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# DESTIN Life

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## Talking Turtles with Marine Biologist Jessica Valek

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

In January 2022, a partnership between Okaloosa Island's Gulfarium and the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism Department was launched. "C.A.R.E."ing for Turtles takes place at the Gulfarium every Wednesday through the end of July; then every other Wednesday in August. The hour-long program is \$15 for ages eight and up.

Jessica Valek, Coastal Resource Coordinator for the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism Department, is very involved in the program. "We teach everyone about sea turtles in general, the ones we see along the Gulf of Mexico," she says. "I do a lot of our turtle nesting work. I go out every day and look for nests. This is a good partnership."

Attendees (locals and tourists) learn about the nesting process, how to protect turtles on the beach, and the different threats turtles face on our beaches and fishing piers. In addition, guests get a



behind the scenes look at the C.A.R.E. turtle hospital and what they do there. "It's really cool, because they always have new turtles," says Ms. Valek.

"At the end of the program, we do a mock intake of an injured sea turtle." The attendees assess the turtle and determine whether it should go into rehab or be released. "They get to be a turtle biologist for a day, and they get a little goodie bag with

turtle-friendly items to take home. It's a good time."

Ms. Valek's coastal resources team includes two other marine biologists. "I focus on sea turtle conservation and do the morning nest surveys from May to August assessing the nests. I also do outreach and education and assist with anything turtle-related."

She has been in her current position for almost three years. Prior to that, the University of West Florida grad-



PHOTO COURTESY OF GULFARIUM C.A.R.E. CENTER  
Jessica Valek talks about sea turtle nesting in Northwest Florida and the different threats our sea turtles are facing.

uate had other marine biologist jobs throughout Florida. Originally from Minnesota, Ms. Valek says, "I've always been interested in marine biology, so I packed up and moved. And I haven't regretted it!"

### TURTLES

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## Celebrating 20 Years Helping Children in Crisis

BY LISA WOODRUM

For 20 years, Children in Crisis has answered the desperate need for foster care through its group homes at the Fort Walton Beach property. It has provided stable and consistent home environments for a multitude of displaced children in the midst of severe circumstances. CIC originated from a small grass-roots group of

### CHILDREN

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**CHILDREN**

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individuals; supporters of the mission have grown to more than 200 members, including CPAs, architects, attorneys, educators and builders.

Ken Hair, CEO and president, and his loving, capable staff have established CIC as a haven where TLC is given to the littles, in a safe, healing atmosphere – physically, emotionally and spiritually. To gird up this mission, a network of caring community organizations, businesses and citizens have partnered in assisting CIC’s mission



to “Provide Homes...Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together.”

There is a severe shortage of foster homes in this area. DCF contacts CIC when it has children who need to be placed. Sarah Traver, Operations Director, tells of the foster care dynamic: “When a child is taken from its home, it is asked to pack a few things in a backpack, then are transported to wherever they find a placement (within four counties). A child in Okaloosa county, for example, may be transferred to an open bed in

Escambia County. Oftentimes, they have to say goodbye to siblings who are placed in another home and county. This child will meet new people, will be enrolled in a new school, etc. (When they come to CIC,) there is only a trash bag with their belongings. I can’t imagine how scary it is to be in a home you have never been in before!”

CIC provides a home to an average of 100 children per year. Since opening its doors in 2008, CIC has been called “home” by more than 1,033 children, pro-

viding them with 123,857 days and nights of a safe, loving environment to grow and thrive.

As foster parent Kristilyn Cash shared, “We all know that it takes a village to raise a child, and that is exactly what CIC is for us as foster parents. CIC is our village!”

In reality, this “village” expands beyond the borders of the CIC neighborhood; it is this community that has and will continue to provide the funding, resources, giftings and volunteers needed. To note a

few needs: financial support (ie. monthly utilities \$8,333); non-perishable foods and gently used clothing, volunteers to fundraise, helping hands in homes sporadically, landscaping. They are seeking to hire respite couples (singles too) to intermittently care for children a few days at a time giving houseparents a break. Further needs can be found on the website: [www.childrenincrisis.org](http://www.childrenincrisis.org) or call (850) 864-4242.

Says houseparent Jowie Rodgers, “Every kid is one caring adult away from a success story. Even though the kiddos are here for a season or two, they will be in our hearts forever. No matter what the fight that we houseparents and staff have to go through, we are passionate about the souls of our children. They are our future.”



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**TURTLES**

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She currently lives in Navarre with her dogs Luna and Jim, as well as four cats. “I enjoy scuba diving, paddleboarding, hiking – anything on the water or anything I can do with my dogs.”

“C.A.R.E.”ing for Turtles is limited to approximately 15 people, and Ms. Valek says they usually reach that number. “We’ve gotten really positive feedback,” she says. “Most people seem to enjoy the information and getting to see the turtles. It just keeps getting better and better.”

Among the things she finds most rewarding? “The impact the program has on other people and them registering how they can make a difference not just for turtles, but for the environment in general.”



PHOTO BY LISA NIVE.

“C.A.R.E.”ing for Turtles guests conduct the mock sea turtle intake, measuring the turtle’s shell to figure out its age.

Ms. Valek’s team is involved with more than just sea tur-

gles. “Our department is helping fund environmental-relat-

ed projects,” she says. “We do beach re-nourishment, invasive species removal and artificial reefs. We monitor anything related to the coast and the water.”

Learn more about “C.A.R.E.”ing for Turtles at [gulfarium.com](http://gulfarium.com).

**Turtle Tips**

“When you go to the beach, fill in your holes,” says Ms. Valek. “Flatten your sandcastles when you leave. Remove umbrellas, chairs and trash. Those are obstacles for sea turtles.”

Refrain from using white light on the beach at night. “We are giving away turtle-friendly flashlights at the Welcome Center on Miracle Strip Parkway,” she says. “We give you as many as you want.”

Be good environmental stewards. “Recycle. And don’t litter!”

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- July 18** Larger Than Life The Ultimate Boy Band Tribute
- July 25** 80's + 90's Street Party with Doc Roc & DJ Boom

 Community

# New Nonprofit & Feature Film, "The Paper Bear," Shines a Spotlight on Florida Panhandle's Rich Biodiversity Through the Eyes of Majestic Black Bears

Millions of people visit the Florida Panhandle for its beautiful beaches and emerald-colored waters. Soon, they will learn there is far more to discover, love and protect beyond the coast through a feature film called "The Paper Bear." Audiences will embark on a coming-of-age adventure and immerse themselves in the region's natural wonders through the eyes of majestic black bears.

"The Paper Bear" is a love letter to Florida and, more specifically, the Panhandle," says Arix Zalace, director and co-founder of "The Paper Bear." "It's also an adventure, a drama, a comedy, and all of the elements that will entertain you so that more are inspired into action."

The Florida Panhandle is one of North America's five richest biodiversity hotspots. Florida has more than 80 distinct ecosystems, and at least 57 can be found in the Panhandle alone. One umbrella species can help protect it all – the black bear. An umbrella species is used as a conservation tool to help protect a larger group of species and their shared habitats. These magnificent creatures have extensive home ranges and rely on numerous biodiverse ecosystems, which is why they play a vital role in maintaining their delicate balance.

To capture the essence and beauty of the Florida Panhandle, the team recruited local and national talent that has worked



on award-winning national television shows and films. The animation will play a critical role and provide a beautiful perspective of the region that couldn't be shown otherwise.

"The Paper Bear" is financed by the team responsible for Nokuse Plantation and the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center. Together, they are responsible for maintaining a 55,000-acre nature preserve and educating over 6,500 students across five counties on the importance of biodiversity to encourage conservation, preservation and restoration. Since 2006, Dr. Matthew Aresco has been the director of Nokuse Plantation, and his team has helped advise and gain access to some of the most rare locations for filming

that will astonish audiences.

"Large-scale, meaningful conservation of these unique and incredibly beautiful natural areas can be accomplished only through greater public involvement in conservation and funding for land protection," says Dr. Aresco, "The timely release of this film will educate viewers on why we must strive to protect nature and wildlife habitat and instill a sense of urgency in the need for conservation."

A special gallery will be presented by The Paper Bear and The Seaside Institute June 26-July 31. The public can view and purchase limited fine art prints at 168 Smolian Circle, Seaside. The Paper Bear co-founder and director, Arix Zalace, created 14 pieces of fine art highlight-

ing critical moments of his time filming and living with wild black bears in the state forests of South Walton, Florida. It took years of preparation, scouting, and waiting to capture the scenes the public will see on display.

To learn more, visit [www.thepaperbear.org](http://www.thepaperbear.org).

## Stay Safe During Excessive Heat

Tips from Okaloosa County and the National Weather Service:

- **NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN OR PETS IN A PARKED CAR:** The temperature can raise to 135 degrees in less than ten minutes, which can cause death to children or pets. If you see a child or pet left unattended in a parked car, you should call 9-1-1 and alert authorities.

- **Slow down.** Strenuous activities should be reduced, eliminated, or rescheduled to the coolest time of the day. Individuals at risk should stay in the coolest available place, not necessarily indoors.

- **Dress for summer.** Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight, and helps your body maintain normal temperatures.

- **Drink plenty of water or other nonalcoholic fluids.** Your body needs water to keep cool. Drink plenty of fluids even if you don't feel thirsty. Persons who (1) have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease, (2) are on fluid restrictive diets, or (3) have a problem with fluid retention should consult a physician before increasing their consumption of fluids.

- **Do not drink alcoholic beverages.**

- **Do not take salt tablets unless specified by a physician.** Persons on salt restrictive diets should consult a physician before increasing their salt intake.

- **Spend more time in air-conditioned places.** Air conditioning in homes and

other buildings markedly reduces danger from the heat. If you cannot afford an air conditioner, spending some time each day (during hot weather) in an air-conditioned environment such as malls and libraries affords some protection.

- **Minimize direct exposure to the sun.** Sunburn reduces your body's ability to dissipate heat.

- **Eat light, cool, easy-to-digest foods** such as fruit or salads. If you pack food, put it in a cooler or carry an ice pack. Don't leave it sitting in the sun. Meats and dairy products can spoil quickly in hot weather.

- **Use portable electric fans** to exhaust hot air from rooms or draw in cooler air.

- **Do not direct the flow of portable electric fans** toward yourself when room temperature is hotter than 90°F. The dry blowing air will dehydrate you faster, endangering your health.

- **Take a cool bath or shower.**

- **Check on older, sick, or frail people** who may need help responding to the heat. Each year, dozens of children and untold numbers of pets left in parked vehicles die from hyperthermia. Keep your children, disabled adults, and pets safe during tumultuous heat waves.

- **Don't leave valuable electronic equipment**, such as cell phones and GPS units, sitting in hot cars.

- **Make sure rooms are well vented** if you are using volatile chemicals.



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# Window Hero Serves Our Community

There are three hallmarks of a great business: a trustworthy brand, a hard-working business owner dedicated to customer service and a team of highly trained professionals. When you choose businesses to work with, you deserve the best. Introducing Ryan Jackson, owner of Window Hero Pensacola-Destin – the only name you need when you’re looking for professional, reliable exterior cleaning for your home or business.

Founder Tyler Kirk started the business in Charlotte, NC, in 2006 under the name Labor Panes, offering window and pressure washing. In 2022, the company rebranded as Window Hero and expanded to serve even more customers with a franchise model. Since then, it has achieved rapid growth, and there are now 24 locations

across six states. Window Hero’s meteoric success comes from building strong relationships, responding to customer needs and adding value to their lives. It has extended the selection of services to better serve its customers, adding full-home and building exterior washing, window cleaning, gutter cleaning, gutter guard installation, roof washing, and solar panel cleaning. Window Hero has become the go-to company for quality exterior cleaning, earning a five-star rating on Google and thousands of satisfied customers.

Ryan Jackson is proud to serve the community as your local Window Hero owner. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy, followed by Naval Flight Officer training. Ryan served 24 years in the Navy flying combat operations



during his deployment in Operation Enduring Freedom. After retiring from the military, he returned to the Emerald Coast to be a permanent part of the community he fell in love with while at NAS Pensacola for flight school from 2004-2006.

Window Hero allows Ryan to achieve a longtime goal: to own a

business that supports initiatives to get involved in the community and create jobs that will enable employees to achieve personal and professional growth. Ryan knew he wanted to be a part of the Window Hero family when he read the core values of its parent company, HomeFront Brands: “Community – We

make a difference in the community one person, friend, or neighbor at a time. Accountability – We do more than expected, by our own choice and our own will. Respect – We treat others as we would like to be treated. Excellence – We set high standards and rise to meet them. Service – We meet others’ needs with a servant’s heart.”

Window Hero Pensacola-Destin has it all. It’s a trusted brand with 17 years of experience, a local veteran business owner focused on giving back to the community, and a team of friendly, skilled technicians.

Make your home or business shine. Call your local pro, Ryan Jackson, at (850) 601-9609 for your free quote. Visit [Windowhero.com/locations/pensacola-destin/](http://Windowhero.com/locations/pensacola-destin/) to find out more.

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Community

Cali's To Do In Destin! JULY 2023

..... 1 .....
Sunrise Showdown Music Festival | 9am | Enlightened Studios
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Rags to Riches Regatta | 10:30am | Grayton Beach
4th of July Bash | 11am | The Pearl Hotel
4th of July KickOff Party | 11am | The Island Resort
Rock the Docks Concert Series | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Karaoke | 8pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 2 .....
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Sunday Breakfast | 8:15am | Destin American Legion
4th of July Bash | 11am | The Pearl Hotel
Sallywag Sunday | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 8pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
..... 3 .....
4th of July Bash | 11am | The Pearl Hotel
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Star Spangled Food Truck Festival and Fireworks Show | 5pm | Destin Commons
Aj's Stars & Stripes Celebration | 6pm | Ajs on the Bayou
Bingo Night | 6pm | Destin American Legion
Silent Disco Party | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Fireworks | 9pm | HarborWalk Village
..... 4 .....
Ajs Grayton Beach 4th of July | 8am | Ajs Grayton Beach
Grayton Beach 4th of July Parade | 8:30am | Grayton Beach
Independence Day Celebration | 9am | Seaside
Red, White & Blue Party | 2pm | Hotel Effie
Freeport 4th of July Parade and Fireworks | 4pm | Freeport Regional Sports Complex
Music Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys Destin
Fat Tuesday Parade | 6:30 pm | Harbor-Walk Village
Independence Day Celebration | 6:30pm | Seaside
Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer
Red, White & Baytowne Fireworks | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Let Freedom Ring! | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
Fireworks Display | 8:30pm | Seaside
Fireworks Display | 8:45pm | Fort Walton Beach Landing
Fireworks Display | 9pm | Destin Harbor (City of Destin)
Fireworks Display | 9pm | Seaside
..... 5 .....
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Bingo in the Ballroom | 6pm | American Legion FWB
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Country Line Dancing | 7pm | The Block FWB
Wednesday Concert Series | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Music Bingo | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Fireworks Display | 9pm | Okaloosa Island Pier

..... 6 .....
Bingo | 10am | Salvation Army FWB
VFW Post Bingo | 5pm | Fort Walton Beach
Karaoke Night | 6pm | Beach Weekend
Music Match | 6pm-8pm | The Island Resort
All American Thursday | 6:30pm | HarborWalk Village
Outdoor Concert Series | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation
Trivia | 7pm | Lucille's Kitchen
Bachata / Zouk Classes | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Latin Dance Lessons | 7pm | The Block FWB
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Broadway on the Boulevard | 8pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Company
Fireworks Display | 9pm | HarborWalk Village
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
..... 7 .....
OneBlood Drive | 10am | The Market Shops
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Locals on the Harbor | 5pm | Boathouse Oyster Bar
Music Bingo | 5pm-7pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 7pm | Destin American Legion
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Latin Dancing | 9pm | Bric a Brac
..... 8 .....
Farmers Market | 8:30am | FWB Landing
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Blue Angels Pensacola Beach Air Show | 12pm | Pensacola Beach
Bark and Brew | 2pm | Idyll Hounds
Rock the Docks Concert Series | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Karaoke | 8pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 9 .....
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Sunday Breakfast | 8:15am | Destin American Legion
Queen of Hearts | 4pm | Destin American Legion
Sallywag Sunday | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 8pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
..... 10 .....
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Bingo Night | 6pm | Destin American Legion
Silent Disco Party | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Fireworks | 9pm | HarborWalk Village
..... 11 .....
10th Annual Great American Cookout | 11:30am | Destin Chamber
Fishing Seminar Series: King Mackerel/ Mahi | 6pm | Legendary Marine
Music Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys Destin
Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer
Boomin' Baytowne | 7:15pm | Baytowne Wharf
Bachata Lessons | 8pm | Enlightened Studios
Movies on the Beach | 8pm | Als Burger Bar

..... 12 .....
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Bingo in the Ballroom | 6pm | American Legion FWB
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Country Line Dancing | 7pm | The Block FWB
Wednesday Concert Series | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Music Bingo | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 13 .....
Bingo | 10am | Salvation Army FWB
VFW Post Bingo | 5pm | Fort Walton Beach
Wine Walk | 5pm | Gulf Place
Karaoke Night | 6pm | Beach Weekend
Music Match | 6pm-8pm | The Island Resort
All American Thursday | 6:30pm | HarborWalk Village
Outdoor Concert Series | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation
Trivia | 7pm | Lucille's Kitchen
Bachata / Zouk Classes | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Latin Dance Lessons | 7pm | The Block FWB
Game Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
..... 14 .....
Wes Hinds Featured Artist Show | 5pm | Maxine Orange Gallery
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Music Singo | 5pm-7pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 7pm | Destin American Legion
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Latin Dancing | 9pm | Bric a Brac
..... 15 .....
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Wes Hinds Featured Artist Show | 5pm | Maxine Orange Gallery
Rock the Docks Concert Series | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Karaoke | 8pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 16 .....
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Sunday Breakfast | 8:15am | Destin American Legion
Sallywag Sunday | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 8pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
..... 17 .....
Kids Fishing Day with Boathouse Oyster Bar | 7am | American Spirit Party Boat
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Bingo Night | 6pm | Destin American Legion
Silent Disco Party | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Fireworks | 9pm | HarborWalk Village
..... 18 .....
Music Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys Destin
Fat Tuesday Parade | 6:30 pm | Harbor-Walk Village
Salsa Lessons | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer
Boomin' Baytowne | 7:15pm | Baytowne Wharf

Movies on the Beach | 8pm | Als Burger Bar
..... 19 .....
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Bingo in the Ballroom | 6pm | American Legion FWB
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Country Line Dancing | 7pm | The Block FWB
Wednesday Concert Series | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Music Bingo | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 20 .....
Bingo | 10am | Salvation Army FWB
Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic | 11am | Destin Pass Bridge
VFW Post Bingo | 5pm | Fort Walton Beach
Karaoke Night | 6pm | Beach Weekend
Music Match | 6pm-8pm | The Island Resort
All American Thursday | 6:30pm | HarborWalk Village
Outdoor Concert Series | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation
Trivia | 7pm | Lucille's Kitchen
Bachata / Zouk Classes | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Latin Dance Lessons | 7pm | The Block FWB
Game Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
..... 21 .....
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Music Singo | 5pm-7pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 7pm | Destin American Legion
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Latin Dancing | 9pm | Bric a Brac
..... 22 .....
Farmers Market | 8:30am | FWB Landing
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Pool Deck Party | Noon | Emerald Grande Pool Deck
Rock the Docks Concert Series | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Karaoke | 8pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 23 .....
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Sunday Breakfast | 8:15am | Destin American Legion
Farmers Market | 11am | Destin Commons
Chakra Sound Bath | 5pm | Prana Maudra Center
Sallywag Sunday | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 8pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
..... 24 .....
Kids Fishing Day with Boathouse Oyster Bar | 7am | American Spirit Party Boat
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Bingo Night | 6pm | Destin American Legion
Silent Disco Party | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Fireworks | 9pm | HarborWalk Village
..... 25 .....
Music Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Fat Tuesday Parade | 6:30 pm | Harbor-Walk Village
Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer
Boomin' Baytowne | 7:15pm | Baytowne Wharf
Movies on the Beach | 8pm | Als Burger Bar
..... 26 .....
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Bingo in the Ballroom | 6pm | American Legion FWB
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Country Line Dancing | 7pm | The Block FWB
Wednesday Concert Series | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Music Bingo | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 27 .....
Bingo | 10am | Salvation Army FWB
VFW Post Bingo | 5pm | Fort Walton Beach
Music Match | 6pm-8pm | The Island Resort
All American Thursday | 6:30pm | HarborWalk Village
Outdoor Concert Series | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation
Trivia | 7pm | Lucille's Kitchen
Latin Dance Lessons | 7pm | The Block FWB
Game Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
..... 28 .....
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Music Singo | 5pm-7pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 7pm | Destin American Legion
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Latin Dancing | 9pm | Bric a Brac
Comedy Show | 9pm | Enlightened Studios
..... 29 .....
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Rock the Docks Concert Series | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Karaoke | 8pm | The Island Resort
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
..... 30 .....
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Sunday Breakfast | 8:15am | Destin American Legion
Queen of Hearts | 4pm | Destin American Legion
Groovin on the Green Concert | 7pm | Carillon Beach
Sallywag Sunday | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 8pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
..... 31 .....
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Bingo Night | 6pm | Destin American Legion
Silent Disco Party | 7pm | HarborWalk Village
Fireworks | 9pm | HarborWalk Village



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# Summer is in FULL Swing at The Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Baytowne is boomin' with events, activities and family fun all summer! The Village and all of its merchants welcome you to visit, shop, dine and play!

**Save the Date!**  
**Perfect Hues: Baytowne Wharf Art Fest**

**Friday, Sept. 1st - Sunday, Sept. 3rd | 5-10 p.m. Nightly | FREE**

This Labor Day Weekend join us for Perfect Hues: Baytowne Wharf Art Fest. Each evening from 5-10 p.m., stroll The Village streets as you browse a variety of artwork from local and regional artists. Enjoy LIVE music throughout the festival and a spectacular fireworks show over the lagoon on Sunday at 9:30 p.m.

Also, on Sunday night, be sure to check in by the breezeway to enjoy a Sip & Shop through The Village. We love kicking off the fall season with such a unique, moonlit weekend!

**Music Line up:**

- Friday*  
5-7:15 p.m. | Mike Whitty  
7:30-10 p.m. | Mari Gleason
- Saturday*  
5-7:15 p.m. | Mike Whitty  
7:30-10 p.m. | Christon Birge
- Sunday*  
5-7:15 p.m. | Jared Herzog  
7:30-10 p.m. | Emily Bass

Vendor Registration ends August 11th.



**Scallywag Sunday**  
**Sundays NOW - August 6th**  
**7-9 p.m. | FREE**

Join Baytowne Wharf for magic, music and mayhem! Watch as the featured pirate Captain Davy takes you on an

adventure with two magic shows on stage! Shows at 7 and 8 p.m.

**Movie Monday**  
**Mondays, NOW - July 31st**  
**8 p.m. | FREE**

- Grab a lawn chair or blanket and cozy up on the Events Plaza Lawn for a featured film.
- July 3 | Capture The Flag
- July 10 | The Bad Guys
- July 17 | Smallfoot
- July 24 | The Parent Trap
- July 31 | Wonder Park

**Boomin' Tuesday**  
**Tuesdays, Now - Aug. 8th**  
**7:15-9:15 p.m. | FREE**

Turn your eyes on the sky and



watch as Baytowne Wharf lights up the night with a breath-taking, fireworks show over the Village Lagoon at 9:15 p.m. PLUS now enjoy a DJ Dance Party with DJ Mike Whitty in the Events Plaza at 7:15 p.m.

**A Can't Miss Wednesday Night Concert Series!**

**Wednesdays**  
**Now - July 26th**  
**7-9 p.m. | FREE**  
**Events Plaza Stage**

Wednesday Night Concerts at The Village of Baytowne Wharf are BACK! Sit back and relax with an outdoor concert and enjoy LIVE entertainment. The concert series features both local and regional talent from a variety of genres. Don't forget your lawn chairs and blankets.

- Live Local Favorites**  
**Music Lineup:**
- July 5 | Horseshoe Kitty
  - July 12 | Jessie Ritter
  - July 19 | Side Project
  - July 26 | Trest Richerson Band

(To find out more about the bands, visit [BaytownWharf.com](http://BaytownWharf.com)'s July calendar.)



**Fly Guy Thursday**  
**Thursdays,**  
**Now - Aug. 10th**  
**6:30 & 8:30 p.m. | FREE**

Enjoy shows from fly-board extraordinaire Ben Merrell over the lagoon! Watch as he soars to the sky and makes waves at Baytowne Wharf.

**The Farmers Market at Baytowne Wharf**

Come shop with local farmers, bakers, local fresh seafood and gourmet, beef, local honey, fresh pressed juices and much more all year long, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Don't forget to tune in to **Beach TV** to watch all that's going on daily in The Village of Baytowne Wharf LIVE—Each day, all year long!

And don't forget all the fantastic, fun activities with Adventure Land Playground, Baytowne Adventure Zone, Baytowne Carousel and Blast Arcade & Laser Maze. SO much summer...so much to do at The Village of Baytowne Wharf!



**MAY 21ST - AUGUST 10TH**

## Summer Time AT THE VILLAGE

- SCALLYWAG SUNDAY**  
7pm & 8pm
- MOVIE MONDAY**  
8pm
- BOOMIN TUESDAY**  
7:15pm-9:15pm
- WEDNESDAY NIGHT CONCERT**  
7pm-9pm
- FLY GUY THURSDAY**  
6:30pm & 8:30pm

## Trends & Treasures!



### Pickleball—America's Favorite New Sport Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

Surely, you've heard that pickleball is considered one of the fastest-growing sports in the U.S. It's also become the most popular sport. Due to the soaring popularity of this decades-old game, many Destin and 30A neighborhoods, and parks and recreation departments are adding pickleball to their sports programming.

Pickleball is a paddle sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong using a paddle and plastic ball with holes, appropriate for players of all ages and skill levels. Pro Tip: "If you were decent at tennis, you'll be able to master the pickleball game quickly. If you didn't play tennis, not to worry, pickleball is quite easy to pick up," said Frill Seekers Gifts owner, Heidi LoCicero. "In fact, we had so many clients joining the sport, we expanded our offerings to include fun pickleball shatterproof cups, game towels, shirts, sweatshirts and festive notepads with fun pickleball themed sayings."

Consider yourself warned, the sport, "highly contagious!"

Pickleball rules are so similar to ping-pong, practically anyone can learn how to play the game. A pickleball court is smaller than a tennis court, gameplay allows players to be close enough to one another that they chat over the net. So, if you're looking to bond with your family or have an outing with friends, pickleball makes it easy to do just that while also giving you the ability to fit in a fun workout.

To purchase fun pickleball-themed gifts, visit Frill Seekers Gifts in City Market Bayside in Destin or shop online at [FrillSeekersGifts.com](http://FrillSeekersGifts.com). Free gift wrapping, too! Visit the store Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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### Home For Sale in Frangista Beach Be On The Coast™ Real Estate Group

Nestled between Destin and Sandestin, you'll discover this charming home, just a short stroll to the beach, complete with a white picket fence in the heart of the sought after enclave of Frangista Beach. The home affectionately known as "Coastal LegaSEA," will quickly become your family's gathering place for weekends, holidays and summer. Or make this your full-time home in paradise. This area of NW Florida is known for its white sandy beaches and crystal clear Gulf water and for its family-friendly amenities including quaint local shopping centers, award winning restaurants, pickleball and tennis courts, championship golf courses and a Scenic Hwy. 98 walking path. Frangista Beach is a haven for water-sport enthusiasts with paddle-boarding, kayaking and surfing opportunities. Imagine sipping your coffee from the home's spacious screened-in porch as the sun rises, then spending the day frolicking along the seashore and toasting the sunset.

This charming 2-story, 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom home is conveniently located near the community pool and is only a short stroll to your deeded beach access. You will love the serene environment and lush treescape, giving it the quaint Florida feel. This home would be an excellent primary residence, second home or vacation rental. Its quaint coastal living architecture defines the relaxed culture of the area. The white picket fence frames the house; a large, screened porch welcomes you to the front door; the lofty, 11-ft. ceilings and beautifully cased Pella windows provide natural light. A combined living and dining area flows into the gourmet kitchen with stainless steel appliances and features marble countertops. The kitchen adjoins a sunroom that exits to the



masterfully landscaped backyard with lush tropical plants and mature oak trees. The master bedroom can serve as your private suite with an adjoining jacuzzi tub, separate shower and double vanities. For a private showing of this furnished home or a FaceTime tour of MLS# 924000, call Brian K. LoCicero, REALTOR® at (850) 739-3800 or visit [BeOnTheCoast.com](http://BeOnTheCoast.com)

### Plan Your Wedding With "Pure" Confidence! Pure & Couture Salon; Pure Collective Salon

Pure & Couture's talented hair and makeup artists know that in order to look your best on your big day, you have to know what works and doesn't work for you. Pure & Couture makeup artists assess your facial structure and highlight your best features. For hair, a loose 'do' offers natural volume while softly framing your face with a couple of soft waves. Other wedding-popular looks include a prettied-up ponytail, a beautiful braid or an enhanced look with hair extensions to add volume and length for that important day. Pampering brides, making them look beautiful and feel confident on their wedding day is the team's goal. Pure & Couture works with you and your bridal party to bring your vision to life for that special walk down the aisle, making sure all your beauty needs are met, whether in-salon or on-location. Offering beauty services for weddings, special events, consultations and trial sessions including airbrush makeup, blowouts, lash extensions, spray tanning and hair extensions.

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your wedding party or bride to the wedding with "pure" confidence.

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### Summer Diamonds! Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Wanting a new design custom-made just for you? Stop by Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry and try to decide which shape suits you best. There's an array of colors and styles just waiting!

Summer is a great time for blue diamonds...yes, blue and beautiful! Just check out this "Ciel" blue diamond (French for "Sky"). Or how about blue diamond stud earrings that match the beautiful blue of our coast?

Whether you're shopping for a special gift, a new summer color or an engagement ring for that "special" day, Beyond Measure is here for you. Owner Ashleigh Woolly carries one-of-a-kind pieces for summer in coastal colors and tons of gemstones available in varying gemstone colors and shades. Want to stick to diamonds? Check out "Bubble Bands," stunning individually or for collecting and stacking! Intrigued? Specializing in diamond, gemstone and precious metal jewelry pieces, the Beyond Measure Jewelers' showroom, in its new location at City Market, is full of diamond and gemstone bracelets, special-occasion rings, necklaces and earrings. Ashleigh is passionate about exquisite and custom-designed jewelry and selling it—especially 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." You can trust your custom project to Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry, where a one-on-one exquisite jewelry experience is waiting!

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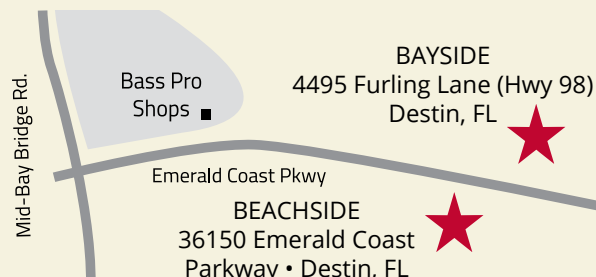
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 Community

# An Altogether Magical Adventure with Mr. Larry

By TAMARA YOUNG,  
DESTIN CITY PIO

There's no way around it. Mr. Larry is a failure. Nothing goes right for him. He loses things all the time. He is easily confused. He showed up at the Destin Library on Thursday, June 22 and created a wake of chaos.

Mr. Larry is an epic fail.

But Larry Darnell isn't.

Darnell, aka Mr. Larry, has specialized in children's entertainment for more than 40

years. He elicits squeals and giggles wherever he goes. While adults enjoy his shows, his entire focus is on the children.

"I like to make a difference, and kids are more fun to work with than adults," said Mr. Larry.

Hailing from Columbus, Ind., originally, Mr. Larry now resides in Birmingham and spends the vast majority of his time in the school systems around that area conducting character education



Mr. Larry uses puppetry to help entertain and teach lessons. A sheep dog named Winston and a dove named Dudley are staples to his show, although every show brings its own surprises, both by him and by the audience.

"The reaction of the kids is the best and what drives the show. They go crazy over certain things. It's fun to see them react," said Mr. Larry.

The children sat on blankets on the lawn of the Destin Library on a sunny day, wide-eyed and eager to get more of Mr. Larry's antics. First, he cannot find his magic wand. Then when he does, and it's only an inch long, madness ensues. But later, when he makes the wand 9 feet long, the children erupt in glee.

Mr. Larry helps children get excited about Destin Library's popular summer reading program. For lessons on compassion, difference, friendship and tolerance, he recommends a few particular books:

- The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister
- The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss
- Stone Soup by Jon J Muth
- The Duckling Gets a Cookie?! By Mo Willems

He also said the classic *The Three Musketeers* is always a good book on the topic.

In a colorful vest and tie, Mr. Larry is a far cry from his first career in orthopedic surgical sales after graduating in finance and marketing from Indiana University.

He failed (chose a different adventure) from that job, and he has never looked back.

Judging by the crowd reaction, maybe Mr. Larry isn't a failure after all. He's a hometown hero!

programming. He works with the schools in Alabama and also some in Florida to help teach kids core moral values like honesty, integrity, compassion and generosity.

This plays well with Mr. Larry's prior experience in children's ministry. Values, lessons and an appreciation of differences.

"Every school system is different, every show is different, every child is different," said Mr. Larry.

And that's the theme he was part of at the Destin Library. His show, "An Altogether Magical Adventure!," is parallel with the national 2023 library theme of accepting differences in people and recognizing value in all.

"People come in all shapes, all sizes, all colors and they are all important," said Mr. Larry. The brick wall behind him shows that "... and they all work together to form this great wall," he said.

Savvy Leigh

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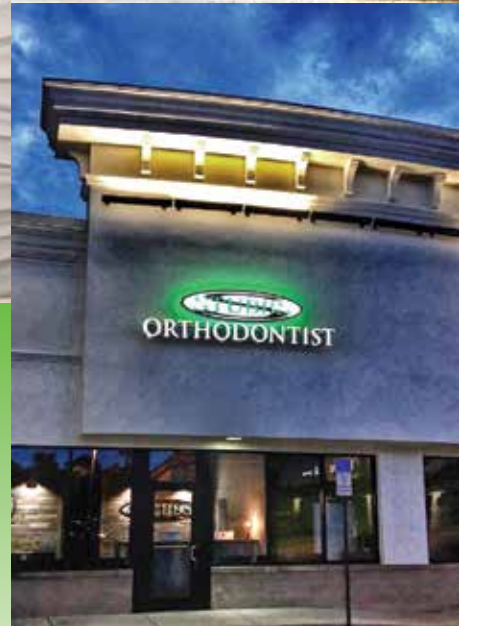
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Our daughter just completed her second phase and had her braces removed today, what a milestone!! This experience has been amazing. We love Dr. Stubbs and her staff. Always friendly and always went above and beyond for my daughter's comfort. ~ Micha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

 Community

# Destin Rotary Recognizes Selfless Citizen with Inaugural Award

The Rotary Club of Destin recently recognized a selfless Destin citizen with a brand-new award: Citizen Above Self, which aligns with Rotary Club's vision to take action to create lasting change across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves.

Local J.D. Lohman exemplifies that vision. He has been a city carrier in Miramar Beach and Destin Post Offices since September 2000. His father also worked for USPS as a mail handler. He previously served in



the United States Air Force and the Army and has been married to his lovely wife, Dawn, for 45

years this year. They have two adult children—a son residing in Ft. Walton Beach and a daughter residing in Colorado. JD is an avid St. Louis Cardinals baseball fan and a Green Bay Packers football fan. In his spare time, he enjoys working in his yard and taking care

of their many cats. He also loves Civil War history.

Nominated by Rotarian Gail

Pelto, she says, "JD has been delivering mail in the west Destin area for 20 years. He's ALWAYS in a great mood, always helpful, never too busy to chat for a moment, and if I leave him something, such as Christmas cookies, he always leaves a thank you card within a few days from he and his wife. When we moved in 16 years ago, J.D. introduced himself, welcomed us and made sure he knew our names. It shows that he cares about serving his customers—truly a Citizen Above Self."

The Postmaster at the Destin Post office, Crystal Mansolino says, "J.D. truly cares about each and every customer on his route. He reports to work each day with a smile on his face and a willingness to do whatever is needed to get the job done. J.D. has a fantastic attitude, is always willing to help his fellow employees and he gets LOTS of compliments from his customers—always has. He is one of our best, a joy to work with, and I cannot think of a better person to receive this award!"

# A Superior Honors Vets/First Responders

In April, A Superior Air Conditioning Company held its second quarterly Veterans & First Responders Appreciation Lunch of the year at Faith Assembly Christian Church, aka The Rock n Roll Church in Miramar Beach. Veterans and First Responders are encouraged to apply online at [ASuperiorAC.com](http://ASuperiorAC.com) for the Free HVAC Giveaway each quarter.

One First Responder nominated a fellow teammate from the Walton County Sheriff's Office for the giveaway. "He has

worked with our agency for 20-plus years," the application began. "In 2009, he was involved in an on-duty shooting where he and other deputies apprehended a man who succumbed to his injuries and was responsible for two Okaloosa Deputies' murders, Burt Lopez and Skip York. After this traumatic incident, he transferred as lieutenant over the Communications Division, where he



flourished in his career. Working now with more than 40 women can be quite challenging, but he has created a fantastic team of unsung heroes who rarely get the credit they deserve. He takes on many tasks, including our county's latest radio tower project, which is a huge undertaking.

"While he is no longer on patrol and in the background, I assure you if he were gone for a week, the ripple effect would be felt all over the agency. I appreciate all he does and cannot think of anyone more deserving of this than him and his family. He lives in a modest home with his wife and 17-year-old son, and there is no central air conditioning unit for their home. They have a window unit in one area of their house to bring some relief from the heat. Thank you for considering this selfless man for your HVAC giveaway."

With that, Jimmy Dallas from A Superior announced the Q2 HVAC Winner, Jason Hall, who stood as all applauded. Some-

times these events get emotional, and this lunch was no exception. When a hardworking individual puts his life on the line to keep others safe – whether safe in our communities or safe in our country – he deserves recognition, appreciation and big thanks from the community. That is why A Superior Air Conditioning Co. started this appreciation event eight years ago. That is why we choose to give away eight units a year to first responders and veterans in need. That is why this event is not only still going strong, but it also continues to flourish and grow as word of mouth spreads and more members of the community join us to give their appreciation.

Will you join us? Our next lunch takes place on **Tuesday, July 11, at Faith Assembly Christian Church, 306 S. Geronimo St. in Miramar Beach, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.** Please help us spread the word to every veteran and first responder you know!



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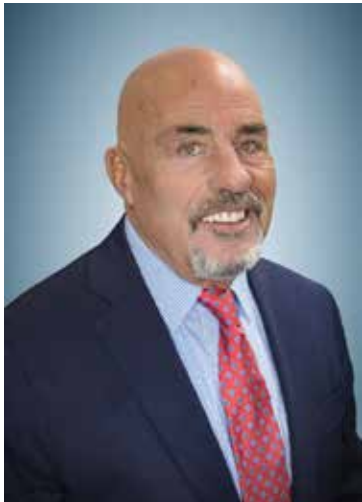
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# Supercharge Your Life



BY RANDY LOCKLIER,  
PRESIDENT, GULF FINANCIAL

Last month we talked of liv-

We each see God in our own way and are free to define a God of our own understanding, a God of love and all that is good. All we need to do is knock and the door will open. It is our willingness to knock that brings us into contact with God.

This simple decision can put us on a rudimentary path to a spiritual manner of living. We can, through prayer and meditation, improve our relationship with our Higher Power. In this heightened state, we will gain knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out. Dream big dreams, for our God is a powerful God. We know that with man all things are not possible,

sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.  
O divine Master, grant that I  
may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Until next month, be happy, be safe, and be blessed!

Visit [gulffinancialgroup.com](http://gulffinancialgroup.com), email [randy@gulffinancialgroup.com](mailto:randy@gulffinancialgroup.com) or call (833) 403-4041 for more details on how to retire happy.



ing life in the present space of the day in front of us. Today, dear readers, we delve into a way to supercharge your life by living in a spiritual fashion. How can we have conscious contact with our Higher Power and find a way to a faith that works wonders?

but not with God. With God all things are possible! Try this as your daily prayer and watch your life changing for the better

### St. Francis Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me



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 Community



Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

# "Reel Talk" from the City of Destin

cussed in an upcoming issue.  
- Tamara Leigh Young, PhD,  
Public Information Manager for the  
World's Luckiest Fishing Village

## Mayor's Plans for Transportation

It's time for more "reel" talk from the mayor and me. This time, the City of Destin's Mayor, Bobby Wagner, and I sat down and discussed public transportation. Please email me at [tyoung@cityofdestin.com](mailto:tyoung@cityofdestin.com) if you'd like to submit a question or have a topic you'd like dis-

**TY:** The other day we met with Rebekah Negron, who is a consultant on behalf of EC Rider and Okaloosa County, and she has been working hard to get public input on ways to improve public transportation in our area. Traffic flow and safety are always priorities for transportation, but what are other considerations for Destin?

**BW:** Our transportation improvements should always prioritize the human experience for



our citizens, workforce, and visitors. We want to create a future for Destin that is not only about moving people efficiently, but also about enhancing their safety and enjoyment in their neighborhoods. That's why we have developed a new "Multi Modal" plan that identifies the gaps and opportunities in our city's transportation network. This plan will undergo a thorough review by various city committees, and I invite you to join me in providing your feedback and suggestions.

**TY:** There's a lot of buzz about the cross town connector in terms of the City's mobility

plan. What are some updates you can share, and how can residents participate in the process?

**BW:** We are thrilled to share some exciting news with you: we have finally acquired all the land required to begin building this project. The project will feature a two-lane road with spacious sidewalks that are lined with trees. These trees will create a beautiful canopy over the pedestrians and cyclists. Parks on both sides of the road will serve as focal points for the nearby communities. These parks will have various amenities that will cater to different needs and preferences. In order to get pub-

lic feedback on what residents would like to see in these parks, we will hold a public workshop in the fall.

**TY:** You referenced the human experience earlier and ways to enhance that. In terms of creative transportation, I've heard you talk about several interesting concepts, but one that seems particularly promising is the potential for a ferry system in the Bay. Can you elaborate on your vision for that?

**BW:** The Chattahoochee bay connects the Florida panhandle with its abundant waterways. This natural gift can be used to improve the mobility and quality of life of the people in Okaloosa and Walton counties. I envision an enclosed A/C ferry system that links Destin, Fort Walton, Shalimar, Niceville, Baytown, Freeport and 30A. This will enable locals and tourists to explore different cities and local businesses with ease and comfort. Moreover, I want to support the workforce that crosses the bay daily. They are the backbone of our community and economy. I am committed to creating an option that saves them money on tolls and time on traffic.

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# A Passion for Caring: Careers in Post-Acute Care Settings

By TERESA HALVERSON,  
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT, DESTINATION  
HEALTH AND REHABILITATION

“The demand for healthcare professionals with expertise in long-term care is growing rapidly. The U.S. will need between 5.7 million and 6.5 million nurses, nurse aides, home health and personal care workers to care for the 27 million Americans who will require long term care by 2050”. (FHCA)

Long-term care is a vital part of the health care system. A career in long-term care is a great stepping stone for individuals who would like to get their foot in the door. This is a great way for recent high school graduates to enter the health care work force along with individuals who are ready to re-enter the workforce. Do you know someone that has an interest in working in health care? Not sure where to get started? Almost every area facility offers entry level positions to get you started. During COVID, Florida implemented a program called “Personal Care Attendant” (PCA) which allows non-licensed health care work-



ers to enter the health care workforce. Facilities offer in-house training and, after 4 months of employment, PCAs are allowed to sit for the State CNA Licensure exam. This is a great way to enter the healthcare workforce, get paid for on-the-job training, and be prepared to take the State Certified Nursing Exam.

Interested in becoming a nurse? Need assistance for college? Several facilities offer tuition reimbursement to assist you in furthering your career. While a career in long-term care offers opportunities for professional growth, it can be very rewarding and provide a great sense of purpose by caring for others. Consider a career today and help make a difference in the lives of others.

When you work in a long-term care or skilled nursing center, you become a hero for residents and their family members. PCAs and CNAs spend time helping residents with their activities of daily living, building a trusting and caring relationship, and letting them know someone cares. Often, these valuable team

members are the first to notice tiny changes that can make an impact on the care residents receive.

Residents and their loved ones will appreciate your care, energy, patience and attention. Consider a career in long term care; start making unforgettable

connections with residents and create lifelong memories. Get ready to make a difference in someone’s life every single day.

For more information, call (850) 654-4588 (After 3 p.m.: (216) 789-9557), email [wecare@destinationhc.com](mailto:wecare@destinationhc.com) or visit [www.DestinationHC.com](http://www.DestinationHC.com).



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 Community

# Leadership Okaloosa Graduates Community Leaders

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Leadership Okaloosa, a well-respected leadership training and development program with a 30-year history, held its annual graduation ceremony at the Northwest Florida State College. The ceremony brought together the college and its partners, including the Crestview, Destin, Niceville-Valparaiso and Fort Walton Beach Chambers of Commerce. Together, they honored the graduates who had completed the rigorous nine-month program designed to enhance their leadership skills and expand their community awareness.

As one of the program graduates, I can attest to the transformative power of Leadership Okaloosa. The curriculum ad-

ministered by Brenda Robinson is exceptionally well-crafted, taking us beyond mere theory and immersing us in practical, hands-on experiences. The blend of in-class training sessions and on-the-ground community engagement gave us a first-hand understanding of how our local government, businesses and community organizations operate.

Meeting and interacting with key community leaders across sectors was enlightening. Our conversations provided insights into the inner workings of our county that would not be otherwise accessible. This deep dive into the county's pulse – its challenges, strengths, and opportunities – was instrumental in forming our outlook. One of



the most noteworthy aspects was the two-day trip to Tallahassee for the Legislative Day meetings, which exposed the partic-

ipants to the legislative process and offered a unique perspective on statewide matters.

However, the heart of the Leadership Okaloosa program lies in its dedication to fostering a sense of community among participants. The group projects not only honed leadership skills but also created strong bonds within the group. It was a chance to learn from one another's diverse experiences and perspectives and appreciate the richness this diversity brings to the community.

Northwest Florida State College hosts the program in conjunction with the local Chambers. With a mission to "Develop, educate and connect individuals to lead and bring value to our diverse community," Leadership Okaloosa has been steadfast in shaping leaders for a thriving Okaloosa County for three decades. Dr.

Devin Stephenson, President of NWFSC, said, "Leadership development, in my opinion, is one of the most important initiatives we can undertake to improve effectiveness and efficiency within our organizations. Leadership is an art, and leaders can improve their skills and abilities through programs like Leadership Okaloosa."

Leadership Okaloosa is now accepting applications for the 2023-2024 Leadership Okaloosa program. The tuition fee for the program is \$975, which includes training materials, instruction, coffee, and lunch during training days at NWFSC, hotel, transportation, some meals during Tallahassee Legislative days, and a graduation celebration. Applications are due by Aug. 25.

Through Leadership Okaloosa, the participants learned how to lead and why leadership matters in driving the county's progress. The connections built, the knowledge gained and the lessons learned are invaluable resources carried forward into the community. As alumni, we proudly join a long line of community leaders shaped by Leadership Okaloosa, ready to play our part in the continuing growth of Okaloosa County. For more information, contact the program at (850) 729-4956 or email [Leadership@NWFSC.edu](mailto:Leadership@NWFSC.edu). To apply, visit <https://www.nwfsc.edu/leadership-okaloosa/>.

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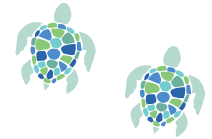
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# Insights for Investors: Stocks, Real Estate and Treasuries Over Time



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BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

A review of the long-term return of stocks versus U.S. Treasuries reveals that a small number of stocks have outperformed US Treasuries and inflation going back all the way to 1926. That result can leave an investor wondering if stocks make sense to invest in at all. The same can be said for real estate as well.

The long-term return for stocks is 8 percent (without reinvesting dividends) and real estate is closer to 4 percent (not considering income). That is according to Peter Earle, an economist at the American Institute of Economic Research. That puts those two classes ahead of Treasuries and inflation, which are both closer to 5 percent and 3 percent over the same time frame. A review of gold also reveals that it has consistently underperformed stocks, as a group, as well. That leaves the investor wondering that if stocks offer the greatest potential for wealth accumulation, where might an investor put his money?

If someone is fortunate enough to have found the right stock, in the right sector at the right time, that probably resulted in outsized gains. Most investors who have accumulated their wealth with equities have done so through the buying and holding of businesses, represented by their stocks, over long periods of time. That also means sticking with a strategy until your needs, objectives, timeframe or comfort level change. We believe that investors can work toward their goals by investing in the American economy (and across the world in some cases) and across all its industries and to be careful not to over allocate to any one area.

What about trends and momentum? Many investors have seen the extraordinary return of a relatively small number of stocks thus far in 2023. Many might wonder if that is indeed the thing to do: Invest where the trends and momentum are currently. The challenge is knowing where that next trend is at any given time.



We think it is critical for investors to look at the importance of sectors, industries, individual companies (or funds of companies) and economic factors over a long-time frame. Time is the main advantage for an investor, as it takes long time periods, consistency, and a good degree of patience to see these returns. In the end, attaining any goal means building a plan and investing according to that plan and trying to lower personal biases as well as the noise from the media.


*Diversification and asset allocation does not ensure a profit or protect against a loss. Holding investments for the long term does not ensure a profitable outcome.*

*Maurice Stouse is a Financial Advisor and the branch manager of The First Wealth Management/ Raymond James. Main office located at The First Bank, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin. Phone (850) 654.8124. Raymond James advisers do not offer -tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymondjames.com.*

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Community



# Fantasy vs. Reality: Navigating the Listing Journey for Your Home Sale

BY GAIL PELTO, REALTOR

Selling a home can be an exciting, yet daunting, experience. As homeowners, we often have an emotional attachment to our properties, making it easy to slip into a fantasy world when it comes to listing our homes for sale. However, it is crucial that you strike a balance between fantasy and reality to ensure a successful and smooth selling process and get where you want to go to next!

### Pricing: The Foundation of Reality

**Fantasy:** It's natural to overestimate the value of our beloved homes, especially when considering the emotional and sentimental attachments we



have to them and any upgrades we've made over the years – who wouldn't like the blue granite in the kitchen?!? In a fantasy scenario, we may believe that potential buyers will readily pay top dollar for every cherished nook, cranny and upgrades we've made.

**Reality:** Pricing your home correctly from the start is essential for attracting serious buyers. Relying on market research and the guidance of a professional real estate agent, like me, is vital to determine a fair and competitive listing price. Being realistic about the value of your proper-

ty will ultimately lead to a quicker sale. The upgrades you've made over the years were for you and you've enjoyed them—some buyers will like them, most are thinking what they're going to do to make the house their home once they become the new owners.

### Staging: Balancing Presentation and Authenticity

**Fantasy:** We often imagine our homes are already a perfectly staged showpiece, akin to the pages of a magazine.

**Reality:** Your home is staged for you. When selling, we want to stage your home to attract as many qualified buyers as possible. It's important to strike a balance between an inviting atmosphere and the authenticity of your living space. Cleanliness, decluttering and depersonalization are key. Aim to create

an environment that allows potential buyers to envision themselves living in the space with their stuff while preserving the character and charm that make your home unique.

### Marketing: Crafting an Effective Narrative

**Fantasy:** In the realm of fantasy, we believe that simply listing our home on popular real estate websites and planting a sign in the yard will automatically attract hordes of interested buyers. We may envision a flurry of offers pouring in, all above asking price, without much effort on our part.

**Reality:** The reality of marketing a home for sale involves thoughtful planning and execution. Engage the services of a professional real estate agent, like me, who has a comprehensive marketing strategy tailored to selling your property. 98% of buyers are working with a real estate agent. So, marketing to all the agents in town is crucial

and your agent has access to all of them. Utilize high-quality photographs, virtual tours and well-crafted descriptions to highlight the best features of your home. Leveraging online platforms, social media and traditional marketing avenues help reach a wider audience and attract qualified buyers.

### Negotiations: Balancing Expectations and Pragmatism

**Fantasy:** We may dream of a seamless negotiation process where buyers eagerly accept our asking price, no questions asked. In this fantasy, we are unwilling to compromise and believe that our home is worth every penny we're asking for.

**Reality:** Negotiations are an integral part of the selling process. Being prepared to engage in give-and-take discussions is crucial. Consider your agent's advice, be open to reasonable

*Continued on next page*



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# Reunification: The Primary Goal of Foster Care

BY RAMSEY LAWRENCE,  
EMBRACE FLORIDA KIDS

For many of us, remembering our childhood brings back happy memories: holidays spent with family, playing outside with siblings and friends, field trips, summer camps and home-cooked meals with parents. For thousands of children in Florida, this is not the case.

June was National Reunification Month, a designation created to shine a light on the goal of foster care – reuniting children with their families – and to celebrate the successes of families who have alleviated conditions in the home to prevent foster care altogether. Many people understand how foster care works and the support it provides for families across our communities. However, most people do not realize the primary goal of fostering is reunification, not adoption.

While there are many organizations across Florida doing great work to support our fam-



ilies in need, few have the history, reach and impact of Embrace Florida Kids. We provide services across the Florida Panhandle as a nonprofit ministry dedicated to providing homes, healing and hope to children coming from families in crisis.

Embrace Florida Kids is caring for kids in Northwest Florida from the cradle to college – and our impact keeps growing. In 2022, we supported nearly 1,000 children and families throughout Florida suffering from neglect, abuse, or abandonment.

One of the core services we offer is family preservation. Keeping a family intact can of-



ten be an intensive program that does not happen overnight. So, how does it work?

Our staff supports family unity by working closely with parents and children before reunification whenever possible. When a parent or primary caregiver begins working toward reunification, we provide them with customized support to ensure a safe transition process for children and youth coming out of foster care back into the home of their parent or primary caregiver. This includes parenting skills and education, community resources, recovery support from addiction and targeted intervention to resolve stressors.



Once a child's safety is ensured, our goal is to reunite them with their family. By working proactively with parents and primary caregivers, we strive to prevent future abuse or neglect.

Federal law requires every state to work toward reunification for 12 months in most cases for children entering foster care. During this time, Embrace Florida Kids' staff are available 24/7 to offer crisis intervention. We offer all services directly inside the family's home and community, ensuring we treat all family members with empathy and compassion.

In 2022, our family preservation program generated a 92

percent success rate for keeping families intact. But there is still much work to be done to ensure the health and well-being of Florida's children and families in crisis. We need financial support from individuals, businesses and organizations who are committed to uplifting Northwest Florida's children.

The funds we receive go directly toward providing homes, healing, and hope for families to safely raise their children. The single greatest investment we can make in our communities is caring for children by equipping their parents through family preservation.

I encourage you to learn how you can make a difference for Florida's families by supporting our mission at Embrace Florida Kids. The children we serve need advocates who will take notice and act on their behalf. Together, we can be a true difference-maker in their lives.

For more information, visit [embraceflkids.org](http://embraceflkids.org).

## FANTASY

*continued from previous page*

offers and weigh the potential benefits of reaching a compromise. Keeping a pragmatic mindset allows for a smoother negotiation process and increas-

es the likelihood of a successful sale.

**Conclusion:** Navigating the journey of listing your home for sale requires a delicate balance between fantasy and reality. While it's natural to have

emotional attachments and envision an ideal outcome, it's essential to ground yourself in the realities of the market, pricing, staging, marketing and negotiations. By embracing a realistic approach, working with profes-

sionals who do this all the time, and staying adaptable, you can increase your chances of a successful sale that meets both your financial goals and the expectations of potential buyers. If you have questions, would like to

talk about the sale of your property, or just want to chat about real estate, then call me – (850) 374-0454 or send an email to [gail.pelto@kw.com](mailto:gail.pelto@kw.com). I'm here to help!



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# Stay Safe During a Tornado

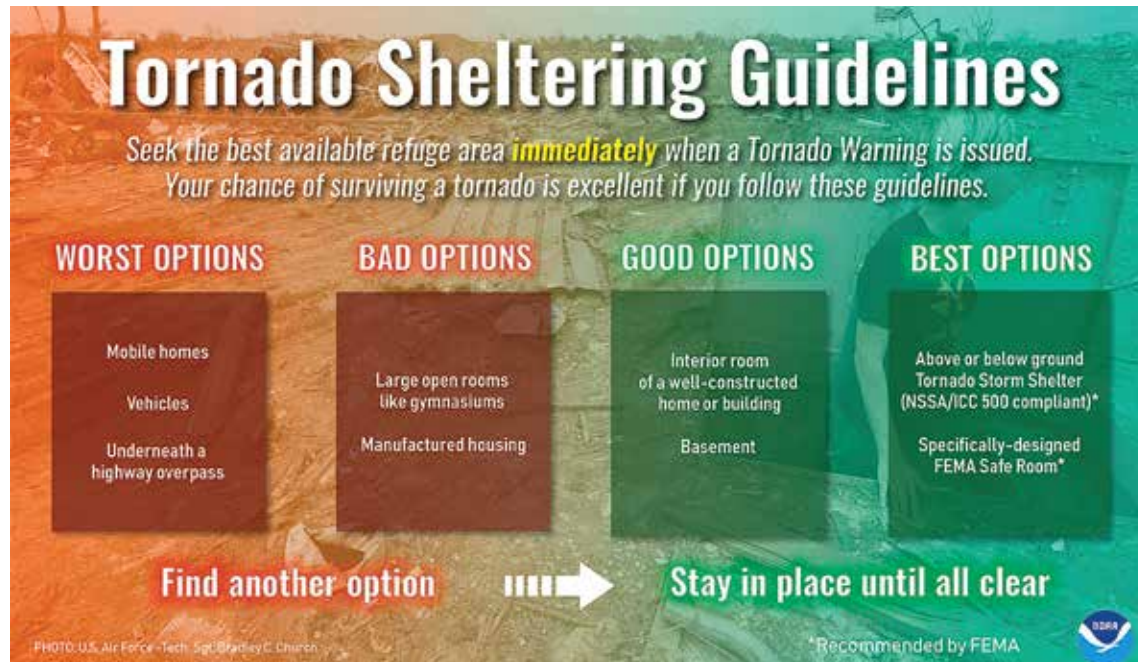
## Be Prepared. Stay Calm. Think Clearly. Act Quickly.

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms with furiously rotating columns of air extending from the base of a thunderstorm down to the ground. And those in our area can come upon us fast. They can occur at any time of the year day or night, and are capable of completely destroying well-made structures, uprooting trees and hurling objects through the air like deadly missiles. Advance preparation and recognizing emergency alerts are vitally important.

It seems we are seeing more in our area lately. Following an EF-1 tornado that spun through Miramar Beach in June and a prior EF-2 occurring in January, Destin Life wants to convey the importance of emergency alert systems and how to be prepared.

Officials say Okaloosa County relies primarily on smartphone technology and emergency alert systems to warn people about severe weather notifications electronically. In the event of an emergency, electronic alerts are sent to your smartphone to notify you about impending severe weather. With the exception of Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field, there are no tornado sirens in Okaloosa county. If you've moved here from another area or state that has sirens, you might have wondered why and there are several reasons:

- A siren provides only one warning and doesn't specify the



type of emergency, nor does it provide information on the recommended course of action you should take.

- In many places, Okaloosa County has buildings that are hurricane-proof, with thick concrete walls and roofs; sirens would be ineffective to transmit sounds through heavy materials.

- The emergency alert system uses current technology and cellphone towers to pinpoint and alert people in our local area. Whenever you start to see storm clouds closing in, keep your phone handy and ready to receive those alerts if necessary.

If you haven't already, make sure you familiarize yourself

with terms used to identify a tornado hazard.

A **tornado watch** means weather conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop and are possible in your area. Monitor NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for the latest weather forecasts, or download a weather app. Even blowing debris or the sound of an approaching tornado may alert you.

A **tornado warning** means either a tornado has been sighted or detected by radar, is already occurring or expected to develop shortly in your area (such as a funnel cloud rotation), and you need to take shelter or move to your pre-designat-

ed place of safety immediately; there is imminent danger to life and property to those in the path of the storm.

Some tornadoes develop without warning and oftentimes can be hidden by trees or rain. Be prepared to act quickly. Planning and practicing specifically how and where you take shelter is a matter of survival. Have a family communications plan, especially for when family members might be in different places. Keep a Ready Kit for at least three days of self-sufficiency.

Storm cellars or basements provide the best protection. If underground shelter is not available, an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor is the best option. In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible. If you are in a mobile home, consider moving to a sturdy building (shelter). If a tornado warning is issued, you will not have much time to act.

When a tornado warning is issued, put on sturdy shoes and go to a safe place and protect yourself from glass and other flying objects. If you are outside, hurry to a safe place in a nearby sturdy building. If you are in a car and you see large objects flying past while you are driving, pull over and park. You now have two choices:

- Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible.

- If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, in a deep ditch for instance, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.

If you live in an apartment or condo that is on an upper floor, get to the lowest level of the building.

After a tornado, local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news and instructions as they become available. Remain out of damaged buildings and stay clear of downed power lines. Report downed lines to your local power company. If you are trained, help injured or trapped people. Check on others who might require special assistance, such as the elderly, children and people with disabilities.

To sign up for the Okaloosa County Emergency Alert System, visit <https://myokaloosa.com/ps/emergency-management>.

## Trees and Storms

Much of North Florida has been experiencing rain, thunderstorms and even some wind damage and this is just the beginning of the 2023 tropical storm season. Because of the likelihood of tree damage, it is wise to take a look at the condition of trees on your property.

Falling trees and flying landscape debris during a storm can cause damage. Evaluate your landscape for potential tree

hazards. Pruning or removing trees once a hurricane watch has been announced is risky and tree trimming debris left along the street is hazardous.

Now is a good time to remove dead or dying trees, to prune decayed or dead branches and to stake newly planted trees. Also, inspect your trees for signs of disease or insect infestation that

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Residential and Commercial



Continued on page 31

# FPL's Efforts to Improve Storm Resiliency, Overall Service Reliability in Okaloosa County

In 2023, FPL plans to make a number of upgrades in Okaloosa County as part of an ongoing effort to enhance day-to-day reliability and improve resiliency in the face of severe weather. These investments include moving more power lines underground, strengthening overhead lines and installing more intelligent devices along the energy grid to help detect potential problems and restore power faster when outages do occur. The investments have the added benefit of improving day-to-day reliability for customers as well.



Crews install a concrete power pole in Northwest Florida to improve resiliency during hurricanes and severe weather and also enhance reliability during day-to-day conditions.

## FPL plans to make the following improvements in and near Okaloosa County this year:

1. Strengthening six main power lines, including those that serve critical services and are necessary for communities to recover faster after major storms.
2. Maintaining trees and vegetation – a common cause of power outages, particularly during hurricanes and severe weather – along 937 miles of power lines.
3. Installing smart grid technology, including 31 automated switches on main and neighborhood power lines to help detect problems and restore service faster when outages occur.
4. Inspecting four main power lines and equipment using infrared technology to detect issues before they cause a power interruption.

## FPL made the following improvements in Okaloosa County from 2019 – 2022:

1. Strengthened 28 main power lines, including those that serve critical services.
2. Inspected 23,396 power poles for strength.
3. Installed smart grid technology, including 1,663 automated switches on main and neighborhood power lines.
4. Inspected 391 main power lines and equipment using infrared technology.

technology, including 1,663 automated switches on main and neighborhood power lines.

4. Inspected 391 main power lines and equipment using infrared technology.

“No energy grid is outage-proof; however, we’ve made and are continuing to make significant investments to strengthen the grid to make it more resilient to severe weather,” said J.T. Young, vice president of FPL Northwest Florida. “These upgrades also benefit our customers each day by delivering more reliable service to power their homes and businesses.”

Strengthening power poles, managing trees and vegetation near power lines, installing smart grid technology to fix problems before they affect customers and using robots and drones to regularly inspect equipment have all helped FPL improve its service reliability by 41% since 2006. These upgrades have helped reduce both the number and duration of outages, as well as the number of momentary interruptions or power flickers.

“Delivering more reliable service and being there for our customers when they need us most is part of the value we bring. This includes investing in innovative solutions and technology that help keep the lights on,” said Bernard Johnson, local senior external affairs manager for FPL. “We work year-round to ensure our customers in Northwest Florida experience fewer power interruptions and faster restorations after major storms.”

In 2022, for the seventh time in eight years, FPL was awarded the ReliabilityOne® National Reliability Award. Presented by PA Consulting, the award is widely regarded in the energy industry as one of the most prestigious honors and reinforces

FPL’s commitment to provide customers with the nation’s most reliable service.

As America’s largest electric utility, Florida Power & Light Company serves more customers and sells more power than any other utility, providing clean, affordable, reliable electricity to approximately 5.8 million accounts, or more than 12 million people. FPL operates one of the most fuel efficient and cleanest power generation fleets in the U.S and in 2022 won the ReliabilityOne® National Reliability Award for the seventh time in the last eight years. The company was also recognized by Escalent in 2022 as one of the most trusted U.S. electric utilities for the ninth consecutive year.

FPL is a subsidiary of Juno

Beach, Florida-based NextEra Energy, Inc. (NYSE: NEE). NextEra Energy is ranked No. 1 in the electric and gas utilities industry in Fortune’s 2023 list of “World’s Most Admired Companies” and recognized on Fortune’s 2021 list of companies that “Change the World.” NextEra Energy is also the parent company of NextEra Energy Resources, LLC, which, together with its affiliated entities, is the world’s largest generator of renewable energy from the wind and sun and a world leader in battery storage. For more information about NextEra Energy companies, visit these websites: [www.NextEraEnergy.com](http://www.NextEraEnergy.com), [www.FPL.com](http://www.FPL.com), [www.NextEraEnergyResources.com](http://www.NextEraEnergyResources.com).

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 Education

## Local School District Excelled in 2022-23



BY MARCUS CHAMBERS, OKALOOSA COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

We are excited to provide you with a snapshot of some of the

many amazing things that happened in the Okaloosa County School District during the 2022-2023 School Year!

Our students went above and beyond this year, representing the Okaloosa County School District and their schools at the district, regional, state and even national levels! They excelled in science fairs, app challenges, art shows, band and choral Musical Performance Assessments (MPAs), academic tournaments, JROTC Pass in Reviews, the-

ater performances and athletic competitions. Teams and individuals won state and national titles, and we are beyond proud of their hard work and determination, as well as the educators, coaches, parents, and community members who were there to support them! To see some of these achievements, we invite you to visit the websites and social media accounts of our schools and District!



Possible design for 4th and 5th grade wing at Destin Elementary.



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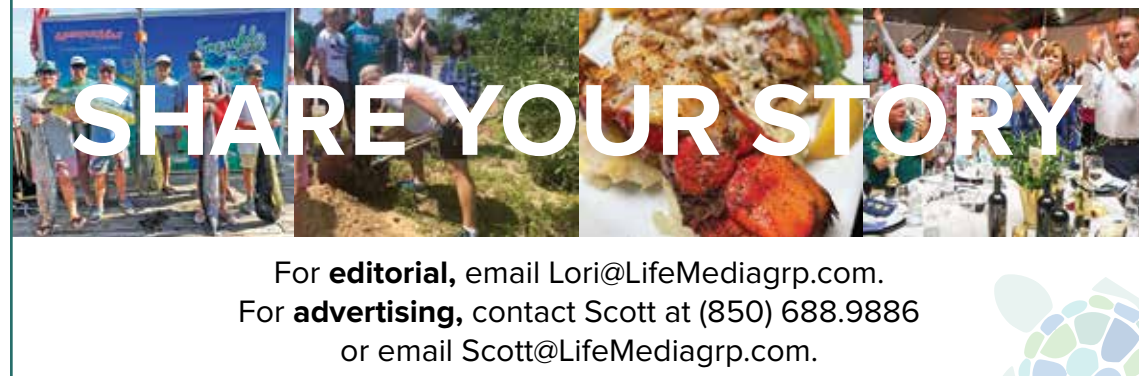
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### A few highlights:

- All 37 OCSD schools earned the state's Purple Star School of Distinction designation.

- OCSD was awarded an A-rating by the Florida Department of Education based on student academic performance, one of 14 A districts out of 67 in Florida.

- OCSD received Academically High Performing School District status from the Department of Education based on academics, financial accountability and class size compliance. Okaloosa is the only district to receive this designation every year since 2013.

- Entered the 2022-23 school year recognized as one of 38 School Districts of Distinction worldwide by Cognia, a school accreditation agency. Cognia serves 36,000 public and private institutions from early learning through high school in more than 90 countries.

- Our school district completed district-wide School Security Upgrade projects, including single points of entry, enhanced camera and communication systems and perimeter fencing.

- This year, we continued our bus fleet refresh process with the purchase of 15 new air-conditioned school buses to continue our bus fleet replacement cycle.

- Rated No. 3 School District in the state of Florida by Niche.com.

- Transitioned to a new platform (FOCUS) for parents and students to access grades, attendance and more online or through a mobile app.

- More than 6,600 volunteers registered through the Raptor Volunteer Management system, giving almost 62,000 volunteer hours back to the schools. This represents 40 percent of our ap-

proved volunteers.

- New Construction: Began design work on a fourth- and fifth-grade expansion at Destin Elementary School among others in Okaloosa County. Continued new construction projects at 14 campuses including a multi-purpose building for Fort Walton Beach High School.

### Our students' mental health is a priority! A few highlights:

- Initiated a mental health campaign to promote monthly themes related to mental wellness.

- Initiated an anti-vaping campaign in secondary schools.

- Increased the number of providers for the OCSD school-based mental health program with the addition of two district mental health counselors, bringing the total to 21.

- Partnered with CDAC to add 11 full-time health providers to 11 high-need elementary schools.

- Completed Hope Squad integration in all elementary schools centered around kindness. Hope Squad, a peer-to-peer suicide prevention and intervention program, was introduced in every secondary school in 2021.

- Implemented a district child study team to coordinate and assist in improving the intervention process for struggling students at each school.

- Established a paid internship program to recruit and retain school psychologists and mental health counselors, as both are hard-to-fill positions.

- Created and delivered voluntary Professional Development for Understanding the Brain States for Emotional Regulation (Surviving to Thriving).

# Accessories Can Give Your Space Personality



BY KIM SCHNEIDER

Accessories can complete a space, give it personality, add a pop of color and complete your

items that speak to you. Try to resist buying a bunch of items from a chain store or your space will end up looking less like you and more like a department store.

**Hanging your art:** We always hear “hang your art at eye level” but that depends on the height of who’s hanging the art. A good rule of thumb is to hang your artwork so its midpoint is between 57 and 60 inches from the floor. In rooms with ceilings over eight feet, hang your art-

work, a statue, books, etc.

**Mix and match:** Create visual interest by varying the textures of your objects and color. Choose accessories that vary in height, this encourages your eyes to move around the room. Don’t be afraid to mix a beautiful bouquet of roses in a less formal vessel. Kind of like wearing faded blue jeans with pearls.

**Add something green:** Always add greenery in a room to give it an organic feel. It can be

a live tree in the corner of your room or a small faux plant on a shelf. Fresh or dried flowers help bring an organic feel, color and personality to a room as well.

**Use trays:** Create a grouping (example: a plant or floral, a candle and a figurine) in a decorative tray and place them on your coffee table, dresser, kitchen island, etc.

I hope the next time you go shopping for accessories you’ll make sure it speaks to your soul

and will help to tell your guests something about you or your family history. Before you purchase it, is it the right size? Will it group well with something you already have or is it large enough to stand on its own?

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room. Your home tells your story in its details. Here are a few ways you can decorate a space that is uniquely you.

**Start with a blank canvas:** When you’re ready to start accessorizing your space, start with a blank canvas. Clear everything out, except the large furniture items. It’s much easier to rearrange the furniture if that’s on your agenda. A space free of décor will help you visualize where you want to place, hang and group all of your treasures.

**Collect over time:** Collect accessories over time and select

work a little higher than 60 inches off the floor. When hanging a picture above the sofa or dresser aim for no less than six inches and no higher than 12 inches above the top of your furniture. My personal preference is about eight inches.

**Play with color:** Aside from painting, accessories can be the least expensive way to add color to your space. Decorative pillows are a great way to add color and texture to a room. I love mixing prints, fabrics and pillow shapes. Make sure to add a pop of vibrancy that speaks to you and tells a story. This can be

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# Victory Village to Receive \$2 Million for Military Retirement Community

Victory Village will receive \$2 million from Florida's Framework for Freedom Budget for fiscal year 2023-24 signed by Governor Ron DeSantis on June 15, 2023. The funding will be used to purchase 80 acres of land from the U.S. Air Force which will be used to develop a military senior living community with resources and services for wounded warriors and their caregivers.

"I am grateful to Speaker Paul Renner and Governor DeSantis for their support of Victory Village," Rep. Patt Maney said. "The Panhandle Delegation led by Senators Doug Broxson and Jay Trumbull understand what an important resource this will be to Okaloosa County and our military widows and aging veterans."

Victory Village will be locat-



"Our research for Victory Village has shown that the aging process for wounded warriors with physical and mental injuries of war will not be typical. Victory Village will honor aging injured service members with an expert understanding of their unique requirements that will be needed so they may live their best lives with others who have shared similar experiences."

Victory Village plans to offer a continuum of care complete with on-site skilled nursing and will also be home to surviving spouses of retired enlisted service members and retired enlisted couples of all military branches of service.

"It will be a senior living community like no other," McLean said.

According to the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA), Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation after California and Texas with more than 1.5 million veterans.

ed adjacent to Air Force Enlisted Village (AFEV). Plans for the community include multiple neighborhoods for 800 people to reside, a community center, a multidominational chapel, a fitness center and pool, walking paths, retail services, and a fire and EMS substation to also serve AFEV and the Poquito Bayou neighborhood.

"We're honored to receive this funding, and we're grateful to our legislative representatives for working in support of our vision for Victory Village," AFEV and Victory Village President/CEO Brooke McLean said.

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# Lady Ray's Celebrates One Year in Business with Launch of a New Pastry Bar Concept

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights, located just to the west of Target in Destin at 833 Harbor Boulevard, celebrates its first year in business with the opening of its new pastry bar concept and the launch of a new culinary brand, "Brother Tim's Sweet Heat Collection."

The pastry bar offers a combination of contemporary flights of fancy and time-honored classics. Favorites include Lady Ray's signature Chocolate Buttercream Croissant, Mocha Latte Bombes, Key Lime bites, fresh baked Dunker Cookies and, of course, plenty of coffee and bubbly. Its rich and playful use of color is as bright and alluring as the confectionery and sweets on display.



The Brother Tim's Sweet Heat collection leads off with Lady Ray's staple Sweet Heat pepper jelly, a condiment you'll find on many of the cafe's sandwiches and charcuterie boards. As the team at Lady Ray's Culinary Delights isn't necessarily looking to reinvent the wheel, partnering with like-minded businesses is vital to their success allowing them to also offer local favorites such as candied jalapenos from JC's Gourmet and a Hot Honey from NoWall Honey Farm in Defuniak Springs.



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Tim and Rachel Vondell, both from upstate New York, continue to stay true to their roots. The immersive and intimate environment created by the soft lighting, uptempo music and new high-top seating provides guests with comfort and relaxation.

The pastry bar is open for coffee, pastries and libations Thursday-Saturday 2-8 p.m. and offers brunch on Sunday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., featuring a different flavor of french toast each week.

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**AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar**

Since 1984, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hang out known for fresh oysters and cold beer has grown into one of the most iconic "hot spots" on the Destin Harbor. From its humble beginning shucking oysters off the deck behind a small trail-



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**Austons on 98**

Offering an amazing raw oyster 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 specialties include little neck clams, 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 for any season's sports. Happy Hour Specials from Monday-Friday, 2-5 p.m., \$2 off all bar drinks and Monday-Friday from 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. \$3 off a dozen raw oysters. Bucket Specials All day every day. Auston's on 98 is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and features its own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce." See full menu at austonson98.com.

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**Boathouse Oyster Bar**

Oysters, live music and a local's vibe, 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 Boathouse 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

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Fondue into summer at locally-owned The Melting Pot Destin. 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 and choice of salads. Cook your main entrée. For

Continued on next page

## DESTIN DINING

*continued from previous page*

dessert, choose a warm fondue bowl of fresh melted chocolate of your choice. There's also "fast fondues" and one-course fondues with cheese, salad, entrée or chocolate.

New! Beat the heat and take a break midday for lunch! The Melting Pot is now OPEN for lunch every weekend! Bring your friends, family or come in for a lunch date Saturdays and Sundays at Noon at Melting Pot Destin. All of your favorite Fondue items such as creamy cheese fondue, fresh salads, premium meats and veggies, and decadent chocolate fondue are now available for lunch!

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### Ovide at Hotel Effie

For a dining experience like no other, Ovide, the first restaurant in Florida by James Beard Award-winning chef, Hugh Acheson (known for BRAVO TV's Top Chef), embraces the fresh, forward flavors and local seafood of the Gulf Coast. The menu showcases celebrity chef Acheson's creativity and passion for distinctive ingredients and cooking techniques by fusing coastal cuisine with a sophisticated French influence. Ovide embraces the fresh, forward flavors and local seafood of the Gulf Coast.

Mondays at 5 p.m., enjoy some of Chef Acheson's favorite dishes with a seasonal prix fixe menu. Choose one starter, one entrée and one dessert for just \$50. Ask your server about the wine pairing option. Breakfast: 7:00 am to 11 am

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### Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast? Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast from 8-11 a.m., seven days a week. Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mimosas and bloody marys. Watch Tailfins' sushi chef create right in front 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. Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than 70 big screen TVs. Be sure to check out the new Video Wall upstairs, possibly the largest indoor TV on the harbor.

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### 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.

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 Dining

# ORO Italian Street Food Celebrates Grand Opening at City Food Hall Destin Commons

ORO Italian Street Food, an authentic Italian street food dining concept and the first of its kind for Destin, held its grand opening in June at City Food Hall in Destin Commons. Attendees were treated to a delightful culinary experience, indulging in a range of signature menu items meticulously crafted by the husband and wife duo, chefs Massimo and Elisabetta Tundo. The event showcased the restaurant's commitment to delivering the most authentic Italian street food in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Elisabetta, chef and owner of ORO Italian Street Food,



said "We were thrilled to share the ORO experience with our friends, family, and esteemed guests. Their overwhelming positive feedback and support have further fueled our passion for bringing the best of Italian street food to the Destin community."

ORO Italian Street Food is

a family-owned restaurant that brings the streets of Italy to your table. Its menu features authentic Italian street food made with fresh and locally sourced ingredients imported from Italy. The dishes are inspired by the vibrant culture and diverse culinary traditions of Italy. For more information about ORO Italian



Street Food, visit [cityfoodhall.com/oro](http://cityfoodhall.com/oro) or on Facebook and Instagram at @OROIItalianStreetFood.

Destin Mayor Bobby Wagner also attended and said afterward that he is thrilled to share his experience at ORO Italian Street Food with the Destin community. "The food is authentic, fresh, and delicious, the service is friendly and helpful and the atmosphere is elegant and open," he said. "I highly recommend

ORO Italian Street Food to anyone who loves Italian food. They are a gem in our city, and I can't wait to go back."

Destin Chamber of Commerce CEO Shane Moody also praised the restaurant's dedication to culinary excellence, saying, "ORO Italian Street Food adds an exciting new dimension to our local dining scene."

For more information about ORO Italian Street Food, visit [cityfoodhall.com/oro](http://cityfoodhall.com/oro).

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## Local Business with National Impact Expands in the Area

Locally-owned G.S. Gelato is not only a national business, but is a leading manufacturer of gelato, sorbetto and non-dairy frozen desserts for foodservice and private label retail. It recently announced an expansion of its Fort Walton Beach manufacturing complex, and will add 25,000 square feet, bringing the state-of-the-art facility to a total of 65,000 square feet.

"When we came here from Italy in 1996, we knew in our hearts that one day gelato would be the evolution of the ice cream industry," said Simona Faroni, co-founder of G.S. Gelato, along with her husband Guido Tremolini.

"G" is Guido Tremolini and "S" is Simona Faroni. Twenty years ago, Tremolini was running a restaurant in Italy and his wife was selling Redken hair products there. There were hundreds of gelato shops in his home town, Tremolini said. On a trip to Florida to visit friends in the 1990s, the husband and wife noticed the lack of stores and restaurants selling gelato.

So, they moved to the United States. They spoke no English. It was as if they were re-born in



another country, Faroni said.

"We began with just 1,000 square feet, and when business rapidly grew, we chose a new location with plenty of space to ensure room for future growth. The expansion will enable us to successfully meet the growing demand for our products and to better serve our customers around the nation. We are thrilled to commence the next chapter of G.S. Gelato."

The new addition includes dry and frozen warehouse storage, significantly increasing production capacity and overall efficiency. Upon completion, G.S. Gelato expects to add nearly 30 staff members to support operations. Since its inception, the company has continuously reinvested in itself in order to remain on the cutting edge of innovation.

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# Current Demand: Summer Escapes and Travel Beyond



ers feel strongly that travel with family and friends is a top priority, often referred to as the three F's—Family, Friends and Fun. Cruises and international travel are headlining the competition. Even though employment and wage levels could present strong headwinds for travel demand, all current indications are that the “Experience Economy” is not going anywhere.

So, if you're looking for that amazing travel experience, I highly recommend a few below:



By JODELL HAVERFIELD,  
HAVE TRAVEL MEMORIES

There are still two main dynamics affecting current travel: Supply and Demand. If I hear the phrase “pent-up demand” one more time, I think I'll scream! Unfortunately, it perfectly describes the way it is. Many people have been unable to travel due to Covid regulations until now; they have finally all lifted and the floodgates have opened. Now, not just airlines, but even cruise lines are overbooking. And, I hesitate to mention the price increases. While pent-up demand is inherently temporary, the good news is travel is expected to remain one of the strongest areas of consumer spending.

Credit Cards are reporting that despite inflation and interest rates, consumers' discretionary spending is proving more resilient than during prior downturns as they continue to prioritize travel and experiences over things and eating out. Consum-

**Any time of year is the best time to go to Tahiti.** With year-round weekly departures, Windstar is ready to take you there. They offer the most seven-day departures of any cruise line with longer 10-day itineraries to the Tuamotus and 14-day voyages to the remote Marquesas.

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[HaveTravelMemories.com](http://HaveTravelMemories.com). Located at 34990 Emerald Coast Pkwy, Suite 300, Destin, Florida 32541.

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 Off the Hook

# Seeing Bears In Unexpected Areas? Here's What You Should Do

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reminds us that juvenile black bears are starting to leave their mothers' home ranges in search of new homes of their own. Between the ages of 1½ -2½ years, juvenile or yearling bears start dispersing in spring and summer, with spring marking a return to activity for bears after limited movements in winter. During this time, juvenile bears may be seen in unexpected areas as they travel across a wide range of areas in search of a new location to settle down.

In recent weeks, bears have wandered into Orlando, Tampa, Jacksonville and on the beach in Destin!

"The most important thing people can do to help these bears is to leave them alone," said the FWC's Bear Management Program Coordinator, Mike Orlando. "Give them plenty of space and let them move along on their own."

Black bears are generally not aggressive. But, like any wild animal, if they feel threatened, they can become defensive. Dogs have been involved in more than half of the incidents of people getting injured by bears in Flor-



On Sunday, June 11, a black bear was spotted swimming in the Gulf of Mexico near Silver Dunes condominiums in Destin.

ida. When walking dogs, keep them close to you – preferably on a non-retractable leash – and be aware of your surroundings, which is good practice for preventing conflicts with both bears and other wildlife. Before letting your dog out at night, flip lights on and off and bang on the door to give bears and other wildlife a chance to leave the area.

As bears become more active this time of year, they cross more roadways. For your own safety and to avoid hitting bears and other wildlife, remember to slow down when driving, particularly on rural highways at dawn or dusk. Watch for road signs identifying bear crossing areas. Each year in Florida, an average of 250 bears are killed after being hit by vehicles.

If you have bears in your area, follow these additional BearWise® Basics to help prevent conflicts with bears:

**1: Never feed or approach bears**

Feeding bears can make them lose their natural fear of people.

It is illegal in Florida to intentionally feed bears or leave out food or garbage that will attract bears and cause conflicts.

Getting close to a wild animal is dangerous.

**2: Secure food and garbage**

Store garbage in a sturdy shed or garage and then put it out on the morning of pickup rather than the night before.

If not stored in a secured building, modify your existing garbage can to make it more bear-resistant or use a bear-resistant container.

Secure commercial garbage in bear-resistant dumpsters.

Protect gardens, beehives, compost and livestock with electric fencing.

Pick ripe fruit from trees and bushes and remove fallen fruit from the ground.

**3: Remove or secure bird and wildlife feeders**

Remove wildlife feeders. If wildlife feeders are left up, only put enough food out for wildlife to finish eating before dark and make feeders bear-resistant.

**4: Never leave pet food outdoors**

Feed pets indoors. If feeding pets outdoors, only put food outside for short time periods and bring in leftover food and dishes after each feeding.

**5: Clean and store grills**

Clean and degrease grills and smokers after each use.

If mobile, store them in a secure shed or garage.

**6: Alert neighbors to bear activity**

If you see a bear, let your neighbors know. Share tips on how to avoid conflicts with bears.

Encourage your homeowner's association or local government to institute bylaws or ordinances to require trash be kept secure.

Having conflicts with bears? Call one of the FWC's five re-

gional offices. Go to [MyFWC.com/Contact](http://MyFWC.com/Contact), and click on "Contact Regional Offices" to find the phone number for your region. If you want to report someone who is either harming bears or intentionally feeding them, call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at (888) 404-FWCC (3922).

More information is available at [MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear), where you can access the "Guide to Living in Bear Country" brochure. Find additional ways to be BearWise at [BearWise.org](http://BearWise.org). Thirty-eight states, including Florida, support BearWise®, an innovative program that helps people learn ways to responsibly live around bears. Help it help bears and other wildlife by purchasing the Conserve Wildlife license plate at [WildlifeFlorida.org/CWT](http://WildlifeFlorida.org/CWT).

The Florida black bear is a conservation success story, increasing from a population estimated to have been as low as 300 bears in the 1970s to more than 4,000 bears statewide today.



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# NWFL Regional Aquatic Center Set for Huge Economic Impact

A new, regional Aquatic Center, a state-of-the-art aquatic facility, is set to be constructed in Niceville, which would include a 50-meter, Olympic-sized pool. The center aims to provide a wide range of aquatic programs for locals and promote community well-being as well as stimulate economic growth.

On June 13, the NWFL Regional Aquatic Center presented its highly anticipated Economic Impact Analysis to the Niceville

Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

The analysis, conducted by expert economists and consultants, brought forth the economic benefits the Center could bring to the area, including an impact of \$235 million on the local economy and the creation of more than 450 jobs. Evaluating the direct and indi-



rect effects of the project on local businesses, job creation, tourism and overall economic growth, the analysis highlighted local benefits such as increased visitor spending and job boosts in the hospitality and service industries with the increase of tourists to the area, employment opportunities and tax revenue gener-

ation, all key factors that would contribute to local economic impact.

One advantage of the new aquatic center of this size in the Southeast Swim Region is the impact from visitors and tourists. Early projections show that there could be as many as 12 events per year to start. If increased by two per year, by 2035, the Center could see up to 32 major events annually.

## See the Underwater Museum of Art for free

Locals and summer visitors traveling by car can access the Underwater Museum of Art (UMA) via Grayton Beach State Park, which offers parking, showers, restrooms, changing rooms and a beach walkover. Once you arrive at the park, the UMA site lies in approximately 58 feet of water and at a distance of less than one mile from shore and is accessible by boat or kayak.

Now through Sept. 4, enjoy free day-use admission to Grayton Beach State Park courtesy

of The Walton County Tourist Development Council.

Visitors who wish to experience the UMA site at-depth should be certified divers who are comfortable swimming in open water. The coordinates for the Super Reef Anchor Point are N 30°18.754 / W 86°09.521. Out of respect for the art, boaters are asked to anchor on or near the Super Reef Anchor Point to protect the sculptures from unintended contact or damage.

Dive30A in Grayton Beach

is able to shuttle divers directly from Grayton Beach to the UMA site. Emerald Coast Scuba in Destin schedules regular trips to the site also.

There are seven more sculptures scheduled for deployment this summer (weather permitting), which will expand the museum to a total of 41 sculptures.

We'd love to see any images you capture while diving! Tag your photos with #UMAFL or @UMAFFlorida on Facebook and Instagram.



## TREES AND STORMS

*continued from page 20*

may further weaken them.

Professional help sometimes is your best option when dealing with larger jobs. Property damage could be reduced by having a professional arborist evaluate unhealthy, injured or questionable trees to assess risk and treat problems.

Hiring a certified arborist can be a worthwhile investment. To find a certified arborist in your area contact the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) at (678) 367-0981 or online at [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com) or the Florida Chapter of ISA at (941) 342-0153 or online at [www.floridaisa.org](http://www.floridaisa.org).

Consider removing trees that have low wind resistance, are

at the end of their lifespan and have the potential to endanger lives or property. For example, laurel oaks are relatively short-lived, beginning to decline in only about 50 years, and they tend to lose their strength and stability faster than most other oaks. They have low wind resistance and also have brittle wood and a shallow root system. If you have a big, old laurel oak

within falling distance of your home, you may consider removing it before the next storm.

A UF/IFAS Extension publication titled "Wind and Trees: Lessons Learned from Hurricanes" includes lessons learned from research conducted after 10 hurricanes: <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/FR173>

A UF/IFAS Extension site on Trees and Hurricanes with

a wealth of information on everything from chainsaw safety to preparing your property for hurricane season can be accessed at [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/trees\\_and\\_hurricanes](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/trees_and_hurricanes).

*Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, June 19, 2023*



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Sports

# NWFSC Women's Softball Play in National Championship

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Another championship-caliber team from Northwest Florida State College, the women's softball team earned a spot in the NJCAA National Championship. The sun shone bright and hard on a high-stakes diamond at Oxford, Ala., as Northwest Florida faced off against the spirited Florida SouthWestern Buccaneers. The Raiders fell short, falling to the Buccaneers 10-6 in a truly epic showdown, but not before posting a record-shattering year.

Layla Thompson, one of the dazzling stars of the Raiders, ignited the early momentum, smashing a two-run home run off the scoreboard, thrusting the Raiders into the lead. However, the Buccaneers quickly responded, showcasing their might and mettle. Feline Poot delivered a resonating equalizer, tying the

game at two in the bottom half of the opening inning.

The second inning unveiled a dramatic twist as the Buccaneers, with a fierce appetite for victory, seized a commanding lead, striking six runs to vault ahead 8-2. However, the Raiders wouldn't fade into the shadows, demonstrating the same tenacity they had all year. Sydney Stewart capitalized on a Brilee Broussard ground out, bringing the score to 8-3, while Riley Gibson steered Layla Thompson home, trimming the deficit to four in a thrilling third inning. But, as the game of softball often proves, one swing can change the narrative, and in the bottom of the fourth inning, Poot catapulted her third two-run home run of the game, finishing with a staggering six RBIs.

As the game progressed, the Raiders continued to swing val-

iantly. In the fifth inning, Gibson homered to center field, bringing home Broussard and narrowing the gap to 10-6, but despite their gallant efforts, the Raiders' championship hopes ended.

Layla Thompson was deservedly crowned the Most Outstanding Offensive Tournament Player in a tournament full of exceptional performances. Meanwhile, Julia Petty, Gyvan Hammons and Thompson were honored on the All-Tournament team.

Northwest Florida ended a monumental season, finishing National Runner-Up with an impressive 57-11 record. This record-breaking season will forever be etched in the annals of the Raiders' history with these records: most wins (57), highest team batting average (.352), most runs scored (515), most RBIs (472), most doubles (129),



most home runs (92), most total bases (1015) and most hits (646). This record-setting season will be hard to match, but NWFSC student-athletes keep the faithful fans coming back for more.

Individual accolades were also aplenty, with Sydney Stewart setting a record for doubles with 22 and Gyvan Ham-



mons leaving opponents in the dust with 39 stolen bases this year.

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# I'm Getting Some Feedback



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,  
JOURNEY BRAVELY

I was stressed and busy. Parenting required more energy than usual. I was irritable and I didn't realize how I was coming across. I thought I was managing stress well until my husband said I was being grumpy. Initially, I became defensive, telling myself he was wrong and I wasn't the problem. After the defensiveness receded, I sorted through the feedback and recognized he was right. The uncomfortable nudge toward self-awareness provided a helpful opportunity to adjust and make amends with my family regarding my stress grumping.

How are you at receiving feedback from those you trust? Do you tend to get defensive and angry? Do you tell yourself you aren't the problem when someone tells you something about your behavior you haven't noticed? What might you be missing by assuming the person giving

you feedback is the problem?

When another person tells you their experience of your behavior, positive or negative, they are providing feedback. While it would be wonderful if we had an accurate view of ourselves, humans have blind spots about how we are showing up, especially when under stress. When done well, both receiving and giving feedback are valuable skills that help you and others grow into wisdom and maturity. Feedback provides an opportunity to embrace the freeing truths that you aren't perfect, you won't be perfect, and life can be a continuous arc of growth as long as you live.

Despite the benefits of feedback, it can be a difficult practice. Receiving suggestions from others about ourselves is humbling, vulnerable work. Feedback can challenge a fragile sense of self, bring up uncomfortable insecurities, and can unearth historical shame resulting in defensiveness. However, working through these discomforts is worth the work to bring you more health and connection. So, how do you navigate feedback as a tool of growth?

## 6 Healthy Ways to Incorporate Feedback Into Your Life

**1. Choose trusted sources of feedback.** Avoid choos-

ing people who have been historically unhealthy. Choose people who are gracious, growth-oriented, emotionally healthy, balanced, non-judgmental and able to receive feedback. Don't choose people who invite you to feel poorly about yourself.

**2. Notice and study your defense patterns.** How do you feel in your body and thoughts when someone tells you something difficult about yourself? What stories do you tell yourself? How do you blame others? What words do you say? Remember, you aren't always right.

**3. Calm your body and mind.** Notice if your body has gone into fight, flight or freeze. Take deep breaths for 1-2 minutes to reset. Let the person giving the feedback know you need a moment if you are struggling to respond well. Engage a healthy coping skill like journaling or taking a walk to give yourself space to process.

**4. Tell yourself the truth about the feedback.** Sort who is providing the feedback. If they are a trustworthy source, remind yourself of this. If they aren't a trustworthy source, it's okay to move forward without spending much time or energy on the interaction. Remind yourself feedback does not mean you are

a failure, a bad person, or less than you were before. Feedback is a tool to improve your healthy sense of self and maturity.

**5. Listen and internalize.** Really consider what is being said to you. Notice how it might be true. Notice how your awareness of your own behavior might be lacking. Consider how your blind spot might be hurtful to those around you. Notice if you'd like to continue behaving in the ways being reported to you or if you would feel better to know you are behaving differently. Consider how you might want to change the behavior. Remember the person giving you feedback is taking an emo-

tional risk to provide you with this information. Consider being grateful someone cared enough to have a difficult, helpful conversation.

**6. Make amends and adjustments.** Now that you understand and accept something new about your behavior, take responsibility by letting others know you regret how the behavior may have negatively impacted them. Seek healthy support to create a plan for changing the behavior. Try inviting those you trust to let you know when they see the unhealthy behavior and to let you know when you are

*Continued on page 36*



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## Eyes, The Gift of Sight



KAY LEAMAN,  
HEALTH ARCHITECT,  
HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

Every time I see a bird or discover something I've never seen before like the black winged dragonflies I recently had the privilege of bumping into reminds me how grateful I am for my sight. Caring for our eyes is

important especially if you want to continue seeing the faces of the people you love and the sights you enjoy spending time in.

There are several diseases that we deal with today such as Amblyopia (Lazy Eye), Macular Degeneration, Color blindness, Diabetic Retinopathy, Dry Eye, Floaters, Glaucoma, Pink eye, Retinal detachment, Astigmatism and Cataracts. I'll be focusing on two of these but the information for maintaining eye health is for everyone.

Risk commonalities exist for several eye conditions such as genetics and health related issues such as obesity, diabetes, etc.

**Myopia** (near sighted) where light focuses in front of the retina and hyperopia (far sighted) where light is focused behind the retina are two conditions that can be corrected by glasses, contact lenses or refractive surgery.

**Astigmatism** is caused when either the cornea or the lens has mismatched curves. Vision is blurred because there are 2 image points. Glasses can usually correct this.

**Cataracts** occurs when proteins in the lens is damaged by oxidative damage. This disease develops slowly and 50% of the US population experience cataracts by age 80. Its likened

to an egg; the albumen is clear when the egg is raw and turns white as it cooks. This explains the whitish color that forms over the eye. Risk factors are smoking, UV radiation, diabetes, radiation therapy, long term use of steroid medications, trauma, lack of anti-oxidant and micro-nutrient protection as well as the commonalities.

**Macular Degeneration** is a blurring of our sharp central vision which we need to see straight ahead, read, drive, watch movies or see the details on someone's face. The macula is the focal point of the retina and resides in the center of the back of the eye. The peripher-

al is not affected. There are two types: Wet, (most vision loss) named for when blood leaks or oozes from new blood vessels (very simple def.) and dry which constitutes 80-85% of cases. This disease is the # 1 cause of blindness in people over 60. There is no cure.

Symptoms include blank or dark spots, blurred vision, issues with seeing colors, or straight lines seen as curvy. Nutritional science shows that by reducing free radical damage and inflammation we can slow down progression or prevent macular degeneration from occurring.

Risk factors include toxic chemicals (BPAs, PCBs, aspartame, phthalates, etc. ingested with food or drink), high blood glucose levels as with diabetes, disseminated inflammations as a result of hyper-permeable intestines (leaky gut), low levels of DHEA (hormone) which protects against oxidative damage and pregnenolone which improves electrical activity in the retina and estrogen blocking drugs such as tamoxifen used in breast cancer treatment which causes harm to the retina. A fun side note is that the eye produces its own homornes.

Eyes also suffer from blue light which can cause eye fatigue, headaches, dry eyes, double vision and difficulty focusing. Using blue light filters such as screen protectors or glasses (they have a yellowish tint) can aid in reducing its affects. Taking 20-30 second eye breaks (turn away and focus on something else.) every 2-3 hours can also help.

High quality nutrition can make a big impact on our eye health. A few of these nutrients are:

**Vitamin C** - Found in every cell in the body it supports healthy capillaries and cartilage and is significantly higher in the retina than in the blood. It helps to maintain optimal performance by protection from free radical damage. It must be consumed as the body does not make it (citrus, peppers, broccoli and kale).

**Zinc** - a trace mineral in high concentrations plays a critical role in transporting vitamin A which is another one that supports the retina. Its been linked to preserving normal night vision (oysters, red meat, shellfish

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*Continued on page 36*

# Experience the Benefits of Hormone Therapy



**By DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD**

Are you seeking to regain your energy, improve your well-being, and reclaim your zest for life? If you're a man or woman over 40, and some as young as 30, the Hormone Restoration Center in Miramar Beach offers a transformative opportunity through hormone therapy. Step into a world of renewed vitality and optimal health with advanced treatments.

In today's fast-paced world, hormonal imbalances can often disrupt our lives, leaving us feeling fatigued, experiencing mood swings and struggling with various symptoms. The Hormone Restoration Center specializes in personalized hormone therapy programs that cater to the unique needs of individuals suffering from these symptoms.

The cornerstone of our approach is bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT). Unlike synthetic hormones, bioidentical hormones are derived from natural sources and mirror the hormones naturally produced by your body. This enables a seamless assimilation process and enhances the effectiveness of the treatment with minimal side effects. The expert providers at the Hormone Restoration Center will conduct a

comprehensive evaluation to create a customized treatment plan tailored to your specific needs and goals.

The advantages of hormone therapy are clear. Patients frequently report increased energy levels, improved mental clarity, enhanced mood stability, and an overall sense of well-being. Furthermore, hormone therapy can aid in weight management, boost libido and help maintain muscle tone and bone density. The experienced team at the Hormone Restoration Center will guide you through the process, ensuring you experience a transformation that extends beyond symptom relief, empowering you to live your life to the fullest.

Your safety and well-being are of utmost importance at the Hormone Restoration Center.

It adheres to the highest standards of care, utilizing state-of-the-art diagnostic tools and evidence-based treatments. The expert physicians and staff closely monitor your progress, making adjustments as necessary to maximize results and minimize potential risks. Rest assured, you will receive comprehensive care that is tailored to your unique needs and guided by a commitment to your health and satisfaction.

Conveniently located in Miramar Beach, the Hormone Restoration Center offers a warm and welcoming environment. The compassionate and knowledgeable team will provide the support and guidance you need throughout your journey. Complementing the hormone therapy program, the center offers weight loss options

including the newest semaglutide to optimize your long-term success in maintaining your newfound vitality.

Take charge of your well-being and rediscover the joy of life. Experience the transformative power of bio-identical hormone therapy at the Hormone Restoration Center in Miramar Beach. Embark on a journey towards enhanced wellness, irrespective of your age. Schedule your consultation today and embrace a life filled with energy, vitality, and renewed purpose by calling us at (850) 837-1271.

*Dr. Richard Chern, MD provides hormone therapy to men and women across the country and treats many of the doctors and nurses in the area. Call him for an appointment at The Hormone Restoration Center at (850) 837-1271.*

# Too Much Sun? Heat Got You Down? Repair Instead.



**By KRISY ANDERSON, OWNER**

It's really HOT. Experts say slow down and reduce, eliminate or reschedule strenuous activities until the coolest time of the day. Wear lightweight, loose fitting, light-colored clothing to reflect heat and sunlight. Minimize direct exposure to the sun; sunburn reduces your body's

ability to dissipate heat. Stay hydrated.

So, get out of the sun and into the spa and repair and reverse sun damage with Red Light Therapy. In fact, the vast array of Red Light Therapy benefits can include increased energy, wound healing and tissue repair, increased collagen production,

hair growth stimulation, increased metabolism, increased fat loss, increased strength gains, faster recovery post workout, flawless skin, anti-aging, psoriasis reduction, dental pain reduction, skin damage reversal, reduced inflammation, improved hormonal health, better quality sleep and improved liver func-

tion. Outwardly, your skin becomes smoother, pores shrink, wrinkles diminish and collagen is restored. Inwardly, light therapy works directly with your cells, generating an increase of ATP, the energy that fuels your body.

As you know, when you have

*Continued on next page*

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 Wellness


BY LISA LEATH TURPIN, HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACH

A person who vigorously supports their country and is prepared to defend it against enemies is a true Patriot! Every U.S. military branch has thousands of patriots physically ready to protect us at all cost. To be able to defend our nation, each branch has standards and testing for their physical readiness and shape. These men and women are at the top echelon for their strength and endurance. I went straight to Military.com to learn

## A Workout Worthy of a Patriot

more about what the requirements are for each branch of the military.

Within the five branches (Army, Navy, Airforce, Marine Corps and Coast Guard), there are similarities but some substantial differences. The Army has made the biggest changes lately by replacing the pull-ups, sit-ups and two-mile run PFT from the 80's.

Since 2022, the Army implemented six new exercises instead of those three of the past. The new six are: 3 rep max deadlifts (MDL), standing power throw (SPT: overhead medicine ball throw), hand-release push-ups (HRP: lift hands off floor during each rep in the down position when chest is on the floor), sprint, drag and carry (SDC: run, drag sled, carry 40 lb. dumbbells or kettlebells in each

hand, run 2 x 25 meter distances of each), leg tuck (LTK: hanging knee ups from pull-up bar knees to elbows) and two-mile run (2MR). This change is for the Army Combat Fitness Test only; special ops and all other military branches still require push-ups, sit-ups and pull-ups.

Instead of G.I. Joe (or Jane), most of us are "Average Joe or Jane;" but that doesn't mean we can't all benefit from a tactical style functional training routine as part of our healthy and fit regime. We can learn from these military fitness tests on how to hold ourselves accountable and set goals. Just like each branch sets standards by using reps over a set amount of time, you can make up your own. Push-ups and pull-ups measure your upper body strength, while deadlifts and sled pulls measure lower

body strength.

Getting stronger takes time; it's more of a marathon than a sprint. The key to getting stronger? Consistency. Basic controlled movement builds the most muscle, whereas combination movements build more endurance and synergy.

Let's dissect the push-up from the basic military tests. How to do a good push-up: Starting in plank position, hands about shoulder width (or a smidge wider), lower your body all the way until chest touches the floor then push back up. Goal is full ROM (range of motion). In order to get ROM, you might need to modify by putting your knees down, using a counter top or even a wall if necessary. To get stronger, do maximum you can do twice daily for 10 days, rest two days, then test yourself

to see if you can do more reps, or if modifying, a stronger style and repeat until you can do a regular push-up. Note: Maximum is the amount you can do until you can't keep your form or ROM anymore. You won't want to keep up the cycle of 10 days on and two days off for long—that's more of a strength push to do occasionally that I found and simplified what is suggested on military.com. You will get stronger if you do your best, work your hardest, stay consistent with two-three days/week, get full ROM and control your movement. Benefits of the push-up are toned arms and shoulders and the strength in the chest to help get up if you fall or need to catch yourself.

For this 4th of July issue, I want to say an EXTRA thank you to our military and families.

### FEEDBACK

*continued from page 33*

improving.

**7. Be a student of giving feedback well.** As you learn to receive healthy feedback, notice how you might be a healthy, kind source of feedback to others in your life. Feel what works well for you and incorporate these learnings into your feedback ap-

proach with others.

While not an easy practice, receiving feedback provides you with an ongoing opportunity to become a healthier, better version of yourself. As you navigate feedback, connect with us as journeybravely.com for coaching and counseling support along your journey.

### EYES

*continued from page 34*

beans and nuts).

**Lutein and Zeaxanthin** are carotenoids that act as anti-oxidants and built in sunscreen for eyes. It helps support blue light filtration and visual acuity (how well we see) in the retina (dark green veggies).

Omega 3 supports the eye's

oily outer layer (fatty fish, plant sources and alpha-linolenic (ALA) found in flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, soybeans).

Grapeseed extract, curcumin, phenol and carotenoids, vitamin E, melatonin, bilberry extract, quercetin, resveratrol and a few more are all used by the body to support the eye and reduce inflammation.

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### TOO MUCH SUN

*continued from page 35*

sun damage, aging or skin disorders, your healthy skin cells are compromised, leaving them helpless to renew on their own. But Red Light Therapy can come to the rescue, using its color wavelengths of visible light, each with specific skin benefits,

to repair and restore. Besides, it's a much better alternative to surgery.

Your skin will soak it up, turning it into fuel for your cells, helping them reproduce faster and more efficiently. This repairs and rejuvenates damaged cells, while also killing bacteria. Collagen production is stimulated, circulation is boosted and

tissue repair is accelerated. Because it works inside your cells, you feel better, too, physically and mentally. Even the outer layer of your skin, hair and nails thrive when you sustain yourself internally. Hence, the reason Red Light Therapy is gaining in popularity is due to its long-term positive effects, internally and externally. And when you're in Beverly Hills Day Spa, you're out of the heat!

A package of 10 red light therapy treatments is \$200 or \$30 per 10-15-minute treatment and can be added onto other services. Ready to make a positive major change in YOUR overall well-being? Schedule an appointment with me at Beverly Hills Day Spa for an in-depth consultation. Call me at (850) 654-8544. Or visit us at [beverlyhillsdayspa.com](http://beverlyhillsdayspa.com).

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# Your Outdoor Escape



## ENERGY TIPS by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

BY CHRIS BALZER, EMERALD COAST ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Summer is officially here and so are our visiting guests. Beaches are getting crowded, restaurant lines are getting longer and traffic can be a challenge most days. This is a good time to think about creating your own outdoor escape. When it comes to increasing comfort, I get excited.

At some point, you may have considered expanding our outdoor living spaces, but didn't know where to start. We can help. 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 awnings 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 built-in wind sensors. Wind sensors are a necessity here because we never know when that gust of wind will appear. 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 that are included in our packages.

Another option to create an outdoor escape is motorized screens. With a custom motorized screen, you can increase your comfort and style, indoor and out. Yellow fly season is here and now you can finally take control of your back porch.



Lifestyle options include insect protection, which prevent pesky insects from invading your space; weather protection, creating an attractive defense to the elements, without hindering

your view and privacy protection, increasing privacy when you need it, while maintaining 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 that allows that breeze to come in and creates privacy, just a click of a button. Wouldn't that be incredible? So if you're 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](http://www.trusteces.com) or email [wecare@trusteces.com](mailto:wecare@trusteces.com) and Beat the Heat.*



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# The Importance of a Local Agent when Insurance Premiums are Rising (Part 1)

## A Local Agent Is Crucial When Insurance Premiums Are Rising

Premiums are going up all over Florida right now, and have been on the rise for the better part of the last three years. Last year saw the downfall of 11 carriers and the swift withdrawal of four others. This year already, two carriers have gone out of business and into receivership. It is not a soft market by any means. The best way to ensure that you are able to find the best plan for your needs is to find a local independent agent to help you, so that you don't have to go it alone.

Property and casualty insurance is an essential type of insurance that covers an individual or a business against financial losses resulting from damage to property or liability claims. Property and casualty insurance provides coverage for losses that arise from unforeseen events, such as theft, fire, storms or accidents that may result in property damage, injury or death.

Having property and casualty insurance is essential for anyone who owns a home, car or business. However, choosing the right insurance policy and carrier can be a challenging and time-consuming task. This is where a local agent can come in handy.

A local agent is an insurance agent who operates in your local area and has a deep understanding of the insurance mar-

ket in your region. Local agents are an excellent resource when you need help understanding your insurance policy or filing a claim. They can also help you find the right policy and carrier to meet your specific needs.

## The Value of your Agent Being Truly Independent

One of the benefits of having local agents is that they can act as your advocate when dealing with insurance carriers. Your local agent can help you negotiate with your carrier when it increases the price of your premium or tries to deny your claim. They can also help you find a new carrier that offers the same level of coverage at a more affordable price.

It is essential to note that your local independent insurance agent represents you and not one carrier. An independent agent can help you find the right carrier that offers the best coverage and premium rates for your specific needs. They work with multiple carriers and can provide you with unbiased advice and guidance when it comes to choosing the right insurance policy.

Property and casualty insurance is an essential aspect of protecting your assets and providing financial security in case of unexpected events. Property insurance provides coverage for your home and personal belongings, while casualty insurance covers liability claims against



you. With insurance premiums rising, it is more important than ever to have a local insurance agent and work with him to find the right insurance carrier for your needs.

While it is important to have property and casualty insurance to protect your assets, it can be frustrating when insurance premiums rise unexpectedly. This is where having a local insurance agent can be invaluable.

## What Can You Do When Your Carrier Increases The Price Of Your Premium?

If your carrier increases the price of your premium, there are a few things you can do to help find the right insurance carrier and keep your costs down.

First, speak with your local insurance agent, who can help you understand why your premium is increasing and can provide you with options for reducing your costs. From changing your deductible to reviewing your current discounts and finding discounts you may be eligible for are just a few of the things your agent can help you accomplish.

If you have recently replaced your roof, you may not be getting all the wind mitigation discounts that you are now eligible for. Always have a new wind mitigation completed after replacing a roof, and also submit either paid in full roof invoice or finalized re-roof permit to your agent for submission to the underwriting department of your insurance carrier. The carriers generally apply new credits effective the day they receive the new inspection, rather than the day the new inspection was completed. All wind mitigation inspections must be signed by both the inspector and the insured.

Next, consider shopping around for a new insurance carrier. Your local insurance agent can help you identify other carriers in your area that may offer better rates. They can also help you compare policies and coverage options to ensure you get the coverage you need at a price you can afford.

Finally, consider making

changes to your policy to reduce your costs. For example, increasing your deductible can lower your premiums, as can bundling your policies. Your local insurance agent can provide you with advice on which changes to make to help you save money while also helping you to understand what your insurance needs actually are. Most HO3 home insurance policies allow policyholders to choose the percentage of the dwelling coverage in contents they prefer to carry.

Some carriers allow only 50 percent, 25 percent or 0. Those are not good choices, but that is what that carrier allows. Some carriers allow anywhere from 10 to 70 percent of the dwelling in contents, and that is useful to know when you are collecting quotes from different carriers, which ones will allow you the flexibility to choose the level of contents coverage that most closely matches what you have in your home.

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# Reflection and Assessment: A Look Back to Take a Leap Forward



BY BILL MASON

In the fast-paced world of business, where constant innovation and adaptation are essential, the power of reflection often goes unnoticed. Although reflection is often neglected as we move toward the future, it plays a significant role in driving transformation. Bill Gates once stated “Most people overestimate what they can achieve in a year and underestimate what they can achieve in 10 years,” highlighting the need to evaluate past successes, track progress and set ambitious goals and dreams for the future.

Reflection allows individuals and organizations to learn from the past, make informed decisions and create strategies for success. It provides an opportunity to evaluate past experiences, both positive and negative and extract valuable insights for growth. By looking back and understanding the lessons learned, businesses can identify patterns, refine strategies, and ultimately empower transformation.

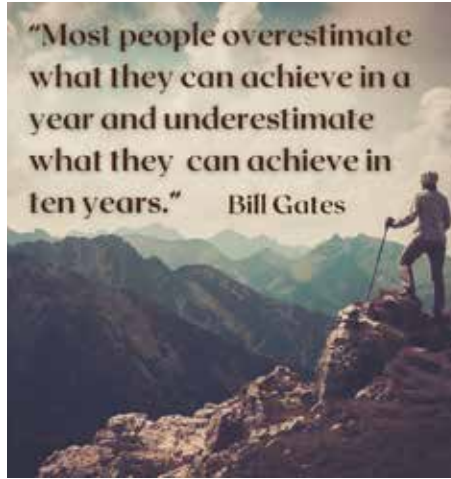
One aspect of reflection that holds immense value is the role of mentors or coaches. These seasoned professionals can serve as guides, helping individuals brainstorm their past achievements to gain a deeper understanding of their journey. Reflecting on past accomplishments can reveal hidden

strengths, untapped potential, and provide a foundation for future growth. A mentor or coach can help navigate this process, providing guidance, support, and an objective perspective.

Regularly taking time to reflect can lead to a greater return on investment through opportunities to celebrate. When engrossed in daily work, it's easy to become fatigued and believe falsehoods such as “I'm not making any progress” or “The company is not improving.” However, reflecting on past accomplishments allows you to celebrate the fruits of your labor. This celebration can bring new energy to the process of the daily grind! Celebration is akin to growth marks on the doorpost of a child's room. They enable you to see the progress, which is happening every day but may be difficult to notice without consistent reflection.

In the past quarter, I was struggling with my coaching business, as I felt uncertain about my goals and progress despite putting in consistent effort for the last two years. During a session with my coach, we reviewed the new client's revenues from the last four months and I realized that I had generated more than \$60K in new revenue from new clients for the next year. My wife and I celebrated by having a nice dinner at one of our favorite celebration restaurants on the harbor in Destin. The act of both realizing accomplishments and celebrating them helped to increase my confidence and establish a clear path for future success. When paired with the guidance of a mentor or coach, reflecting on these achievements can spark significant transformations.

As a U.S. Army Blackhawk pilot, my team and I conducted after-action reviews after every



flight. These reviews involved discussing our successes, as well as any issues or challenges that arose during the mission. Critically, we were able to openly address failures in order to identify ways to improve both as individuals and as a team. By analyzing our shortcomings, we could take chances and establish fresh procedures that enhanced our team's efficiency and fulfillment of goals. These occurrences can provide valuable lessons and encourage personal and professional growth. By scrutinizing such incidents and gaining insights from them, individuals can enhance their capacity to adjust and surmount challenges, resulting in increased resilience and effectiveness as leaders.

Due to the Covid crisis, companies have had to make significant changes from their usual practices in the past few years. As we start returning to normal times, the risk of reverting to old practices and becoming complacent is high. In these times, it's essential for leaders to engage in regular reflection to identify areas for improvement and make proactive adjustments.

Organizational development can benefit from the practice of reflection. By cultivating a culture of self-assessment and reflection, businesses can en-

courage constant improvement and innovation. Reviewing past strategies, both successful and unsuccessful, allows companies to adjust, improve and remain competitive.

I encourage you to take 30-60 minutes sometime this week to reflect on both your personal and professional life. Review the past year and acknowledge your accomplishments, errors and growth. Think about your aspirations for the future and establish achievable objectives for the upcoming year, categorized as minimum, target, and stretch goals. By doing this, it will boost your confidence and

ambition as you manage your daily obligations.

To reach new levels of success, consider getting a friend, mentor, or coach who can help you unlock your full potential and challenge you in ways others can't. Reflection is a valuable tool for both personal and professional growth and can drive positive changes in the business. Let's embrace this as we navigate the constantly evolving business landscape.

*If you work with Bill as a coach, you can expect to develop a clear vision for your team, create plans to achieve success, and become a high-performing team that exceeds expectations. If you want to learn more, call (850) 855-3430 or email bill@rocketfuelcoach.com.*



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# Local Business Expands Into Bay County

By J. ZIMCHEK

Gulf Coast Shutter and the Overhead Door Company of Northwest Florida (both Dillard companies) together are such a well-known entity, you'd be forgiven for thinking they've been around forever. But it was in 2011, when Wayne Bernheisel acquired Gulf Coast Shutter (founded in 2001) that this local business really became part of the local community. Now, with the acquisition of Quality Gates and Openers in Panama City, it's poised to extend its reach

even farther down the Gulf Coast.

Wayne Bernheisel had always wanted his own business, but the path to this end goal wasn't a straight one. It took a stint in the Air Force and corporate jobs with companies like Rolls-Royce and Crane Aerospace & Electronics before he was able to buy Gulf Coast Shutter in 2011. It turned out to be the perfect time for him to combine his love of community with his dream of a self-owned enterprise. "I wanted something

that provided me an opportunity to be out serving the community and building relationships," he said. "To me, that was really important and more fulfilling. Coming from the corporate side, the local community was not such a priority during my tenure." For him, Gulf Coast Shutter and the Overhead Door Company of NW Florida offer a way to provide the community with needed products, for security and otherwise, but also much-needed services. Its tagline - Live Life Beautifully Se-

cure - is reflected in a product line that ranges from basic hurricane screens to Colonial and Bahama Shutters with plenty of curb appeal to a variety of eye-catching garage door options.

And though it got its start primarily in residential, it is now a major supplier for commercial as well. Whether it's dealing with a large business or a comparatively small residential project, customer service is paramount. Recently, an older gentleman and his brother came into the showroom and said they needed springs for sheet doors on their outbuildings. Bernheisel and his team dug up the information for them and passed it along. It's this kind of community interaction that helps build strong local ties, reinforced by his out-of-office roles whether he's serving in his Niceville church or sitting on both the board of the Destin Chamber and the Apprenticeship Advisory Council for NW Florida State College. He's also been a member of the Destin Rotary Club since 2011 and will be president-elect for the next term.



install keypads, card readers, wrist bands - if you can use it to open a gate, Harris is your guy. He's been in the gate business for 16 years, ever since he bumped into a former mentor in the construction industry driving around working on automated gates. Harris had been looking for a new opportunity and the man offered to take him on as a 50/50 partner on the spot. Now, it's a multi-million dollar business with 15 employees. In addition to offering a range of installations, Harris also offers a 24-hour response time for stuck or broken gates, whether or not he installed them. "I don't know anyone around that is reliable doing that," says Harris. "Service is something we pour a lot of effort into." Like Bernheisel though, Harris is also big on community. Every Veteran's Day since 2021, the company has held a dinner and given a veteran and installed an automated gate that Quality Gates. But it doesn't stop there - Harris is also a long-time football coach at Mosley High School, and the company participates in both Bay and Walton County chambers, the Community Association Institute, the American Fence Association and recently joined the Panama City Beach Rotary Club.

For more information or a consultation, call (850) 269-1066 or visit Overhead Door of Northwest Florida at [www.destinoverheaddoor.com](http://www.destinoverheaddoor.com), Gulf Coast Shutter at [www.gulfcoastshutter.com](http://www.gulfcoastshutter.com), and Quality Gates and Openers at [www.qualitygatesandopeners.com](http://www.qualitygatesandopeners.com).



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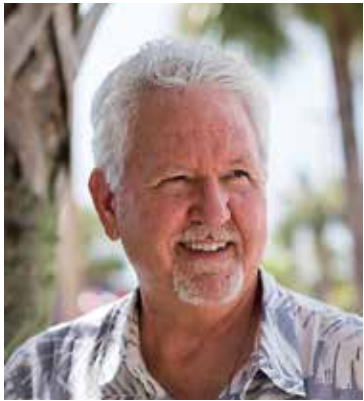


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# A Pastor's Ponderings: Forgiveness Takes the Sting Out of Sin

## Mouse Traps and Mustard Seeds

BY PASTOR DAVID HOLLAND

*"Jesus said to his disciples: 'Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves.'*

*"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."*

*"The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'"*

*"He replied, 'If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'be uprooted and planted in the sea, and it will obey you.'" Luke 17: 1-7*

"Snap!" The mousetrap snatched the writhing creature. I hate mice. My favorite part is baiting the trap. Planning the murder is so exciting. I plotted to trap him, baited the snare, and now I have the filthy animal writhing in the clutches of my trap.

Christ warns His disciples in Luke 17:1-10 concerning the nasty trap of temptation.

The Greek word Christ uses for "sin" in this passage is scandalon, referring to the part of the trap where you attach the bait. It means "offense," or "snare" and describes the behaviors that provoke others to sin.

Christ's indictment is not on the sinner as much as the person who causes someone to stumble. He says it would be better for that person to have a millstone hung around their neck and thrown into the sea than to cause someone to falter. Judgment awaits those people.

ment awaits those people.

Jesus warns us because our behavior can lead people to the Lord or drive them away. I think there are few Christians who wake up in the morning asking themselves, "How can I tempt others to sin today?" But people scrutinize our behavior every day, watching how we behave. Will they see real Christianity in action?

What about when you are the offended person? What do you do when you are tempted or hurt? The idea of forgiving the people who offended them overwhelmed the disciples. Forgive them seven times a day? Was Christ kidding?

No, Jesus wasn't kidding. Jesus shows them the liberating power of forgiveness released through faith. Even faith as tiny as a mustard seed.

Jesus is saying He came to forgive all who come to Him. If you follow Jesus, you will need to learn to forgive. If you have

enough faith to believe in the Lord, you have enough faith to forgive others. Forgiveness sets people free and displays real Christianity for all to see.

Rebecca Pippert tells the story in her book "Out of the Salt Shaker and Into the World," concerning one man's demonstration of thoughtful love. She knew a young man named Bill who had become a Christian on her college campus in Oregon. He was a free spirit with long, messy hair, who never wore shoes, ever. Snow, sleet, or rain – he walked barefoot.

Bill soon attended the church across the street from the campus. He walked into the rather formal church wearing denim jeans, a T-shirt, and his signature look – no shoes. As he walked down the center aisle looking for a seat in the crowded church, none was available. So, he squatted down on the floor near the front pew as the service was about to begin.

Unnerved, the church people

didn't know what to do. Tension hung in the air as an elderly member began walking down the aisle toward the boy. What would he do? Scold him? Offer him his seat? Ask the young man to leave? All eyes focused on the silent drama unfolding before them.

The old man lumbered down the aisle, and when he reached Bill, he awkwardly plopped down on the carpet next to him. They worshiped together on the floor as people witnessed real love fleshed out before them. The elderly gentleman did what Christ would do in that situation, and it enveloped everyone in the loving arms of God.

We want our lives to draw people to Christ, to catch them in the net of God's grace rather than the death-like snap of evil's trap. We can choose to live in the grip of grace rather than temptation.

Faced with such forgiveness

*Continued on next page*

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 Musing


BY SEAN DIETRICH

Hi there. This is that Little Voice inside your head speaking. Yeah, I know. It's been a while. But how are you? How's life? How's the fam? You still doing keto?

Listen, I know we haven't

talked in a long time, but technically, that's not my fault. You probably don't remember this, but you quit listening to your inner voice just as soon as you hit the fourth stage of puberty.

The moment you developed armpit hair, you became a lot more concerned with getting a driver's license, French kissing, and eradicating zits.

So over time that voice inside you got quieter. Oh, sure, every now and then you'd hear me droning in the background like Charlie Brown's teacher. But you never actually listened.

Although there were a few times...

## Sean of the South



Remember that rude waiter a few weeks ago? When the meal was over, you almost stiffed him with the tip. But then, you dug into your wallet and gave him a ridiculously generous gratuity.

Did you ever stop to wonder why you did this? Well, I'll tell you why. Because the teeny, tiny voice reminded you that being generous was not just kind, it was right. That Little Voice was me.

There was that other time, when you gave a ride to two Mexican young women who didn't speak English. Their car broke down in the Walmart parking lot, and they were crying. You helped them out because that faint voice would not shut up.

Also me.

And let's not forget about the time you almost got into that fatal car wreck.

No, wait. You never knew about that one. You never did know how close you came to the end. Because the Little Voice told you to pull off the interstate immediately before the disaster happened. And you actually listened. In a few seconds there was a ten-car pile up on I-65, and four people were killed.

Still, most of the time you keep me turned off. Sometimes you sense me reminding you to use your turn signal, not to play

on your phone too much, and not to cuss during third down situations. But most of the time you never even hear me talking.

The thing is, if you'd listen to me once in a while, you would discover that I know stuff. Big stuff. Important stuff. I am a very smart Little Voice. I don't have time to run through my whole résumé, but I'll hit the highlights.

For starters, I'm older than you. Way, WAY older. In fact, I'm ancient enough to remember when the Dead Sea was just getting sick. The Grand Canyon was still a teenager when I was celebrating my 2,000,000,000 kajillionth infinity.

Secondly, I love you. I'm part of you. I'm part of your soul. So in a way, you and I are like peanut butter and jelly. We go together. We are inseparable. Think of me as electricity that makes an appliance work.

Your body is like a GE washing machine, only with more adipose tissue. Without electricity, a washing machine is just a big metal box.

I am the amperage running through the circuit breaker, the plug, the electronics. I am the voltage that makes the agitator spin inside the drum. I am the most important part of the machine. I'm not asking for any credit here, I'm just telling you how it is.

In fact, that is why I am writing this letter. Because I've been watching you recently. I saw you crying this morning when your wife was in the hospital; I saw you weeping when hospice administered your mother's final meds; I watched you crumble on your bathroom floor and bawl because the doctor gave you bad news; I saw you shut down when they told you your son committed suicide.

I was with you. I was right there. I was speaking to you, but you were too upset to hear me. Hey, that's okay. Believe me, I get it. This is the darkest period you will ever go through.

I'm here to tell you that you're going to make it through this mess.

The problem is, your brain is turning against you. Your brain keeps telling you this is the end, that your life is over. Your brain is telling you to quit. To stop trying.

Don't trust your brain. Your brain knows nothing. Your brain is full of a plentiful substance commonly found in barnyards and hog pens.

I am telling you, without the slightest hue of doubt, you will survive this. You will be okay. One day, by and by, this will all be over, and you'll understand it better. But for now, just know that this is not the end.

And here's the thing: Deep inside yourself, you know I'm right. You don't need a heavenly sign for proof of this. You don't need anything to convince you. Because within the innermost, most profound layer of your soul, you just know. You know what I'm saying is true.

Because I am your Little Voice.

Or you can always call me by my other name.



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### FORGIVENESS

*continued from previous page*

and love, the disciples cried out, "Increase our faith!"

Christ challenged them to faith as small as a mustard seed. These words throw me back over sixty years to a conversation I had with my mother. As a little boy, I remember my mother wearing a heart-shaped, glass necklace.

"Momma, why does your

necklace have that speck of dirt in it?"

"Oh honey, that's not dirt. It's a precious mustard seed."

"Why did they put it in there, Momma?"

"It reminds me to always have faith in God, no matter what happens. God will always bring me through."

In the end, God is looking for people with faith. The Master desires followers who have the faith to forgive people, over and

over — just as He does.

*Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring in Destin. He recently released his new devotion-al-Bible study based on the Gospel of Luke titled "Prodigal Jesus, Journey Back to the Father" 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 DavidHolland54@gmail.com.*



BY PASTOR DOUG STAUFFER

# America's Global Mission as Pilgrims, Patriots and Pioneers

In the annals of world history, no nation since ancient Israel has borne a mission as profound as the United States of America. From the crucible of revolution to establish a land of liberty, America was founded on principles echoing a divine intent. It was to be the beacon of hope and the spiritual light in a world darkened by sin and burdened by oppression. It is essential to recognize that as America goes, so goes the world.

This nation, under God, was painstakingly crafted by the Founding Fathers, whose wisdom and foresight set into motion a divine mandate. A mandate where liberty is not merely a buzzword but a call to transform the world through the

action of missionary endeavors. The resonating words of the Declaration of Independence serve as a constant reminder that we are “endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” namely “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” This best conveys my sentiments:

*Mountains to prairies, to oceans white with foam,*

*God, please bless America, our beloved home.*

*This Independence Day, let every American vow,*

*A return to righteousness for the time is now.*

*Consider one and all as the star-spangled banner does wave,*

*Over the land of the free, the home of the brave.*

*In God's grand design, a choice remains,*

*To accept His influence or bear sin's chains.*

For centuries America has been the beacon of hope, a role emphasized in our national an-

them, a tribute to resilience in the face of adversity. This land owes its birth to the seeds of religious freedom, sown and nurtured by the sweat and sacrifice of pilgrims, patriots, and pioneers who dared to dream of a land free from tyranny.

Beyond our borders, America's mission spread, driven by churches sharing the Gospel's light to remote villages and urban metropolises. This mission has a dual purpose: saving souls and discipling Christians. America's role is crucial in an era marked by turbulence and challenges. We face a formidable adversary, Satan, who seeks to destroy our nation, knowing its demise would further plunge the world into darkness. Our greatest strength lies NOT in economic or military power but in our adherence to the principles that birthed our nation.

*Remember, where the Spirit of the Lord resides,*

*There, indeed, true freedom abides.*

*Biblical freedom does not bind,*

*To political institutions, it isn't confined.*

Recognizing this spiritual threat is paramount. We face an enemy intent on sowing discord, stoking division, and causing us to deviate from our divine path. As we pay tribute to our nation's founders, we must recommit ourselves to America's divine mission. We are the torchbearers of their vision, tasked with preserving America's blessings for future generations. As we navigate these trials, we hold steadfast to our faith, trusting in God, who has guided us since our nation's birth.

*Freedom to enjoy God's blessings are vast,*

*In Spirit-led liberty, our souls remain steadfast.*

*True independence, in Christ we stand,*

*In this truth, we discover unity so grand.*

Indeed, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Let this liberty echo from our mountains to our valleys, reaching every corner of the earth. Such is the calling, the blessing, and the destiny of the United States of America. We are “one nation under God,” and shall find refuge under His wings. God bless the U.S.A., and Happy Independence Day.

*Dr. Doug Stauffer is pastor of Faith Independent Baptist Church. He was saved July 6, 1980, in Niceville, while stationed at the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base and has now been in the ministry for over 35 years. He has written 20 books including the best selling “One Book” trilogy (“One Book Rightly Divided, One Book Stands Alone, One Book One Authority”); along with several devotionals (“Daily Strength” series); and prophecy books (“Reviving the Blessed Hope, When the End Begins”).*

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 Arts & Music

# Beat the Heat: Fun Musical Activities for Summer Break

As the school year comes to a close, summer break offers a fantastic opportunity for students to explore their creativity and passion for music. Whether they are aspiring musicians or simply enjoy a good tune, engaging in fun music activities can enhance their skills, provide a creative outlet, and make their summer memorable. Here is a variety of exciting music-related activities that will keep young minds entertained and inspired during their summer break.

## 1. Make a Music Video:

Choose a favorite song or piece of music and become an actor/actress for the day. Kids can work together to write a creative story that goes along with the song, complete with characters, costumes and props, and then turn it into a video.



Ideas could include acting out the lyrics to a song, dressing up as a famous pop star or creating a short film and adding some music to the background, silent movie-style.

## 2. Form a Band:

If your child already plays an instrument, encourage him to gather a group of talented friends, form a band and pre-

pare a set list of their favorite songs or even write new ones! They could even host a backyard concert one evening for friends, family, and neighbors. This activity is a little challenging but can do wonders for encouraging teamwork and confidence.

## 3. DIY Instruments:

Engage in some arts and crafts for a hands-on experience.

Even everyday items like buckets, spoons and trash cans can be used as performance props, just like the entertainment group Stomp, who use ordinary objects to create amazing performances with rhythm, dance and a bit of comedy. Check out one of their performances on YouTube.

## 4. Music-themed Movie Night:

Host a music-themed movie night, where kids can enjoy films that revolve around music and musicians. Choose iconic movies such as “The Sound of Music,” “School of Rock,” “La La Land” or “Coco.” After the movie, encourage a discussion about the music, themes, and characters, so they can work on their understanding and appreciation of music in different contexts and cultures.

## 5. Try a New (Or Old) Instrument:

If you have an old instrument sitting in the closet, now is the perfect time to dust it off and experiment with it. Music lessons are over for the sum-

mer, so there’s no pressure! If instructions are needed, it’s very easy to find tutorials around the internet for all different kinds of instruments. A visit to the local music shop can also be a fun experience and you might even find something new to take home with you.

## 6. Campfire Sing-Along:

Thinking of organizing an evening campfire party on the beach? It wouldn’t be complete without a little singing. You might consider hiring a guitarist to lead your group of friends and family in singing some old favorites.

This summer break, let the power of music fuel the creativity, curiosity, and passion of your kids. By adding a few musical activities into their day, they can nurture their talents, explore new ideas, and create lasting memories. Give these activities a go and hopefully you’ll make this summer an unforgettable one!

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## ECTC's 10 Years of Magic Continues with Season 11

By ANNA FISHER,  
ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC AND  
EDUCATION DIRECTOR

We just closed our 10th season with a sold out run of one of my absolute favorite musicals, “Sound of Music.” It was a little bit magical to end 10 years of incredible shows with such a profoundly beautiful story. I look forward to Season 11 with such excitement and anticipation for what another year of great theatre will bring!

We launch Season 11 next fall with Million Dollar Quartet in September/October. This smash-hit musical tells the story of legendary music icons Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins as they come together on Dec. 4, 1956, at the famous Sun Studios. This show has so many great songs including “Blue Suede Shoes,” “Sixteen Tons,” “Great Balls of Fire” and “I Walk the Line” just

to name a few. Elvis will be in the building y’all!

We follow that with the timeless holiday classic A Christmas Carol in December. This fast-paced stage version is so fun and includes all of your favorite characters like Tiny Tim, the Fezziwigs, all the ghosts and, of course, the original grumpy old man, Ebenezer Scrooge. This show is a mug of warm wassail on a cold winter’s night and just the right thing to get you into the holiday spirit. Our favorite Scrooge, Bruce Collier, will be returning to the stage as well in this production.

There’s plenty of chances to catch The Marvelous Wonderettes: Caps and Gowns throughout the winter months with shows in January, February and March. This is the delightful sequel to The Wonderettes

*Continued on next page*

# Twist Your Summer!

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Yes! Whether it's a birthday, bachelorette, reunion, work event, get together, reunion or whatever group you're in, bring your whole crew for a unique, fun outing they'll never forget. Is it time for a Girls' Night Out? BYOW (bring your own wine-ages 18+) to a paint party that's a toast to your girl gang. Reserve your fun party time now online.

You focus on quality time and we'll handle the rest!

### For the Kids!

Set your kiddo's creativity free with a new twist on fun! Book a birthday party, kids camp or Mommy & Me for ages



8 and up! A FULL week of Kids Camp starts July 17! Each day your child will leave with a completed painting. They will learn some basic art techniques, play games, listen to music and have time for a light snack. A FULL week: only \$200.

### Paint Your Pet

Your furry (or scaly) friends deserve some love, too! Turn your pet's photo into a portrait with step-by-step instruction from amazing artists. On Fri., July 21 at 10 a.m. Paint Your



Own Pet for kids during Kids Camp! Ages 8+. On Sun., July 30 from 2 to 5 p.m., paint your pet for ages 18 and up.

### NEW! Add a candle to any event!

Make your own soy wax candle that burns 40 hours. Candles are soy and paraben free and scented with essential oils. Currently, there are 24 scents from which to choose from and they are ready by the end of class to take home! DIY Soy Candles can be added on for \$20 to any event. Just show up 30 minutes prior to painting class. There are also pre-made candles that can be purchased any time

when you need or want an extra gift for someone!

The July calendar offers a variety of paintings— from seasonally-inspired landscapes to decorative DIY wood board signs, funny self-portraits, Seaside sunsets, paint pour and more! Find a paint night theme that fits you, then reserve your spot online at [paintingwithatwist.com/studio/fort-walton-beach/calendar](http://paintingwithatwist.com/studio/fort-walton-beach/calendar).

## ECTC

*continued from previous page*

and follows our favorite girls as they graduate in 1958. With songs like "Rock Around the Clock," "At the Hop," "Dancing in the Street" and "River Deep, Mountain High," you will find yourself tapping along to this gem of a musical!


Another offering we have during those winter months is The Play That Goes Wrong. I absolutely adore the humor in this show! If you want a good laugh while trying to solve a murder mystery, this is the perfect night out. It was a smash hit on Broadway and we are thrilled to produce the show at ECTC!

If you liked Steel Magnolias, you will love Crimes of the Heart premiering in late February. This is a deeply touching, funny play about three eccentric sisters in a small southern town who deal with the fallout when Babe, the youngest, shoots her husband. This story serves up humor and pathos along with a large glass of sweet tea!

And since everyone loves a mystery, we're keeping the final musical of our season under wraps! Just plan to come on out to ECTC for a fantastic show in May 2024.


If Season 11 can't get here fast enough for you, make plans

to catch "Broadway on the Boulevard, Dancin' in the Street" outdoors in the Grand Park at Grand Boulevard every Thursday during the summer through the end of July. We also have a fantastic group of teens performing Grease at the end of July at 560 Grand Boulevard, upstairs in our theatre. I hope no matter how busy life gets, you always make time for the joy of a well-told story and the richness of a night out with friends and family. See you at the theatre!



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# Ask Destinites: Destin City Wants Lot By Marlar Bridge

BY PATRICIA LEE, OWNER  
DESTINITES.COM  
Destin City Councilor, Kevin

Schmidt reached out to locals in our Facebook Destinites private group (www.Facebook.com/

Destinites) to let us know that the council was seeking to buy the vacant lot next to Marlar's

Bridge. In his statement to the group he said, "In case you haven't heard yet, the City of Destin is trying to buy this parcel!!! (Picture was provided of the lot). I believe this will be coming back to council at least one more time!! If you feel strongly about Destin preserving this property and protecting it from what it COULD become, I would ask you to send your support to council@cityofdestin.com as well as come to the meeting if/when it comes up again! If you have any questions, please reach out!" Ok locals, let your voice be heard!



property to save it from some terrible hotel being built there. Lets do something for the local people of Destin and not just the tourists."

The reaction of the locals was overwhelmingly in favor of Destin taking possession of the parcel. Some members wanted to know what the city planned to do with the property should they gain ownership but Councilman Schmidt said they had not gotten quite that far in their planning but that he has some ideas of his own. You are welcome to express your own ideas by writing to the email listed above or attending the next council meeting.

The owner of the parcel is seeking 10 million. Destin City Council voted 5 to 2 to approve an offer of up to 8.5 million. The property was purchased on June 17, 2022 by BK of Destin, Inc. for \$5,500,000. The city's appraisal of the property is 7.9 million. City Council is now waiting for a response from the owner. Whatever is decided will ultimately affect the visual impression of Destin, as people cross the bridge coming into the city. Let's hope that if the City gains ownership, they will let the people vote on what they think should be done with the property.

Here are some comments and concerns expressed by locals in the Destinites group:

1. "I would love for the city to buy it but that price tag!"
2. "Please, please, not a parking garage."
3. "Yes, very cool! That's a wonderful thing! Totally support that action. Thank you Kevin for letting us know!!"
4. "I hope they buy it. If they don't, it will be a carwash."
5. "The city needs to buy this

If you are a Destin resident or in the close surrounding area, I invite you to join our private group at www.Facebook.com/Destinites with more than 8,200 members (Est. Oct. 2018).

Check out our monthly newsletter and sponsored local business directory at www.Destinites.com. Directory sponsors are allowed to advertise in our group.

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 Offer expires 7/31/23  
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**10% OFF PURCHASE**  
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 Offer expires 7/31/23  
 985 Highway 98, Destin, 850-424 6777, CafeDestin.com  
 Kwench: 981 US Hwy. 98, 850-842-2802

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**CALL 850-688-9886**

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**\$300 OFF**  
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 36058 Emerald Coast Pkwy. Destin  
 850-837-2600

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 34709 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin  
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