it a little water.

If it appears that you've lost half the tree in a freeze, you'll only need to apply about half as much fertilizer. If you have a situation where many leaves were lost but twigs and branches were not injured, you'll need to slightly increase the amount of fertilizer. But wait until after new growth has occurred come spring. It's a good idea to make frequent light applications rather than one heavy application.

Roots on trees, including citrus, extend two to three times beyond the tree's branches. As a result, citrus tree roots may grow out into the lawn. Tree roots in the lawn can easily take up the lawn fertilizer. Your lawn and citrus trees do not need to be stimulated by nitrogen fertilizer during winter, potentially resulting in tender new growth that can be injured by the next freeze. Wait to fertilize your lawn until mid-April in North Florida.

Here are two links to UF/ IFAS Extension publications with more information on dealing with cold-injured citrus.



https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ publication/CH004, https:// edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/ HS1275

#### Christmas Plants Can Be Enjoyed Beyond the Holidays

Christmas cactus, poinsettia and amaryllis are some of the flowering holiday plants that can be kept for enjoyment after the holidays are gone.

These plants require bright, indirect light. They should be placed close to a sunny window and turned once a week to prevent them from leaning toward the light. In rooms with poor light, place your plants under incandescent or fluorescent lamps, but not too close to incandescent light due to the excessive heat.

Keep temperature cool for best results with plants associat-

ed with the holidays. Ideal temperatures are lower than found in most homes. But your plants should do well if the day temperature range is 65 to 75 degrees fahrenheit, but cooler at night.

It's important to keep the plants evenly moist. This includes the Christmas cactus since it is not a typical cactus. Avoid moisture extremes of letting the plants become bone-dry or waterlogged.

The flowers will eventually fade on your holiday plants. Once this happens, remove the faded flowers. This will improve the appearance and prevent the plant from setting seed, which will provide more energy for growth.

The poinsettia eventually will begin dropping its leaves. This is normal. The plant is going into a resting stage. When it begins to drop its leaves, decrease watering until you're watering only enough to keep the root and stems from drying out excessively. In April, prune the stems to about six inches, resume normal watering, fertilize and place where it will get plenty of light but not direct sun. Forcing poinsettias to re-flower for the Christmas season can be a challenge within the average home environment.

With amaryllis, each flower lasts only a few days. But since multiple flowers are produced, plants may remain in flower for a week or more. After the last flower fades, remove the bloom stalk. Leaves begin to emerge at flowering and continue to elongate after flowering when additional leaves may appear. It is essential that the leaves remain on the bulb so that it can manufacture foods needed for re-flowering. It should be kept under high indoor light and watered and fertilized regularly.

When the danger of frost has passed, amaryllis can be placed outdoors and grown under light shade. By late summer the leaves will begin to die and the bulb enters a resting stage. Reduce watering, store in a cool dry place and allow the bulb to rest two to three months. Resume watering and the plant should re-flower in four to six weeks. Amaryllis can also be planted outside in our climate and will re-flower each year with proper maintenance.



#### Section 8

### Almost \$22M In BP Oil Spill Funds to Double Size of NWFSC Nursing Program

By Christopher Saul, MIDBAYNEWS.COM

It's the largest single amount of money ever given to Northwest Florida State College. But, don't expect any buildings to be named after the people responsible for the money.

Northwest Florida State College received a grant for \$21.8 Million, the largest amount ever given to the college, from a pot of money from BP as restitution for the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill over a decade ago.

The money was authorized by Triumph Gulf Coast – a non-profit corporation whose officers are appointed by the Florida Governor. The Board of the company voted to distribute

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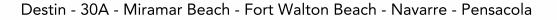




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money from the fund to allow projects like this to take place.

"Tis the season," said Northwest Florida State College President Devin Stephenson about the announcement on Twitter, "Yesterday, [Northwest Florida State College] was awarded \$21.8M by Triumph Gulf Coast to double the capacity of our nationally-recognized nursing program – Largest award in our history!"

#### What Does the Money Get Us?

The United States, particularly Florida, faces a critical nursing shortage. According to an application packet submitted by the College for the grant – the state of Florida is currently short about 52,000 nurses and will see that gap widen to 59,000 by 2035.

The college's proposal invests the \$21 Million into renovations to facilities, marketing to potential nursing candidates, and remodeling buildings to reduce the deficit over the next 12 years of the project's lifespan.

The College's proposal claims the program will pump out a total of 2,664 accredited nurses from its pipeline over the next decade. Of those nurses, roughly 1,460, or 54.8%, will be due to the expansion.

The College believes with the money received from Triumph Gulf Coast, they will be able to get an additional 546 Associates in Nursing and 256 Bachelor of Nursing students to pass their boards and move into the workforce. Without the money, there would be 802 fewer nurses graduating over that period.

The greatest cost for the program (valued at a total of \$43.6 Million over the next twelve years) will be the remodeling of the nursing building on Campus

at Northwest Florida State. According to the grant application, the building was built more than 50 years ago and is in need of a retrofit. This is the list of the costs for the program over the next decade or so:

\$22 Million – Renovations \$16.7 Million – Personnel \$3.5 Million – Equipment

\$900,000 - Furniture

\$625,000 – Marketing and Recruitment

\$330,000 – Professional Development

The overhaul of the building and the equipment within will be partially subsidized by a private company, Vertex Solutions. Vertex, A Niceville-Based Defense Firm, will donate research and development to the building that is worth in the neighborhood of \$2.5 Million. This will consist largely of an "architecture learning framework that supports the implementation of learning products with a variety of backend services, including Learning Management Systems, automated student performance analysis tools, scenario development and other instructors tools."

In English, this means that it will help train and test future nurses better and allow them to learn more while they are still in school through skills and scenario-based training.

According to the conditions laid out by Triumph Gulf Coast in their paperwork to take the grant – NWFSC can't use the money they are given as a part of this grant to fund general or administrative overhead.

Nursing students at Northwest Florida State College Practice their skills in one of the college's older nursing facilities. Upgrades will mean more students will be attracted to the program (the college hopes).

The number of graduates for associates in nursing is expected to more than double over the next decade - thanks to the grant from Triumph Gulf Coast.

Program Costs for Nursing Program Upgrade at NWFSC. AS you might have guessed, the main cost drivers are the upgrades to the facilities and salaries.

### **OCSD Marcus Chambers & District Programs Highlighted by FADSS**

We are pleased to announce that Okaloosa County Schools Superintendent Marcus Chambers was recently recognized by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) for his accomplishments during his tenure. In addition, several innovative district programs and awards were mentioned, which included the following:

The Okaloosa County School District (OCSD) was one of 38 school systems worldwide to receive the Cognia's District of Distinction award.

OCSD has returned to an authentic and meaningful School Performance Plans (SPPs) process to ensure each school's goals are apparent and coming to full fruition.

Increased District focus on professional development op-



portunities for administrators designed to empower communication and leadership.

Grant funding from Triumph Gulf Coast, in partnership with HCA Florida Hospital in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, launched the Health Academy. a program available through the District's Career and Technical Education (CTE), where students can gain hands-on experience and earn an industry certification upon completion.

The CTE Building Trades and Construction Design Technology program has been expanded, as well as the introduction of Kids CODE, a computer program aimed at elementary students to spark interest and impart knowledge in computer programming.

For over 25 years, Superin-

tendent Chambers has devoted his life to public education. Chambers acknowledges that his focus has been dedicated to educating, enhancing, and encouraging students, whether in the classroom, playing field, or the concert hall. "To me, there's nothing more important than investing in our children. The future depends on it; those like me called to the profession will reap more rewards than they can imagine. I'm blessed to be a part of this community in ways I never imagined, and I wouldn't change it for the world," said

Superintendent Marcus Chambers.

The mission of FADSS assists and supports superintendents in carrying out their responsibility as the educational leader of their community to ensure every student has access to a high-quality public education. To read the recognition in its entirety, please visit https:// fadss.app.box.com/s/rcf9zy-1ccnon0cd9ayw200k34we1svht.



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ALMOST \$22M

continued from previous page

#### Where Does the Rest of **The Money Come From?**

In short, from you! (well, most of it). Of the total \$43.6 million dollars needed to make this dream a possibility - NWFSC partnered with several different public and private groups. First and foremost - the college will use about \$13 Million in PECO funding from the Florida Department of Education.

PECO, or Public Education Capital Outlay to us laymen, is the bank account the state of Florida uses to fund the construction of education buildings under its purview (think state colleges and universities - but it can in theory also be used for public schools and public broadcasting centers). That money is given to the state by taxpayers every year.

Another roughly \$8 million bucks will come into the program from tuition into the program. Students, of course, will pay to take classes. This amount will be about 18% of the total cost to fund the program.

Roughly \$900,000 will come from Nursing Pipeline Funds from the Florida Department of Education as well. That \$900,000 is NWFSC's estimated share of about \$60,000,000

in available money that has to be split statewide.

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#### Business

### A Superior AC to Host More Vet Lunches in 2023

By Marta Rose-Thorpe

Throughout 2022, A Superior Air Conditioning Company was able to bring our community's Veterans and First Responders together for fellowship and meaningful camaraderie... nine times! We've been told many times how much these lunches mean to the men and women who unselfishly served, and are serving, our communities and our country.

In 2022 we gave away thirteen new HVAC systems to

deserving Veterans and First Responders in need: eight new HVAC systems at our Texas Roadhouse lunch in Panama City Beach; four new HVAC systems at our Walton/Okaloosa County lunch at Faith Assembly Christian Church (aka "The Rock 'n Roll Church") in Miramar Beach; and one new system at the Downtown Panama City lunch which took place at First Baptist Church.

This year brings more lunches, HVAC giveaways, and op-

portunities for the community to get involved. We have arranged for the Arnold High School ROTC Color Guard to present the Colors during the PCB lunches; we have organized guest National Anthem singers and musicians; and have coordinated with the chaplain of Naval Support Activity Panama City (NSA-PC) to do the invocation and prayer.

The dates of the 2023 lunches are as follows (Downtown Panama City date to come):



HVAC winners James and Becky McCroan receive their award by Jimy Thorpe. James served in the U.S. Navy.

Tuesday, January 10 – Walton / Okaloosa Co.

Tuesday, January 17 – Texas Roadhouse, Panama City Beach Tuesday, April 11 – Walton /

- Okaloosa Co.
- Tuesday, April 18 Texas Roadhouse, Panama City Beach

Tuesday, July 11 – Walton / Okaloosa Co.

- Tuesday, July 18 Texas Roadhouse, Panama City Beach Tuesday, October 10 – Walton
- / Okaloosa Co. Tuesday, October 17 – Texas
- Roadhouse, Panama City Beach

Are you interested in getting involved and becoming a sponsor? Cost is \$150 per lunch for Miramar Beach and \$350 per lunch for Bay County (\$1,200 for the year = four lunches). Annual Bay County sponsors will receive a free sponsorship to the First Baptist Church lunch in Downtown Panama City. Sponsor benefits include setting up a table, booth, tent, or display at the event that you provide; opportunity to distribute your marketing materials and swag; having your company's logo included on all print material that promote the event (such as rack cards and poster); and addressing the crowd at the mic for a brief description of the service you provide. Lunch is included for you and a guest. 100% of sponsor dollars cover of the costs of the event. To sponsor, or for any questions regarding sponsorship, contact Jimmy Dallas for Walton/Okaloosa events at (850) 896-2955 and Steve Richmond for Bay County events at (850) 358-0908.

Not able to sponsor? No problem! You can still contribute by bringing a smile, a gift basket, coupons, etc. as raffle prizes for our guests. Come join us – and help get the word out to local Veterans and First Responders – so we can all thank the men and women who keep us safe in our communities and our country.

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### SimpleHR Celebrates a Milestone

Local employee management solution company, SimpleHR, celebrates a milestone with 20 years in business. Wellknown as a "Best in Class" provider of payroll, human resources, benefits administration and workers' compensation, SimpleHR is a five-time earner of the annual Best Companies To Work For In Florida list by Florida Trend magazine. The people-centric business is driven by a team of committed and certified professionals.

"At our deepest core, our people differentiate us from other companies. While other competitors have shifted their service model primarily toward I.T. utilization, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to having our team of humans deliver service to our clients. We are so very thankful for their efforts and for their experience," said Bill Lindsley, president of SimpleHR

The numbers back it up with more than 47 percent of the SimpleHR team having more than five years of service; 35 percent have 10 years and 27 percent have 15. The company is led by the original founding members, and continues to focus on client service and community support. SimpleHR has evolved over the last two decades in response to customers' changing business needs and industry demands. The company was instrumental to clients' survival during the COVID-19 crisis.

Plans for the next 20 years are under way with the expansion of SimpleHR's business campus, technology infrastructure advancement, enhanced service offerings, and continued team development.

For more information about SimpleHR visit SimpleHR. com.



Sean of the South

🀲 Musing

Page 41



By Sean Dietrich

10:40 P.M.-New Year's Eve. Hank Williams is on my radio. My wife is sleeping in the passenger seat. My coonhound is in the backseat.

To bring in the year, we've gone for a drive on county roads that weave along the Choctawhatchee Bay.

There are no cars out. The highway is vacant-except for police cruisers. I've never welcomed in a year like this.

As a boy, my father and I brought in holidays with shotguns. We'd march to the edge of creation and fire twelve gauges at the moon. Then, I'd sip Coca-Cola; he'd sip something clear.

Another year goes by without him.

11:02 P.M.—my tank is on E. I stop at a gas station. The pump card-reader is broken. My wife is still out cold.

I go inside to pay. The clerk is a young girl with purple hair. She wanted to be with her kids tonight, but someone called in



with a sinus infection. I buy a Coca-Cola in a plastic bottle.

I also buy a scratch-off lotto ticket. The last few minutes of the year, I'm feeling lucky. I use my keys to scratch the ticket. I win five bucks. So, I buy another two. I win another dollar.

"Lucky you," the cashier says. "Wish I could buy one, but it's against store policy."

To hell with policy. It's New Year's Eve.

I buy her one.

She swipes a coin from the take-a-penny tray. She scratches. She wins ten bucks. We highfive.

It's only ten bucks, but seeing her win makes my year.

11:28 P.M.—I'm driving. My wife is still sawing pinelogs. I'm riding though the North Florida woods, sipping Coke. Trees grow so high you can't see the moon. It's almost like poetry.

Long ago, my college professor told us to choose a poem to recite in class. Students chose lofty selections from the greats. Whitman, Dickinson, Frost.

I consulted Daddy's Hank Williams songbook. He'd given it to me before he died. He'd wanted to be a guitar player once upon a time, but he was god-awful. He gave the instrument to me.

I recited, "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," and made a D.

I wasn't doing it for the teacher.

11:40 P.M.-my Coke is almost empty. I'm parked on the edge of the bay to watch fireworks. My coonhound is looking at me with red eyes. And I'm writing you, just like I do every day.

Listen, I don't remember how I started writing, or why. I

## BY SEAN DIETRICH

I wish I understood more,

But sometimes, I wish I understood less.

I wish I had more, I don't; thank goodness. I wish more people said,

"I'm sorry," That's a weakness, I

know, But I wish that they said

it, just the same, Instead of, "I told you so."

Above all, I wish love,

To you, your family, friends, and life,

I pray you kiss your kids, and your dogs,

And hopefully even your wife.

have nothing valuable to say, I don't know any big words, and I'm as plain as they come. But I won't lie to you, it has been precious to me. And so have you.





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For over a decade, Matthew Vanderford has worked in the Construction, Restoration and Insurance Industries as an Insurance Company Preferred Vendor, Insurance Industry Continuing Education Instructor, Public Adjuster/ Policy Holder Advocate and Licensed Contractor. He's proud to call Destin his home, with his wife Candice and four children: Matthew, Blake, Jordan and Scarlett,

Have Questions about Property Damage or Insurance Policies? Call Us: (850) 684-4794 You could have it answered in one our columns.

# I Wish

Friend, I'm a lot like you, And we're a lot like every woman and man.

We got a hell of a lot wrong last year, God knows,

But tomorrow, we start over again.

Happy New Year.

These are my last words of the old year, my first words of the new:

I love you. Happy New Year.

#### 🐲 Musing



By PASTOR DAVID HOLLAND

While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" Luke 22:47-48

Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me." Luke 22:31-34

I have failed more often than succeeded in my attempts to live a godly life. I'm not the worst sinner, but I know my bad habits, evil thoughts and misspent youth. Many times I could have spoken up for the Lord and stayed silent, so I get mad at myself. Or the frequent occasions I made bad choices when given the opportunity to make money. Or better

### A Pastor's Ponderings: A Tale of Two Traitors

yet, the situations when I knew the right thing to do and did the wrong thing anyway. These make me feel like a traitor, like Peter or Judas.

Yet, Jesus loves me anyway.

Christ and the disciples sat for their last supper together. The Passover holiday season made this a special time, similar to our Thanksgiving. Traitors sat among the disciples and ate with Jesus that night. Judas and Peter standout as obvious candidates, but they all abandoned Jesus when it mattered most.

All the deserters experienced Christ washing their feet and heard him wooing the disciples to love one another. Christ warned each of them concerning their upcoming failures. They didn't listen.

Yet he loved them anyway.

Judas is the most famous traitor in history. The treasurer for Christ and his band had ample opportunity to feel the money in his hands. As the end drew near, he sold Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver – roughly four months' wages. If the average worker today made about \$1,000 a week, that amount would equal \$17,000. A hefty sum, tempting even.

The betrayal by Judas led to the cross and death for Christ. But that wasn't Judas' worst sin.

Feeling remorse over the result of his betrayal, Judas went and hung himself. He gave up rather than face his failure and return to the Lord. He didn't have the faith to believe God could forgive him, so it became his unforgivable sin. The moral of the story? Don't give up on the grace of God.

But what about the great disciple, Peter, the brash fisherman who walked on water and confessed "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.?" What led to his failure?

As the gang of soldiers rushed in to arrest Jesus, Peter boldly stepped up to resist them. In an act of bravado, he swung a sword at a soldier attempting to cut off his head. The soldier tried to duck the blow, but the sword lopped off his ear.

Christ rebukes Peter and heals the ear before they led him away

to be beaten and tried. During the trial, Peter stood by, anonymously warming his hands by the fire. When a young lady recognized him as a Jesus follower, he denied Jesus three times, swore, and ran away. Why did he run away like a frightened little girl? Guilt makes cowards of us all.

Thankfully, Peter's story doesn't end there. Guilt still hung on Peter like a dirty diaper, but the residue of hope rested, sleeping in his heart.

Early in the morning, on the first day of the week after Christ's crucifixion, two women burst through the door, babbling about gardeners, angels and an empty tomb.

Hope awakened in Peter's heart. He jumped up and ran to the tomb. Finding it empty, Peter stood between the living and the dead, pondering the possibility of Christ's resurrection.

Later, we find Peter at the Sea of Galilee fishing. When the resurrected Lord called to him from the shore, Peter leaped into the water and swam to the Master. Jesus was cooking breakfast for him as a sign of his love, forgiveness and acceptance.

Peter's life had been dominated by impetuous actions and failures. Jesus still wanted him, despite his failures.

Eventually, Peter became a different man – a man on the road to thoughtful wisdom. Never to be a traitor again, Peter would die upside down on a Roman cross rather than betray the Lord. The traitor became the courageous.

Successful Christians keep coming back for more mercy and discover again the faithfulness of God. Don't give up on the grace of God because, despite our failures, Jesus loves us anyway.

Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring in Destin. He recently released his new devotional Bible study based on the Gospel of Luke titled, "Extraordinary Jesus: Ignite Your Season of Miracles." You can get a copy of this book from his website, DaveHolland.org, or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach in churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidvHolland54@gmail. com.



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### Sinfonia Gulf Coast Presents Get Happy

Sinfonia Gulf Coast welcomes back two Broadway stars, Morgan James and Nicholas Rodriguez, for "Get Happy: A Judy Garland Centennial Celebration" Saturday, Jan. 21. at 7:30 p.m. at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center in Destin.

James replaces Jessica Vosk who was originally cast in the lead role.

The exciting multimedia component showcases rare interviews and vintage footage of "The Judy Garland Show," with some never-before-seen outtakes featuring Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra.

Judy Garland (1922-1969) was an American actress widely known for playing Dorothy Gale in "The Wizard of Oz" (1939). She attained international stardom as an actress in both musical and dramatic roles, as a recording artist and on the concert stage. Renowned for her versatility, she received an Academy Juvenile Award, a Golden Globe Award, and a Special Tony Award. Garland was the first woman to win the



Grammy Award for Album of the Year, which she won for her 1961 live recording titled "Judy at Carnegie Hall."

"Who doesn't like a legend like Judy Garland?" asks Sinfonia Gulf Coast Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller. "This is a great production because it showcases the string section of the orchestra and a jazz band along with superstar vocalist Morgan James with a bonus of Nicholas Rodriguez in a supporting role. You will feel as though you are seeing Judy Garland singing live with the orchestra."

Morgan James is a Juilliard-trained singer, actress, songwriter, and recording artist in New York City. On Broadway, James was in five back-toback original companies: "The



Addams Family," "Wonderland," "Godspell," and "Motown: The Musical," and as a guest at Kristin Chenoweth's "For The Girls." She recently co-produced and starred in an all-female concept recording of Jesus Christ Superstar entitled "She Is Risen."

Nicholas Rodriguez has had an extensive career on Broadway ("Tarzan"), Off Broadway

"The Toxic Avenger: The Musical," "Almost Heaven: Songs of John Denver," Death for Five Voices) and film ("Sex and the City 2"). He recently toured the U.S. as Captain Georg Von Trapp in "The Sound of Music" and traveled the world on tours of "Jesus Christ Superstar" (Jesus), "Evita" (Che) and "Hair" (Claude) among others.

Both performers have appeared live on stage in original solo performances to raise funds for Sinfonia Gulf Coast.

Tickets range from \$30-\$55 for adults. Active-duty military are from \$20-\$30 and student tickets are \$15-\$20. Premier Preferred seats (\$55 per person) at a table of 10 in a club-inspired dinner theater atmosphere. Preferred regular seating starts at \$45 per person. Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its education and community engagement initiatives throughout Northwest Florida. Purchase tickets online at SinfoniaGulf-Coast.org or by calling the box office at (850) 460-8800.



#### Arts & Music

### No Winter Doldrums Here! Humor, Fun and Steel Magnolias Abound at ECTC

By Anna Fisher, Associate Artistic & Education Director, Emerald Coast Theatre Company Shoulder pads, Aqua Net bangs, and neon blazers only came in large and extra large, and President Ronald Reagan dominated the media. Anytime you turned on the radio, you either got rick rolled or serenaded by Whitney Houston. It was also the year that playwright Robert Harling gifted the world with the timeless story of "Steel Magno-



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lias" in a successful three-year off Broadway run from 1987-1990.

Harling wrote the play as a tribute to his late sister Susan, who died in 1985 of complications due to diabetes. The playwright based the small town and its inhabitants on his own home town of Natchitoches, La., and insisted that the 1989 film version be produced there as well.

Some of the best one liners ever spoken originated with this play. Eternally grumpy Oiuser quips, "Don't try to get on my good side...I no longer have one" and "I'm not crazy...I've just been in a very bad mood for 40 years."

Then there's Clairee, our southern magnolia with a razor sharp wit who observes, "The only thing that separates us from the animals is our ability to accessorize."

You will have a chance to experience all of this southern sass, humor and heartache on February 24 - March 5 when "Steel Magnolias" opens at Emerald Coast Theatre Company.

We are very excited to welcome back UWF professor, playwright and steel magnolia Marci Duncan as director for this classic girl's-night-out show.

But don't wait until February to visit ECTC! You can catch Marci on stage in January in Dissonance, a new work she has written and produced in collab-

oration with Kerry Sandell. Other great January shows include "Odd Couple" with Jason Hedden and Nathanael Fisher making another appearance on stage together, "The Last Five Years" featuring Rebeca Lake and Carl Hendin, and our very own Shirley Simpson as funny gal "Minnie Pearl." Other storyteller events in February and March include "The Flight of Jackie Cochran" performed by local playwright and actress Nancy Hasty, and Bruce Collier is back with his spot on one man show "Winston Churchill: Through the Storm." Winter at ECTC stays warm with The Golden Age of Hollywood Valentine's Day cabaret fundraiser as well. We have everything you need to fight the two (maybe three) months of cold winter blues we have here on the Emerald Coast.

As Clairee says, "If you can't say anything nice about anybody, come sit by me." There's no better place than Emerald Coast Theatre Company to catch a show and catch up with friends. If you don't make time for that, well, bless your heart.

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🐞 Arts & Music

### Crescendo! 2023: A Cultural & Culinary Extravaganza

Sinfonia Gulf Coast, our region's only fully professional symphony orchestra, has announced the lineup for its annual fundraiser Crescendo! A Cultural and Culinary extravaganza, slated for Feb. 24 and 26.

Festivities begin on Thursday, Jan. 26, at 11 a.m. with a Crescendo! Kick-Off Lunch at Bijoux Restaurant + Spirits, located at The Market Shops. Tickets are \$150 per person and include lunch, wine and gratuities.

On Friday, Feb. 24, at 6 p.m., Crescendo! weekend will begin with a series of curated vintner dinners held in elegant homes and venues throughout the Emerald Coast, which pair the talents of local and regional "celebrity" chefs with some of the country's most acclaimed vineyards for a delicious evening of food and wine. Vintner Dinner tickets are \$500 per person and include all food, wine, and gratuities.

This year's main event is set for Sunday, Feb. 26 at 11:30 a.m. at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa in Miramar Beach, celebrating the cultural





and culinary arts by showcasing world-class vintners, expert spirit purveyors, auction items and a



musical performance. Enjoy reserved table seating, hors d'oeuvres, a full, seated lunch, live and silent auctions and an all-inclusive afternoon of incredible fun. This year's theme is, Ebony & Ivory Ball, so please channel your favorite variation of black and white.

Tickets are \$195 per person and include all food, wine, reserved table seating, performance and valet parking. Tables of up to 10 guests may be reserved by calling (850) 460-8800. Sponsor-

ship opportunities are available. For information, email info@ sinfoniagulfcoast.org. Proceeds from Crescendo! will benefit Sinfonia and its music education community engagement outreach programs, which include musicians/guest artists in schools, free orchestra concerts, bus transportation for students, Sinfonia Youth Orchestra program, Arts in Medicine initiative with Sacred Heart Hospital and Link Up concerts for third through fifth graders in partnership with Carnegie Hall and more.

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ry C 11:40-12:30 p.m.: Primary A

12:45-1:45 p.m.: Primary B

Pre-Primary Ballet and Primary Ballet creative dance classes are part of the classical curriculum for the youngest dancers, instilling foundational elements of movement through creative experience, expression and play. Both boys and girls are highly encouraged. Classes occur once a week on either Tues., Wed. or Sat.

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#### Destinites

### Ask Destinites: Support Group For Caregivers



By PATRICIA LEE, DESTINITES

I want to start off this new year by saying thank you to all of my Destinites Facebook group members for the love and support they constantly show me since I became my daddy's

Alzheimer's, and it has been slowly overtaking him for about five years. The situation finally evolved, and I had to move in with my parents to help my mother. Talk about a life-altering experience, and at the age of 63, it's not what I thought I would be doing. Having said that, though, nobody knows better than I how life can change in a split second. I have dealt with a lot of major life events/tragedies including fighting three different cancers, two of which I was not supposed to survive, but none of that can compare to this Alzheimer's situation. This is a whole different ball game on many different levels. In your wildest dreams,

caregiver. He has dementia/

you cannot imagine what the patient, family and caregivers go through. God is my foundation and people who show me support are my angels; Destinites are my angels.

I cannot stress here enough how important it is for caregivers to have support. However, I know some people do not like the idea of belonging to some type of specific support group. That's fine. A general community group like our Destinites group will work. In my case, there are many there who have or are currently going through the same situation, and they have offered great suggestions which have tremendously helped me. Not to mention, I gained a prayer chain, which is as important as anything else. If you are an Alzheimer's or any type of caregiver, do not sit there thinking you can handle it all by yourself. You will lose your mind without having someone to talk to who understands and is not judgmental. Our Destinites Facebook group is a general community help group but you can find more there than just recommendations for roofers or other general needs. Members help each other with all kinds of different things, but we have a few laughs along the way, too. You may not be the one who needs support for any reason right now, but you may be able to help someone else who does, so please join us. We are

nothing in this life if we are not reaching out to help each other. It's what life is all about; lifting each other up and extending a helping hand.

If you are a resident of Destin or the nearby area, I invite you to ioin our private locals Destinites Facebook group at www.Facebook.com/Destinites with more than 7,100 members. We also have a monthly newsletter, which anyone may sign up for from the homepage of our website at www.Destinites.com. If you own a local business and would like to advertise in our group or in our newsletter, please email me at DestinitesGroupBox@gmail. com. Thank you and Happy New Year!

### Wreaths Across America Honors Deceased Veterans

By Corleen Zieglar

The Davis-Sikes Post 296 American Legion family held the fifth annual Wreaths Across America event at Destin Memorial and Marler Family cemeteries Dec. 17. Members of each branch of the service laid ceremonial wreaths on the graves of a deceased member of the same branch. Retired Lt. Col. Dean Sharp emceed the event. Helen Peyton led the singing of the National Anthem. Marine

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Sgt. Dakota Rudolph of Palmer, Alaska, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Army Sgt.1st Class Josh Marshall laid a wreath for Army veteran Robert Charles Terrell, who served during World War II.

Marine Sgt. Benjamin Feliciano from San Antonio laid a wreath for Marine veteran Thomas E. Robertson who served during the Korean War.

Retired Navy Capt. Gary Windorst laid a wreath for Harold Lee Williams, who served during World War II.

Air Force Capt. Brent Dupree laid a wreath for Air Force veteran Wilbur Dean Withers, who served in both the Korean and the Vietnam wars.

Marine Sgt. Stephen Yaster, of Traverse City, Mich., laid a wreath in honor of all those serving in the Space Force, on the grave of Army Air Corps veteran Aubrey Douglas Jones, who served during World War II.

Coast Guard Boatswain's Mate Third Class Isabella Wolcott from Tampa laid a wreath for Coast Guard veteran David Henry Marler.

Marine Sgt. Craig Test, Jr. from Sharon, Pa., laid the wreath for the Merchant Marines on the grave of Julius Scheidl, Sr., who served during World War II.

Marine Gunnery Sgt. Jordan Horn from Jacksonville laid a wreath for the 93,129 Prisoners of War or Missing in Action.

Gold and Blue Star family members were recognized.

Volunteers laid wreaths on all the remaining 200-plus veteran





graves. These wreaths are not decorations. They are a living symbol of the lives given for our freedoms. Each wreath is a gift of appreciation from a grateful America.

More than 3,400 locations around the world participated in the mission of Wreaths Across America to honor, remember and teach. To sponsor wreaths for the 2023 event, go to www. wreathsacrossamerica.org. Use location code FLDEMC and group code FL0665. Checks made payable to Wreaths Across America can be mailed to Davis-Sikes Post 296 American Legion 311 Main Street, Destin, FL 32541.





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