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DESTIN Life

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New Year, New You?

BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

The holidays are over and New Year messages are here. Change yourself. Change your life. Lose weight. Earn more money. Look younger. Do more. Take better trips. Buy better stuff. Eat differently. You and your life aren't enough. Spend money to be a better, more acceptable version of yourself.

While a life-long journey of growth is a healthy pursuit, common New Year messages miss the mark for changing your life. Most messages focus on external adjustments to create a better life. In reality, internal character patterns drive your external behavior. You can drink less, however, if you don't understand the emotional connection between coping and drinking, you are unlikely to sustain change. You can work out and eat differently, but if you don't address how stress or historical beliefs impact your food/fitness habits, you are unlikely to sustain change.

What if you shifted from setting external behavior goals to setting internal character



goals? What if instead of focusing on working out, weight loss, or drinking less, you focused on strengthening determination, self-control, kindness, or curiosity? It's likely that internal character growth will result in greater success in adjusting external habits. If you grow in self-control, you will set different boundaries with alcohol or money. If

you grow in kindness, you will respond more kindly in relationships. So, how do you shift from external behavior goals to internal character growth?

7 Ways to Focus on Internal Character Growth

Identify your character growth area. Ask yourself: What do I really want

to be true in my life and relationships? Then, notice a character trait you need to shift in order for your desired reality to become true. An example for a parent: When my kids are adults, I want to have a supportive, patient, curious relationship with them

NEW YEAR
continued on page 37



Go Red for Women!

BY MELISSA FERTITTA

February marks the 20th anniversary of the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women initiative.

Started in 2004, Go Red for Women prioritizes educating women about their risk for cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women, taking a life every 80 seconds, according to the AHA.

Each February, more than 50 countries participate with speaker series, luncheons, fashion shows and workplace events. Attendees wear red to show their solidarity in support of this mission.

Beachworx, Destin's premiere

GO RED
continued on page 17



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MATTIE KELLY
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Meet Our Hometown Hero: **Children in Crisis' Ken Hair** A Legacy of Compassion and Leadership

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Ken Hair, a name synonymous with compassion and dedication, has been the face, heart and soul of Children in Crisis (CIC) for 18 years, leaving an indelible mark on the community and the lives of children. After nearly two decades as president and CEO, Ken Hair has retired from the organization, renowned for providing homes and keeping brothers and sisters together, many of whom have been abused, neglected and abandoned.

I recall my first Chamber Breakfast where Ken's influence was evident. During the 50/50 drawing, the winner donated her winnings to Ken and CIC, a gesture embodying the spirit of generosity that Ken himself championed. Who was this Ken Hair and why did so many Chamber members wish to donate their winnings to him and this organization? I would soon learn.

Under Ken's leadership, Children in Crisis, established



in 2002, has flourished. The organization has provided homes for more than 1,000 young children, offering them refuge and stability. Ken's journey, filled with challenges always stayed the course seen in the tangible impact of CIC's work. Upon retirement, his leadership earned him the Golden Deeds Award from the Exchange Clubs. The Emerald Coast Public Relations Organization (ECPRO) also presented Ken with the inaugural "Ken Hair Non-Profit of the Year Award at the FWB Chamber's First Friday Breakfast on December 1st. This award will be given each year and carries Ken's name and spirit of excellence.

Ken's heartfelt interactions

often moved people to tears, reflecting the depths of his love and life. Recognition of his commitment was exemplified at his retirement ceremony when Ft. Walton Beach Mayor Dick Rynearson dubbed him the honorary mayor of "The Children's Neighborhood"—the residential-style foster care neighborhood conceived and managed by CIC. The mayor also presented Ken with a key to the City of Ft. Walton Beach.

CIC expanded under Ken's guidance to include an Emergency Shelter, family foster homes and the Opportunity Home for young adults aging out of foster care. CIC's influence extends beyond its immediate community highlighted by initiatives like the Pensacola Bay Area Impact 100 and a significant land donation/lease valued at \$3 million from Northwest Florida State College,

Ken's personal and military background is a testament to his life of service. A retired Chief Master Sergeant in the United

States Air Force, his military career laid the foundation for his work in child wellbeing. The discipline, integrity and leadership skills honed in the Air Force were instrumental in his successful management of CIC. Even the Air Force recognized his excellence with the coveted titles of NCO and Senior NCO of the year.

Ken's humility and empathy have endeared him to colleagues and community members alike. His ability to connect with diverse groups has been crucial in building partnerships and garnering support for CIC. Reflecting on his journey, Hair credits his military experience for preparing him for the challenges of leading this non-profit: Ken has said, "The skills and values I learned in the Air Force have been integral to my work with Children in Crisis...It's about serving a cause greater than oneself, whether in uniform or in our community."

As Ken navigates through his second retirement, his legacy

stands as a powerful testament to the extraordinary impact one individual can have in shaping a better future for others. Ken's life and work evoke some parallels to the classic film "It's a Wonderful Life." This movie portrayed a man who did not realize the profound impact one person can have on his community. Just as the film highlights this reality, Ken's contributions make us ponder the different landscape of many on the Emerald Coast without his influence. His journey and achievements underscore the immeasurable value of selfless dedication and the ripple effect of kindness and commitment in a community.

As we honor his contributions, it's clear that Ken's service and leadership have left an indelible mark, both to the nation and in the hearts and lives of countless children and families. For more information or to support Children in Crisis, please visit www.childrenincrisisfl.org. Let Ken know you want his legacy to live on.



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New Year!*

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Community

Cali's To Do In Destin! JANUARY 2024

..... 9

- Breakfast Bingo** | 10:30am | Chick-Fil-A Destin
- ECPRO Leadership Lab Q&A** | 11:30 am | Greater FWB Chamber of Commerce | FWB
- Music Match** | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB
- Music Bingo** | 6:30pm | Lone Wolf Pizza Destin
- Trivia** | 7pm | World of Beer
- Open Jam Night** | 8pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

..... 10

- Bonfire on the Beach** | 5pm | The Bay
- Sip & Science: Wizarding World** | 6pm | Emerald Coast Science Center
- Trivia Night** | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB
- Open Mic Night** | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

..... 11

- Ladies Night & Karaoke** | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Trivia** | 6pm | The Island Hotel
- Spill The Tea Poetry Night** | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Cafe
- Ladies Night** | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 12

- 30a Songwriters Festival** | Multiple Times / Locations
- Free Beach Bonfire** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
- Karaoke** | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
- Karaoke** | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
- Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons** | 8pm | Bric a Brac

..... 13

- Women's Climbing Circle** | 9am | Destin
- Rock Out Climbing Gym** | 30a Songwriters Festival | Multiple Times / Locations
- Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
- Karaoke** | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

..... 14

- 30a Songwriters Festival** | Multiple Times / Locations
- Beach Church Service** | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
- Melodies & Mimosas** | 2pm | Harborwalk Village



..... 15

- CLL Winter Semester Classes Begin** | CLL-FWB.org to Register
- Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
- Run Destin Night** | 5:30pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Music Bingo** | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons

..... 16

- Music Match** | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB
- Music Bingo** | 6:30pm | Lone Wolf Pizza Destin
- Trivia** | 7pm | World of Beer
- Open Jam Night** | 8pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

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- Bonfire on the Beach** | 5pm | The Bay
- Trivia Night** | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB
- Open Mic Night** | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

..... 18

- Bubbly Baytowne** | 5pm | Baytowne Wharf
- Business After Hours** | 5:30pm | Emerald Coast Science Center
- Trivia** | 6pm | The Island Hotel
- Ladies Night & Karaoke** | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons

..... 19

- Destin Chamber Awards Party & Wine Pairing Dinner** | 6pm | Brotulas
- Spill The Tea Poetry Night** | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Cafe

..... 19

- Ladies Night** | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
- Free Beach Bonfire** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
- HYPROV: Improv Under Hypnosis** | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- Karaoke** | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

..... 20

- The Marvelous Wonderettes-Caps and Gowns** | 7:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.
- Karaoke** | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
- Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons** | 8pm | Bric a Brac

..... 21

- Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
- Creation Station** | 11am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- Chili Cook Off** | 1pm | Emerald Republic Brewing
- Women in Business** | 3pm | Palm Folly

..... 22

- The Marvelous Wonderettes-Caps and Gowns** | 7:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.
- Sip & Science: Wizarding World** | 6pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- Karaoke** | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

..... 23

- Sinfonia Music of the Knights** | 7:30pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center

..... 21

- Beach Church Service** | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
- Melodies & Mimosas** | 2pm | Harborwalk Village
- The Marvelous Wonderettes-Caps and Gowns** | 2:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.

..... 22

- Stinky Cheese Man** | 9:45am & 11:30am | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
- Run Destin Night** | 5:30pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Music Bingo** | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons

..... 23

- Music Match** | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB
- Music Bingo** | 6:30pm | Lone Wolf Pizza Destin
- Trivia** | 7pm | World of Beer
- Open Jam Night** | 8pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

..... 24

- The Marvelous Wonderettes-Caps and Gowns** | 2:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.
- DCWAF's Riedel Seminar** | 4:30pm | Camp Creek Inn | Inlet Beach
- Bonfire on the Beach** | 5pm | The Bay

..... 25

- Trivia Night** | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB
- Open Mic Night** | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
- Crescendo! Kick Off Lunch** | 11am | Bijoux Restaurant + Spirits
- Board Game Happy Hour** | 1pm | The Island Hotel

..... 26

- Ladies Night & Karaoke** | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Planetarium Night** | 6pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- Free Concert: Taylor Hicks** | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- Spill The Tea Poetry Night** | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Cafe

..... 27

- Ladies Night** | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
- Free Beach Bonfire** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

..... 28

- Beach Church Service** | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
- Destin Commons Farmers Market** | 11am | Destin Commons
- Melodies & Mimosas** | 2pm | Harborwalk Village
- The Play That Goes Wrong** | 2:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.

..... 29

- Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
- Run Destin Night** | 5:30pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Music Bingo** | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Meet & Mingle with Impact 100** | 4:30pm | Live Oak Plantation
- Music Match** | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB
- Music Bingo** | 6:30pm | Lone Wolf Pizza Destin
- Trivia** | 7pm | World of Beer
- Open Jam Night** | 8pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

..... 30

- Bonfire on the Beach** | 5pm | The Bay
- Trivia Night** | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB
- Open Mic Night** | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

..... 27

- Karaoke** | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
- The Play That Goes Wrong** | 7:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.
- Karaoke** | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
- Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons** | 8pm | Bric a Brac

..... 28

- Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
- Fore Her Pink Walk & 5K** | 8:30am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
- Palate & Palette** | 2pm | Legendary Marine
- Chili Cook Off** | 5pm | 3rd Planet Brewing

..... 29

- Emo Night Karaoke** | 7pm | Downtown Music Hall
- Karaoke** | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
- The Play That Goes Wrong** | 7:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.
- Stage Crafters Award Banquet** | 7:30pm | Fort Walton Elks Lodge

..... 30

- Beach Church Service** | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
- Destin Commons Farmers Market** | 11am | Destin Commons
- Melodies & Mimosas** | 2pm | Harborwalk Village
- The Play That Goes Wrong** | 2:30pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. Grand Blvd.

..... 31

- Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
- Run Destin Night** | 5:30pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Music Bingo** | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
- Meet & Mingle with Impact 100** | 4:30pm | Live Oak Plantation
- Music Match** | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB
- Music Bingo** | 6:30pm | Lone Wolf Pizza Destin
- Trivia** | 7pm | World of Beer
- Open Jam Night** | 8pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

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- Bonfire on the Beach** | 5pm | The Bay
- Trivia Night** | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB
- Open Mic Night** | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café



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It's Time to Celebrate Mardi Gras and 35 Years of Gumbo at The Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Gumbo Anyone? Pursue the Roux at the 35th Annual Sandestin Gumbo Festival!
Friday, Feb. 23, 5 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 24, 12-4 p.m.



Kick-off the Party at Hammerhead's Bar & Grille Friday, Feb. 23, 5-7 p.m.

Mark your calendar for the official kick-off of the Sandestin Gumbo Festival weekend with a low-country shrimp boil at Hammerhead's Bar & Grille and live music starting at 4 p.m. Hammerhead's Bar & Grille will serve fresh gulf shrimp, corn on the cob, sausage, boiled potatoes, and a cup of gumbo ya ya. Tickets: \$35 meal only; \$50 with beer and wine.

Then tantalize your taste buds at the Sandestin Gumbo Festival! This foodies' favorite Gumbo winter festival is celebrating three and a half decades as the Best Gumbo Cook-Off on the Emerald Coast! Yum! Yum! Known as one of the largest and most popular winter food events in our region, Gulf Coast restaurants will feature their top-secret gumbo recipes and compete for your vote. Sample the variety of gumbos and vote for your favorite as the "People's Choice" winner. Dark or light roux?

Chicken, sausage or seafood? Celebrity judges will name the "Area's Best." This festival's atmosphere is filled with fun—live music from Dikki Du and the Zydeco Krewe while you taste, free kids' activities and restaurants from all over our area vying for your coveted vote.

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

Visit www.SandestinGumboFestival.com for tickets and details, including a daily schedule of events and entertainment. General admission tickets are \$45 before Feb. 23 and allow tastings of all gumbo and Bloody Marys; \$55 day of. If you're interested in entering the event, visit baytownewharf.com. The event will happen rain or shine.

Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler! Mark Your Calendar for the Annual Mardi Gras Parade!
Sunday, Feb. 11, 2 p.m.
No Cost to Attend.

Mardi Gras is bigger and better than ever at The Village of Baytowne Wharf! Again, this year, the Fat Tuesday Baytowne Bash Parade and the Mardi Gras Dog Parade will join forces for one festive event. The Village streets will be filled with costumed dogs and their humans along with unique and colorful floats, golf carts, vehi-

cles, pick-up trucks and Mardi Gras cheer. Let the good times roll with dressed-up marchers in their Mardi Gras best and Mardi Gras music filling the air as four-pawed friends and parade participants shower parade-goers with a barrage of beads, moon pies and other trinkets.

Baytowne is looking for Krewe's to join in the Mardi Gras festivities. To participate, register by Friday, Feb. 9, at 5 p.m. at baytownewharf.com. Participants who register by Feb. 5 will receive five points added to their score.

Baytowne Mardi Gras Street Pardi
Tues. Feb. 13, 6-8 p.m.
No Cost to Attend

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

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

Now a family tradition, lace up those skates and continue the magical winter spirit at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Baytowne on Ice. For locals and visitors who miss the cold and ice, Baytowne's seasonal ice rink is the perfect opportunity to share some of your favorite winter traditions. The ice rink is open through Sunday, Feb. 4. Hours vary daily. \$13 for a 90-minute



skate; \$3 skate rentals. Rent the rink for private parties and functions starting at \$300. Call (850) 428-2736 or visit baytownewharf.com for more information.

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

On Thursday, Jan. 18, 5 p.m., join Baytowne Wharf for an evening full of free champagne and shopping during its **Bubbly Baytowne**. Sip and shop through the Village streets.

Stop in various retail merchants as you enjoy a selection of premium champagnes.

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

Walk or run with friends and family at the **Pink Walk & 5K Benefiting Fore Her** on Saturday, Jan. 26, at 8:30 a.m. Wear your pink and have fun while raising funds for breast cancer patients in financial need. Register at www.foreher.org/pinkwalk5k.





Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

"Reel Talk" from the City of Destin Holiday Reflections and Hope

By TAMARA LEIGH YOUNG, PhD, PUBLIC INFORMATION MANAGER FOR THE WORLD'S LUCKIEST FISHING VILLAGE

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 reflected on 2023.

TY: Christmas in Destin has such a lovely small-town feel in



everyone come together for the music and Christmas tree lighting at the Community Center. What's one of your favorite Christmas traditions in Destin?

BW: I have always had a love for Christmas lights and have continued my family's tradition of going all

out on decorations during the holiday season. One of my favorite parts of this time of year is when my family and I pile into a car to drive around and see everyone's Christmas lights. I am hopeful that we will see even more spectacular light displays in the future.

TY: You received a spectacular Christmas gift this year with Bekah saying "yes" to your marriage proposal! Anything else you're asking Santa for?

BW: I am ecstatic that Bekah agreed to marry me and that we get to spend this holiday season engaged. This Christmas has been one of the most memorable for both of us. Bekah is my best friend, and I am grateful that we get to learn, grow and share this life together. I have everything I could ask for and don't need anything from Santa this year.

TY: Perfect answer. So, we've reflected well on 2023, but looking ahead, what are some "resolutions" – goals – for Destin in 2024?

BW: It will be a pivotal year for our community, and we're presented with a remarkable opportunity to shape the future of our city at the ballot box. As we approach this crucial presidential election year, it's the ideal time to engage our citizens in a democratic process that could fundamentally transform the Destin community. Key issues such as enhancing local representation, considering strategic annexations, and expanding the scope of our public safety services are not just policy decisions. They are vital steps toward a legacy that will benefit generations to come. By placing these critical topics on the ballot, we empower our community to make informed decisions and contribute to the collective vision of our city's future.



a variety of ways. For instance, the Harbor waters light up with a splash of all colors with the boat parade – magical! What's your most meaningful memory of that particular parade?

BW: Years ago, I was asked to be the official photographer of the Destin Boat Parade by Kathy Blue Marler. As a newer business owner, being able to volunteer and contribute to such a special event was a proud moment for me. The parade was breathtaking and capturing those holiday moments as the vessels "showed off" their lights and spirit in front of the judges was a lot of fun!

TY: The other parade, the one on Highway 98, was equally amazing with thousands of people lining the streets. Our Parks and Rec folks took care of things beginning to end. And we, City staff, had a blast building our own float this year and dressing up as Cousin Eddie from "A Christmas Vacation." What were some floats you liked?

BW: The WOW factor for me was the bubble cannon float! While we didn't have snow on the ground, the bubbles were a great substitute. My honorable mention, since I love music, goes to a local band called the "Purple Monkeys." They won the "Best Band" award in the parade this year and were fantastic to hear.

TY: Live music is the best, and Purple Monkeys was a crowd hit! It was also nice to see

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Lauren's Legacy Pregnancy Center A Place of Hope and Help

By VICTORIA OSTROSKY

Life happens, doesn't it? The unexpected slaps us in the face and our life begins to crumble. Maybe your pregnancy test came back positive. You're young, single and still in school. What are your options? Or, perhaps, you're a little older with a career and not sure if a baby will fit into your plans right now. How do you navigate these uncharted waters and with whom?

Last March, a new pregnancy center opened in our area as a resource for women and men in Okaloosa and Walton counties providing pregnancy testing

and ultrasounds, parenting programs, assistance with community resources and counseling for women in unexpected pregnancies.

At Lauren's Legacy Pregnancy Center, they don't provide for or refer for abortions, but they give education on abortions so women can make an informed decision. All services at the pregnancy center are free and confidential. Stacey Reed, the Executive Director, says it this way: "This is a safe place for women to discuss their options, to have someone who cares. Their story and needs are important to us."

Protecting the most vulnerable and coming alongside to help those in need are some of the ways we can be the hands and feet of Jesus. We know He loves children and has compassion on the sick. We're also familiar with the scripture where He said the second greatest commandment is to "love your neighbor as yourself."

One of the many services the pregnancy center offers is parenting programs, where new parents take classes and receive baby items in return, such as car seats, diapers and other needed supplies. This is a wonderful way

for new parents to learn more about taking care of their newborn, and they can remain in the program until their baby is one year old.

Stacey was able to share, with permission, one young lady's story. She was 30 weeks pregnant at the time and wanted to learn more about the center's parenting program. "She and her husband had recently started their own business and were finding it difficult to make ends meet. She found our website and learned she could take our parenting program to earn a free car seat." After completing enough classes

to earn the car seat, she ended up taking additional classes. "Upon completion of those classes, she earned a stroller, bassinette, clothing, diapers, wipes, bottles, books and many other wonderful items." So, you see, there's a lot more to the pregnancy center than just determining the viability of your pregnancy.

With this kind of assistance in providing resources and mentorship, only God knows the tremendous differences these services will make in the lives of everyone involved, not just now,

Continued on next page



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TRAVEL VENDOR
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For information contact tammy@tammysjourneys.com or 850-243-3809

 Community

LAUREN'S LEGACY
continued from previous page

but years into the future. For women who want to give birth, but aren't able to keep their baby, the pregnancy center offers referrals to local adoption agencies. There are many infer-



Lauren's Legacy Executive Director, Stacy Reed

tile couples who wait for years to adopt. The center also offers post-abortion support, understanding the need for heart healing.

Lauren's Legacy Pregnancy Center is located at 16019 Hwy. 331 Business in Freeport. Hours

of operation are Mondays and Fridays 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Thursdays 3 – 7 p.m. Appointments are encouraged. You can also call (850) 880-6287 or visit the website at www.laurenlegacy.net to learn more about all the services provided.



AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

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- When you look through magazines, do you envy the models' smiles?
- Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
- Would you like to change the way your teeth or gums are shaped?
- Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, you may be a good candidate for A Smile Makeover.



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Join the Wall of Champions:

ECCAC calls on community to pave the way to ending child abuse and neglect

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) invites the community to become champions in the fight against child abuse and neglect by contributing to the creation of a new symbolic tile Wall of Champions in the Julie Sacco Porterfield Children's Advocacy Center in Niceville. This 14,000-square-foot building, with its new addition, is dedicated to bringing dreams back to life for children affected by



abuse and neglect.

Embrace the opportunity to

be part of the Wall of Champions at the Julie Sacco Porterfield Center by having a name, logo, or artwork engraved on an 8" x 8" tile. This will not only secure one's place in the legacy of this vital center but also signify the commitment to being a champion for the cause. Contributions will help build and sustain this Center for children and families facing the challenges of abuse.

Be part of this extraordinary initiative by getting a tile,

or making a year-end donation to support the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center and its unwavering mission to restore childhoods for these courageous children. Engraved tiles can bear any name, whether it is a family name, a company logo, or a tribute to a special person in their honor.

To join the Wall of Champions, simply order a tile. ECCAC's goal is to have 100 tiles at \$250 each for an 8" x 8" tile,

or buy more, earning multiple tiles permanently placed in the Wall of Champions in the Julie Sacco Porterfield Center's main conference room.

For more information or to contribute, please visit <https://eccac.org/about/end-of-year-giving/> or email Lee Curtis: Lee@ECCAC.org. If abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

Mark Your Calendars for ECCAC's Signature Gala & Golf Events

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) is putting on its annual signature Gala & Golf event this year, presented by George and Janice Hendricks. The Gala

Band and DJ Chris Henson; exciting live auction by famed auctioneer DawnMarie Kotsonis, also known as The Gavel Girl; as well as a featured guest speaker. The Gala is an energetic, yet

important ECCAC fundraiser to benefit children by providing services at no cost to help identify, treat and support child victims in abusive situations.

ment. Tournament cost is \$400, which includes two tickets to the Gala. Gala tickets only are \$250

per couple. Please make reservations on-line at eccac.org. Sponsorships are still available.

Contact Lee Curtis at at 850-850-400-3488, or email her at Lee@eccac.org.



features a cocktail hour starting at 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, March 8, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Guests will enjoy dinner and live entertainment by the popular Will Thompson

important ECCAC fundraiser to benefit children by providing services at no cost to help identify, treat and support child victims in abusive situations.

The Golf Tournament, also to benefit ECCAC, will take place on Sunday, March 10, at Kelly Plantation Golf Club with registration and a cookout meal from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. to be ready for a tournament shot gun start at noon. An Awards Ceremony will follow the tourna-



March 8 & 10
Hilton Sandestin Beach
Golf Resort & Spa
Kelly Plantation Golf Course

*You're invited to the
Emerald Coast Children's
Advocacy Center's*

eccac gala & golf


presented by Janice & George Hendricks

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eccac.org/gala-golf




Announcing Ecco Motors HarborSide!

In 2005 Ecco Motors opened a 2-person golf cart repair business as a "retirement hobby" for its owner. 18 years later, that "hobby" has flourished into Service, Rentals, Storage and now a 3rd Sales location.

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Trends & Treasures!



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“It has been our pleasure to have had you all as our valued clients, friends and partners this past year,” says Adrienne Brackett, Pure & Couture owner. “We all at Pure & Couture hope that 2024 holds success and great hair and skin.” Treat yourself to a colorful, trendy transformation and begin the year with “pure” confidence. Invest in good hair care products to change your hair game. Whether you're looking to grow it longer or have healthier hair, Pure & Couture has products to help such as the Renewal Remedies Treatment by Oribe. The Pure and Couture team of stylists and make-up artists listen to what YOU want your hair to look and feel like. They discuss your preferences for makeup and personality and suggest options that work with your skin

tone, face shape, lifestyle and budget. With hand-tied hair extensions, color, styling, makeup, spray tans, a pampering facial or even a therapeutic massage or kinesiology, Pure and Couture wants a relationship with you! Offering curbside pick-ups and online ordering, too!

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Meet the Top Realtor Brian Locicero, REALTOR®

Award-winning. Record-breaking. Knowledgeable. In fact, there are few people that know the Destin-30a-Seaside real estate market as well as REALTOR® Brian K. LoCicero. As a local, he has an exceptional perspective on the community and its development. Brian is a longtime resident and well-respected member of the community who will assure that all your real estate needs are met. He specializes in selling, listing and marketing unique properties, in addition to finding key locations for new or expanding businesses desiring to bring their brand to the Destin-30A area. Brian is known locally as the “go to” person to handle real estate transactions for individuals, businesses and lending institutions. He has his finger on the pulse of the market and can quickly analyze your needs to identify areas that best fit your lifestyle. As an elite Luxury real estate consultant with Keller Williams Luxury Division, Brian has continued raising the bar of excellence in the Destin-30A luxury home market. He has a well-established network to help connect buyers and sellers quickly and effectively.

Brian owes his remarkable success to his real estate acumen and detailed knowledge of the Emerald Coast area markets; his

aggressive advertising and marketing campaigns on behalf of his clients and the great team of professionals he has assembled to help clients through every step of their real estate transaction.

When you're ready to buy or sell property along Florida's Gulf Coast from Pensacola to Perdido Key, Navarre Beach to Destin, or Sandestin to Alys Beach, contact Brian at (850) 739-3800 or visit his website at BeOnTheCoast.com.

Welcome 2024 in Style! Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

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

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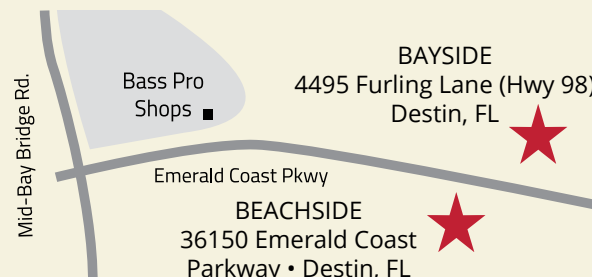


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Why is the Medicare Open Enrollment Period Important?



By GREG DURETTE

Now that the Medicare Annual Election Period (AEP) is over (ended December 7th), you can finally take a breather from all those ads, phone calls and mailers. Come January 1st, you will have a chance to try out your new Medicare Advantage, Supplement and/or Prescription plan.

If you suddenly discover the

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

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

• Did you sign up for a new Advantage Plan or a stand-alone

Florida Health



Connector

• Enroll in a stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plan

• Elect to change from one Medicare Advantage Plan to another

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

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

Again, enrolling in a stand-

Part D prescription drug plan during the last Annual Enrollment Period (AEP)?

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

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

The OEP runs annually from January 1st to March 31st.

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

These allowed changes are:

• Cancel your stand-alone Part D prescription drug plan

• Drop your Medicare Advantage Plan and return to Original Medicare (A & B only)

Continued on next page

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Insights for Investors: Deciding on Where and How to Invest in the New Year



BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

If we reflect on almost four decades in the investment world, we cannot find, with any consistency, anyone who can tell you when and how to invest in the next year. For sure, there are market predictions, economic predictions and forecasts and opinions. The question we keep coming back to is: Does anyone really KNOW where the markets, the economy and the world are headed? Sometimes a prognosticator will get it right, but he or she is rarely right on a consistent basis. Why might that be?

Morgan Housel is an author who has written two books on investing and behavior. One is titled "Same as Ever" and the other is "The Psychology of Money." The main theme drawn from these two writings is that the future cannot be predicted, because people and events cannot be predicted. Would anyone have known for sure that Russia would have invaded Ukraine two years ago (and the economic fallout that followed)? Or, as was pointed out, the effects or significance of the coronavirus pandemic? Housel points out that The Economist magazine,

well revered in the investing and professional world, predicted neither in its annual forecasts for 2020 and 2022 respectively.

Some call unusual or unpredictable events "Black Swan" events. No one knows when they will appear. It's impossible to predict things, so we encourage investors to plan and invest according to their time frame, their risk tolerance and their investment objective. These are the big three for most investors.

Charlie Munger, Warren Buffet's partner, has had many books written about him, as has Buffet. A current read is "The Tao of Charlie Munger" by David Clark. It is replete with lessons from the investing great who passed away in December of 2023. One consistent lesson was for investors to not be in a hurry. We suggest that investors identify companies, or funds, or bonds or instruments that fit your investment objective, their time frame and their comfort level, and then be patient.

2023 tested the patience of many investors as they saw the markets gain substantially for most of the year while perhaps their investments did not. Had they held the so called magnificent seven (META, Google, Apple, Microsoft, Tesla, Nvidia and Amazon) only, they would have seen those returns. Most stocks (the remainder of approximately 500 stocks in the S&P 500) had lesser returns, no returns or perhaps lost up until about October of 2023. Then, in November, interest rates (based upon the 10-year U.S. Treasury note) began to decline (from approximately a high of 5% to 3.9%).



The market's performance for the S&P in November was almost nine percent and many long-term bonds appreciated as much as 6%. December numbers, while not final at this writing were equally compelling. So, what might be learned, or gained, from all of this?

Peter Lynch, the well known fund manager from Fidelity, said many years ago in one of his three books to not give up hope at the worst possible time and sellout. We have seen this repeated by many investment managers for years, to not sell at the bottom (as if you would know the bottom). Did that happen in 2023? Many investors were convinced that cash or CDs was the best place to be and as a result either sold out and moved to cash or CDs or remained in cash or CDs. To be clear, these low to no risk investments play a part in most investors' portfolios. However, we would suggest that if someone has a long term time frame, to not use a short term lens, so to speak, when making an allocation decision or a change.

The U.S. economy continues

to lead the world in innovation, cost of doing business and opportunity. We look back over the last almost 100 years and see that investors saw the highest returns in large cap stocks followed by bonds then by cash (Ibbotson Charts). Research, know what you own or what you want to own and why you own it. Know how long you want to own something. Appropriate risk mitigation along with patience might serve investors well in 2024 and beyond.

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, FL 32451. Phone 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymond-james.com.

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MEDICARE

continued from previous page

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

Last, some folks have a change of heart once they see the detailed materials of the Advantage plan they enrolled in during the AEP. Perhaps you find your HMO plan does not

have the providers you need but, a PPO plan does. Or, perhaps the terms of coverage are better in a plan different from your current plan. Maybe, another plan costs less (or even \$0!).

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

The best options for your particular situation should be

thoroughly discussed with your insurance agent/broker to make sure you have all the facts about the choices you may be thinking about and, get all your questions answered.

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the State of Florida and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for over 40 years and can be reached at his office at 850-842-2400 or his mobile at 978-509-2941.



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2023: What Happened in Real Estate and Why It's Important to YOU!

Time for the Annual "Just the Stats, Ma'am"

BY GAIL PELTO

2023—another one bites the dust and on to a new, exciting year! (And Thank Goodness for THAT!) So, let's recap the res-

idential real estate market stats for 2023 compared to 2022:

- In 2023 the number of **SOLD Listings was down by 21.6% % over prior year.**

- In 2023 the **Median Sales Price was down by 5.4%** over prior year.

- In 2023 the **Number of New Listings was up by**



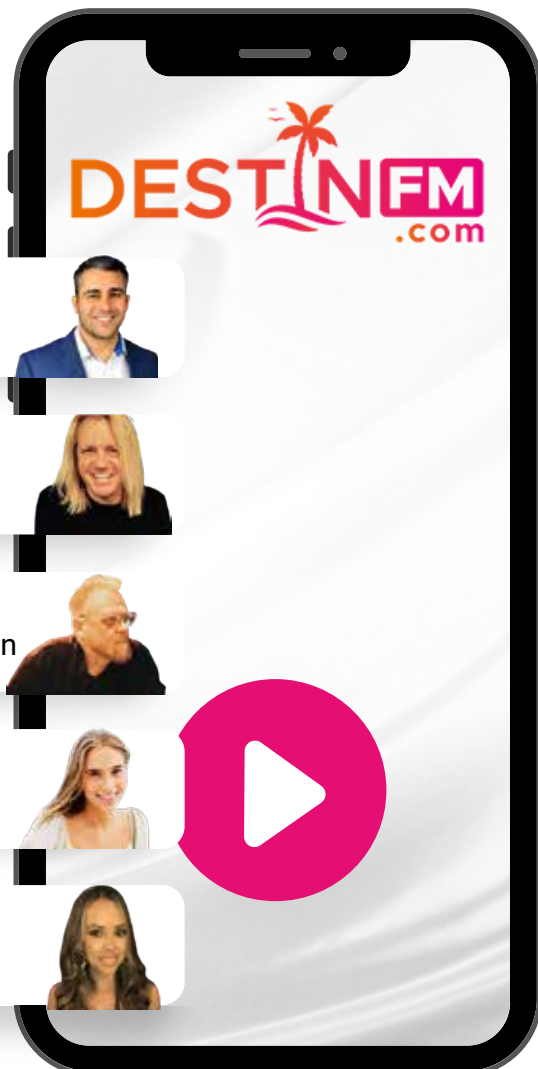
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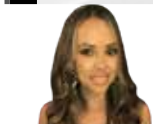
▶ Dan Collins
Crab Island Throw Down Sat 12n



▶ Ellie Adair
Weekends



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Foodie Friday 7a, 8a, 9a



ly everything between Panama City Beach and Pensacola) through December 2023 and depending on the exact area where you are selling or buying, the numbers may change.

What does this all mean to YOU?

- The housing inventory has grown to more "normal" pre-pandemic levels.

- If you are on the market for sale now and **you've been on market for more than 72 days, it's time to review why** and think about some changes...maybe it's because of the condition? Or maybe it's the price? Talk to your Real Estate Agent.

- If your property is **priced correctly, you should expect to sell at about 96% of list price.**

- **If you are looking to sell in 2024, work on getting your home on the market NOW!** Those high sales months are right around the corner! It's time to interview to make sure you get the right agent. **Don't know how to interview agents? Reach out to me. I'll give you some pointers. Call 850.374.0454 or email me at Gail.Pelto@KW.com.**

- **If you're looking to buy, BUY NOW.** There's not too many buyers in January and February and you might have a good chance at finding a motivated seller! AND you can take advantage of high inventory and lowering interest rates. Note that if interest rates fall

1.8% over prior year.

- In 2023 **March had the highest number of sales** followed by June and April.

- The **Median Sales Price** was \$420,000 in 2022 and in 2023 it was \$397,150.

- **Average Cumulative Days on Market** (length of time from listing to under contract) was 72 in 2023 compared to 39 in 2022.

- **Average Sold to List Price** was 96.33% in 2023 and 97.83% in 2022.

- In 2023 we **averaged 4.41 months of inventory**; in 2022 we averaged 2.43 months of inventory. Five months or less is considered a sellers' market; over five months is considered a buyers' market. Note that the last two months of 2023 inventory was above five months.

- The current **Active Listings have been on market 79 days** on average—the 2023 sold listings were on market an average of 72 days.

Keep in mind that these stats are for ALL residential sales in the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors (which is basical-

Continued on next page

Is a Roth IRA Conversion Right for You?



BY RANDAL LOCKLIER,
PRESIDENT, GULF FINANCIAL

It's no secret that it's a good time for Roth IRA conversions. We are doing a lot of them. Current Trump era personal income

answer will be yes. Especially if you are already in retirement and at relatively low earned income. One way to see if a conversion is right for you is to run a mock tax return. Our tax team can work with you to determine the taxes owed ahead of time. Isn't that a smart move? Being tax efficient will increase your income and improve the longevity of your portfolio. TAX SMART. That's the Gulf Financial way.

Keep in mind the following KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You can convert all or part of the money in a traditional IRA into a Roth IRA.

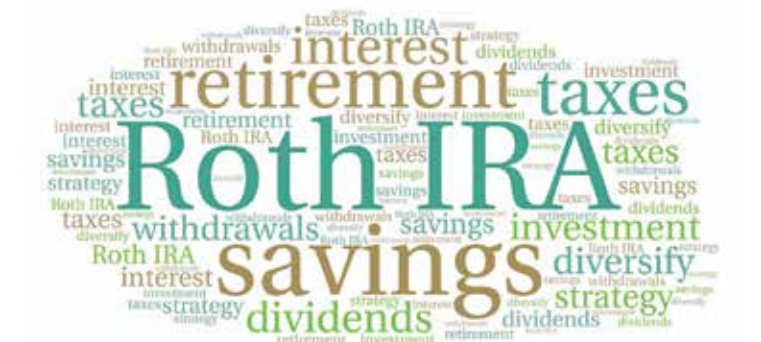
money you convert, but you'll be able to take tax-free withdrawals from the Roth IRA in the future.

- Be aware that withdrawing converted funds within five years of the conversion will trigger a 10% penalty.
- Roth IRA conversions may not make as much sense for in-

dividuals nearing retirement; for that group it may be more advantageous to simply pay taxes over time via traditional IRA withdrawals. Open and fund a Roth if you are still working.

Questions? Visit gulffinancialgroup.com or call me at 833-403-4041

Investments involve risk unless otherwise stated. Consult with a licensed Investment or Tax Advisor and read the prospectus prior to making any investment. This article is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information on the subject matter covered.



tax levels are some of the lowest in history. It's also no secret that taxes could increase significantly in the future. Does it make sense to pay income taxes on Qualified assets (IRA) now while they are low? For a lot of folks, that an-

- Even if your income exceeds the limits for making contributions to a Roth IRA, you can still do a Roth conversion, sometimes called a "backdoor Roth IRA."
- You will owe taxes on the

2023 REAL ESTATE

continued from previous page

more, you can refinance after six months.

• If you're looking to add to or start an investment property portfolio, NOW IS THE TIME! Cash-out refinancing may be a great way to start! **Purchase the property and have the renters pay you. And, if you have one, have them pay the mortgage too! Need to speak to a lender? Call me and I can help.**

• Need an agent? I can help. call me at 850.374.0454 or email to Gail.Pelto@KW.com.

2024 predictions from the National Association of Realtors:

• NAR predicts 4.71 million existing-home sales in 2024, up

13.5% from 4.1 million anticipated in 2023.

- Annual median home prices are expected to remain largely unchanged at the national level in 2024, for the second straight year, modestly improving affordability from rising income.

Know the stats. More importantly, make sure your real estate agent knows the stats! (just sayin')

Cheers to Your Healthy, Prosperous and Joyful New Year! Call me if you need some help.

Gail Pelto is a full-time real estate agent with Keller Williams and a board member with both the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and The Rotary Club. If you have questions about real estate, call her! 850.374.0454



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Community

Know Your Neighbor: Vet Rides Voice to Second Career

By KENNETH BOOKS

When local resident Kevin Gaddie retired from the Navy after 20 years, he realized he had a lot of life ahead of him. He needed something to do.

“I said to myself, I’m too young to sit on the porch,” remembers Kevin, now 63. Pos-

sessed of a rich baritone voice, he decided to try his hand at voice-over work. “I ended up going to the University of West Florida and taking a class called ‘Getting Paid to Talk,’” he says. “There were maybe 20 people in the class. They gave us scripts to read and we played them. When

I played mine, I heard some ohs and ahs from the crowd.” Kevin was no stranger to using his voice. His two decades in the Navy were spent as a broadcast journalist, a job that won him several awards. The first thing to do was to get an agent. So, he sent his demo tape out. “I got

signed around Christmas,” Kevin says. “It was the best present I got.”

The ball was rolling. Voice Coaches, out of Albany, N.Y., called and gave him a voice test, which went well, so they decided to train Kevin. He participated in four Saturday sessions over



the phone on script reading and interpreting copy. “I pretty much breezed through it,” he says. He also got 50 CDs with his demo on them. Next, Kevin attended an acting academy run by Ann Marie Crouch, a model and actress who lives in Fort Walton Beach by way of Enid, Okla., and Los Angeles. She runs AMC Talent and is best known for her role as Princess Shayla in Power Rangers: Wild Force. “When I moved from LA, I wondered, what do I do now?” says Ann Marie. “All I’d ever done through life is act. So I started teaching. I like to help the next generation of actors along this great path.” Ann Marie liked Kevin’s voice, but saw greater things for him. “I said, why don’t we put him on camera?”

Six weeks later, Kevin was cast in the movie “Atlantic Rim” as an extra. Ann Marie was the casting director and fellow actor Steve Marlow said he liked Kevin’s voice, which earned Kevin an invitation to her open call designed to meet new talent. Local voice actor Johnny Alexander brought his boom box and they played Kevin’s demo. She signed him on the spot. So far, Kevin has had roles in about 30 movies, including seven as the lead actor. He has completed more than 150 voice-over projects as well.

One of his proudest voice-over gigs was as a volunteer for WUWF 88.1’s Sightline program.

“We read stories – cold, no rehearsal – from the Pensacola News Journal to our blind and visually impaired audience,” he says. “I also narrated 55 children’s books for WUWF’s ‘The Children’s Hour.’ In nine years, I logged a total of 770 volunteer hours with WUWF. I admit to being proud of that. Volunteering at WUWF was a way I found to give back to the community for all the good fortune I’ve had in my life.”

Later, he saw an ad on Facebook for automated record-

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Continued on page 40

GO RED

continued from page 1

coworking community, is hosting a Go Red for Women event on Wednesday, February 14 at 9 a.m. The breakfast will be informative for men and women. A local heart attack survivor will share her harrowing journey to a successful heart transplant. Inger Berg, Senior Director of Development and Community Health for the American Heart Association in the Florida Panhandle, will be on hand to discuss Life's Essential 8, the AHA's science-based recipe for improving cardiovascular health in all people. There will also be free blood pressure screenings.

Often called the "silent killer," the AHA estimates that 45% of women over the age of 20 are living with some form of cardiovascular disease. This number can be influenced by the unique life stages women may experience, like pregnancy and menopause.

Pregnancy causes additional strain on a woman's heart and blood vessels, which can uncover existing, unknown cardiovascular issues or create new ones that may last past pregnancy, especially if other risk factors exist, like obesity or gestational diabetes.

While menopause does not raise a woman's risk for cardiovascular disease, some of the changes that may happen during this life stage can.

According to the AHA, many studies indicate estrogen reduces atherosclerosis by reducing low-density lipoproteins (LDL or "bad" cholesterol) and inflammatory processes in the vascular system. Estrogen may also act as

American Heart Association®



an antioxidant.

After menopause, a woman's body naturally makes very little estrogen and a decrease in this hormone during menopause may cause cholesterol to build-up in arteries, leading to increased heart attack and stroke risk.

Risk for metabolic syndrome also increases during menopause. Metabolic syndrome is a condition that usually includes three or more of the following risks: abdominal obesity, high triglycerides, low HDL cholesterol, high blood pressure and high

blood sugar.

Go Red for Women is designed to educate women about their unique risks and symptoms and empower them to take control of their cardiovascular health through education and self advocacy. The initiative also raises funds for women-focused research.

Next to the U.S. Government, the American Heart Association is the largest funder of heart disease and stroke research. But according to the AHA, only 38% of 2020 clinical trial participants were women. Go Red for Wom-

en events support the AHA's commitment to funding research focused on women.

Events like the one being held at Beachworx on Valentine's Day help educate men and women about risk mitigation and raise money to further the AHA's mission of education, outreach and research.

Scan the QR code to register for the event or donate to the American Heart Association.



Link to Beachworx Valentine's Day event or visit Eventbrite and search 'Go Red for Women Emerald Coast':

<https://bit.ly/GoRedDestin>

Women's heart attack symptoms can be different from men's.

Both men and women generally experience chest pain or discomfort, but women more often experience shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting and back or jaw pain.

Stroke symptoms are the same for men and women and present suddenly. Stroke symptoms can include numbness in the face or on one side of the body, confusion and trouble speaking or understanding, vision trouble in one or both eyes and severe headache. The acronym F.A.S.T. is an easy way to respond to warning signs of stroke.

F - face drooping. Ask the person to smile. Is there drooping on one side or numbness?

A - Arm weakness. Is one arm weak or numb or drifting downward when asked to raise both arms.

S - Speech difficulties. Is it difficult for the person to correctly say a simple sentence? Are they difficult to understand?

T - Time to Call for an emergency response if any of these symptoms present, even if they go away. Get the person to a hospital immediately.

By the Numbers

Blood pressure is an indicator of cardiovascular health, but what do the numbers mean?

- High blood pressure makes your heart work harder, which strains the heart and arteries.

- Systolic pressure (the top number in a blood pressure reading) measures the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. A "normal" number, according to the CDC, is less than 120 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury). You might have high blood pressure if your systolic pressure is 130 mm Hg or higher.

- Diastolic pressure (the bottom number in a reading) measures the pressure in your arteries when your heart rests between beats. If diastolic pressure is 80 mm Hg or higher, and stays high over time, it can put you at risk for cardiovascular disease, heart attack and stroke.

- Blood pressure is affected by physical activity, diet, cholesterol and alcohol consumption and tobacco use. Some influences we cannot control include genetics, heredity, age, race and ethnicity.

- A single high reading is not

an immediate cause for alarm. Having blood pressure measures consistently above normal may result in a diagnosis of high blood pressure (or hypertension).

- If your blood pressure is normal (120/80 mm Hg or below these numbers), have it checked at least every two years. If it is high, follow your health care professional's advice to control it and consider monitoring it more frequently. Find the AHA's guidance on monitoring your blood pressure at home at this URL: https://bit.ly/home_BP

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 Environment



exercise more, eat healthier, and save money. A look back 20 years, CNN's poll showed the top resolutions were: get out of debt, lose weight and develop a healthy habit (quit smoking). It's not surprising that the top resolutions are similar year after year, because they all have great intentions and actually go hand and hand. Let's look at eating healthier and exercising. Eating healthy can mean cooking more at home, which saves money. Eating healthy also could cause

By Chris Balzer, ECES

Welcome a new year! A recent survey of 531 U.S. adults showed the top resolutions are

Resolutions




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fewer medications or doctor visits, which saves money. The same with exercising, developing a good exercise plan will make you healthier and could cause fewer medications or doctor visits, thereby saving you money. My grandmother once said, it's better to spend money at the grocery store on healthy foods than for doctor's visits.

Another way to save money which is always on the top of my mind, and typically not on most, is to increase efficiency and tighten the envelope of our homes. Tightening the envelope is not a phrase from Tom Wolfe's novel "The Right Stuff," but a term used to describe a system. The Building envelope is the physical barrier

between the exterior and interior environments enclosing a structure (your home). Generally, the building envelope consists of a series of components and systems such as a roof, walls, windows and a foundation. These systems protect the interior from the effects of the environment like precipitation, wind, temperature, humidity and ultraviolet radiation. One function of the building envelope is to control these effects between the interior and exterior of the building. When there is missing or compacted insulation or unsealed windows, doors and attic penetrations, your building envelope is compromised and wasting energy and comfort.

If your home is older than

15 years, you most likely don't have enough insulation to meet today's guidelines. Prior insulation code for this area was R-19 (roughly 6.5" of insulation), now the new code is R-30 (roughly 10.5" of insulation). That's a 61% increase. Why the increase? Because we know that R-19 insulation has trouble keeping our homes comfortable and the only solution was to add more insulation. We recommend R-38 (14.5" of insulation). More states are requiring the use of reflective radiant barrier insulation installed on the inside of the attic roof line. Reflective radiant barriers reflect 97% of radiant heat in your attic, lowering the attic temperature by 40 to 50 degrees in the summer, allowing your insulation and ductwork to perform better, saving you money and increasing your comfort. It's all about tightening the envelope to increase efficiency and comfort. If one of your resolutions is to save money this year, schedule an inspection to know exactly where your home could improve its envelope.

May success knock on your door, all your joys multiply and you and your loved ones stay healthy. Happy 2024!

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 inspection by calling (850) 588-2870, visit www.trustees.com or email wecare@trustees.com and Beat the Heat.



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Interior Design Trends You'll See Come and Some That Will Go in 2024



BY KIM SCHNEIDER,
COASTAL DESIGN BY KIM

Happy New Year! Hope you had a joyful and memorable December. Now that the holiday hustle and bustle is over and the decorations are packed away, we can turn our atten-



tion to refreshing our home for the new year. Below are a few trends you'll see and few that will disappear this year.

2024 Trends

- **Earthy Tones** – We are going to see a lot of rich, earthy tones. Look for earthy brown tones, dark mossy greens, aubergine (deep purple) and amber (golden brown hue) to help bring a cozy welcoming atmosphere to your space. Bold, moody colors are a vibe that's becoming increasingly popular. Expect to see these colors used on cabinets, too.
- **Nature is coming indoors.** You will see more natural materials such as bamboo and linen, plants and natural light (think larger windows) being utilized in the home.
- **Texture is still forging forward in upholstery** – the richer the better.

Remember those scalloped details on furniture? They're back! You will begin seeing

them implemented on furniture, upholstered pieces and as an accent on cabinetry. If you love antique shopping, this may be where you will find your best scalloped furniture pieces. Adding an antique piece of furniture to your space creates charming results.

- **Stacked Tile is becoming increasingly popular.** Subway tile has been around for quite sometime. But, instead of the standard brick layout, a modern twist is stacking it either vertically or horizontally. Stacking your tile will provide a timeless look for years of enjoyment.

- **Large Format Tiles are making a statement on both floors and walls.** They're oversized and offer a high tactile quality with dramatic patterns and minimal grout lines. They have a big personality and make a grand statement.

- **Geometric Shapes are being revived.** We can expect to see these designs in light fixtures. It's been said that shapes and curves appeal to our brains.

- **Shiplap is everywhere.** But, the latest trend is installing it vertically (think paneled walls from the 70's) and painting them.

Fading Trends

- **Grey** has been popular for years, but it's disappearing quickly. It's taking a backseat to the increasingly popular moody earth tones.

- **Monochromatic designs** are being considered outdated as these shades are being replaced with bolder moody colors.

- **Mass Produced Furniture** has been popular for a long time due to its budget friendly pricing and the quick ship availability offered. Due to today's sustainability and environmental awareness, people are no longer

interested in disposable furniture.

- **Caning and Wicker Furniture** may have a nostalgic feel, but it has limited versatility and doesn't hold up well.

- Concrete floors, high ceilings, exposed architectural elements and pipes referred to as the **Industrial Style** is no longer being sought after for home life. People are shifting towards a

more cozy, inviting vibe.

- The **Open Concept floor plan** is falling out of favor as people are looking for smaller, cozier, intimate spaces.

This year I believe we will see homes become cozier through paint color, furniture and textiles. Trends definitely come and go, but I'm a fan of doing what

makes you comfortable in your home.

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 Education

The Seaside School™: A Legacy of Excellence and Innovation in Education

In the picturesque coastal town of Seaside, a pioneering institution has been shaping the future of education since 1996. The Seaside School, comprising Seaside Neighborhood School and Seacoast Collegiate High School, stands as a testament to the power of community collaboration, forward-thinking and the relentless pursuit of academic excellence.



Historical Roots in the Charming Town of SEASIDE®

The Seaside School's history is intertwined with the story of Seaside, Florida—a town conceived in 1979 by Robert and Daryl Davis, that became a symbol of community planning and design innovation. Designed on a neighborhood scale with interconnected streets, Seaside aimed to foster a sense of community. The town became famous for its design, and its idyllic setting was immortalized in the hit 1998 movie *The Truman Show*.

Truman Show.

Remarkably, the movie played a pivotal role in Seaside School's history. Robert Davis donated the land for the school, and the fees from *The Truman Show* funded its first building. Thus, Seaside School was born, taking the path of becoming one of Florida's first public charter schools.

Dr. Rosemary Williams spearheaded the movement to create a tuition-free neighborhood school in Seaside to address the need for middle school education in the southern end of Walton County - emphasizing

that success is achievable both academically and socially during the often-challenging middle school years. The journey began with 36 students, two faculty members, and one administrator housed in two portables on Seaside's Lyceum Lawn. Over the years, the school has expanded its offerings, eventually establishing Seacoast Collegiate High School to expand the charter's scope. Today, The Seaside School proudly holds the distinction of being the oldest public charter school in Florida.

A Holistic Approach to Education

The school prides itself on being a flexible and personalized learning community, providing a tuition-free experience with small class sizes and top-ranked

educators - a learning experience usually associated with private education. Learning extends beyond the classroom, encompassing gardening, culinary, art, and music programs, as well as mentorship from local business leaders. The comprehensive athletics program adds another dimension to the students' holistic development.

Additionally, Seacoast Collegiate High School has become the premiere dual enrollment program, empowering students to graduate debt-free or enter the workforce as skilled employees. This unique high school offers a collegiate model where students can earn college credits in 11th and 12th grades to ultimately earn their A.A. degree alongside their high school diploma at no cost. With a 100% graduation rate, over 6,300 college credits earned, and more than \$8 million in academic and athletic scholarships, Seacoast Collegiate High School stands as a beacon of success.

The school's strong collaboration with Northwest Florida State College is set to reach new heights with the expansion of its campus in Fall 2025. This expansion, the first of its kind in the area, will include 80,000 square feet of new educational space, dedicated buildings for classrooms and labs, and "The Accelerator" - a facility housing a workforce/business incubation center. This initiative demonstrates Seacoast's commitment to preparing students for high-demand careers and fostering economic development in the region as well as becoming a national model for education.

Achievements Beyond the Classroom

The Seaside School stands as a beacon of academic excellence, recognized nationally and within the state of Florida for its outstanding achievements. Sea-

Continued on page 24



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National Model for Education

Seacoast Collegiate High School in partnership with Northwest Florida State College and the Walton County School District, is quickly becoming a national model for education through its multi-million dollar expansion that includes a dual enrollment and workforce-development center. This innovative and collaborative model, set to open in Fall 2025, aims to boost economic development and provide access to college-level classes for in-demand careers.

3

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Learning goes beyond the classroom for our students, including gardening, culinary, art, and music programs as well as mentoring from local business leaders. We also offer a complete athletics program for our middle and high school students.

4

Collegiate High School

Through our partnership with Northwest Florida State College, students who attend Seacoast Collegiate High School have the opportunity to earn college credit hours and an AA degree completely free. Our 2023 graduates earned more than 3,300 college credits, saving them and their families over \$760K in college tuition. The 2023 graduates also earned more than \$3.6MM in academic and athletic scholarships.

5

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We offer our students a tuition-free personalized learning experience typically found in private education including small class sizes and top-ranked educators. We are also a certified STEM School with a strong emphasis on character, communication, and critical life skills.

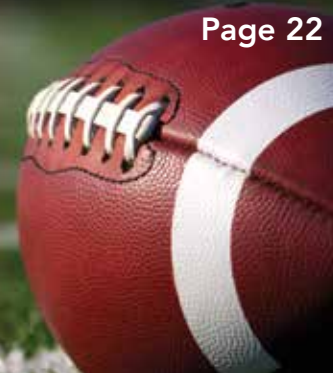


SEACOAST

COLLEGIATE HIGH SCHOOL

2024 Football Guide

Football. Food. Fun. Fans. Let the Games Begin...



BY SCOTT MILLER

Some of us prefer college football; some of us prefer pro football; and people like me, well, we love it all! Now that the college season is over and the Bowl games have run their course, we turn our attention to the playoffs. So, buckle up fans; it's gonna be a bumpy ride.

Could we see a rematch from last year? It's possible, but I doubt it. Both the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles seem to have slipped a bit since last year. So, my guess is a

Best Places to Watch Your Favorite Teams

pair of new contestants. If I had to pick right now, I'd say Baltimore Ravens vs. San Francisco 49ers will be the matchup. As a diehard Eagles fan, I'm not giving up just yet. So, Go Birds is the mantra for me. How about you?

Who does your allegiance lie with? Whoever you root for, I wish you luck.

As uncertain as these games can be, there is one thing I know for sure. Destin has the best places to gather with friends and family as we watch these play-offs unfold. Read on and take my advice, there's never a bad seat in the house.

Wondering where to watch? There are a lot of great places to enjoy right here in our own backyard – places full of big screen TVs and diehard fans where we can gather to cheer

on our favorite teams and enjoy some really great food and drinks, too. Home field advantage goes a long way, especially here in Destin. So, here's a few of my favorite "home field headquarters!"

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 trailer on the Destin Harbor, it has grown to four locations along our Emerald Coast, serving fresh seafood, live music and exciting water activities in the Destin area. Attention all die

hard football fans, AJ's boasts the one and only Jumbotron on the Destin Harbor. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month. Don't miss any of the action just come on down to AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar all season long... Come join for an amazing view of the Harbor, lots of food, drinks, friends and fun and a football-watching, Jumbotron experience like no other!

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include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail. With big screen TVs all around and football season upon us, there's no bad seat in the house. So, come by and watch the games all season long. 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." View full menu at austonson98.com.

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Continued on next page

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BEST PLACES

continued from previous page

Boathouse Oyster Bar

Oysters, live music and a local 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.

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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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Hey football fans, Tailfins Waterfront Grill is calling you... That's right y'all Destin's favorite season is here and there's not a better place in Destin to come and watch your team play.

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

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LIVE MUSIC!

- Mondays:** 4pm: Cole Jordan
8pm: Roshambo
- Tuesdays:** 4pm: Zach Renzi
8pm: Austin Jennings
- Wednesdays:** 4pm: Hunter & Tony
8pm: Smoke Show
- Thursdays:** 4pm: Flash Flood
8pm: Austin Jennings
- Fridays:** 4pm: Jason Findley
8pm: Airavata
- Saturdays:** 12pm: Kelly Byrd
4pm: Rotating Spot
8pm: Gunner
- Sundays:** 12pm: Kelly Byrd
4pm: Shane Curle
8pm: Rotating Spot

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

288 Harbor Blvd, Destin
(850) 837-3645

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BoathouseOysterBar
www.boathouseoysterbardestin.com

Pro Football Schedule

Week 18

Saturday, January 6

Pittsburgh Steelers at Baltimore Ravens, 3:30 p.m. ESPN
Houston Texans at Indianapolis Colts, 7:15 p.m. ESPN

Sunday, January 7

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Carolina Panthers, Noon Fox

Cleveland Browns at Cincinnati Bengals, Noon CBS

Minnesota Vikings at Detroit Lions, Noon Fox

New York Jets at New England Patriots, Noon Fox

Atlanta Falcons at New Orleans Saints, Noon CBS

Jacksonville Jaguars at Tennessee Titans, Noon CBS

Chicago Bears at Green Bay Packers, 3:25 p.m. CBS

Kansas City Chiefs at Los Angeles Chargers, 3:25 p.m. CBS

Denver Broncos at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:25 p.m. Fox

Philadelphia Eagles at New York Giants, 3:25 p.m. CBS

Los Angeles Rams at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m. Fox

Seattle Seahawks at Arizona Cardinals, 3:25 p.m. Fox

Dallas Cowboys at Washington Commanders, 3:25 p.m. Fox

Buffalo Bills at Miami Dolphins, 7:20 p.m. NBC

Game 2: Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024 (7:00 on Peacock)

Game 3: Sunday Jan. 14, 2024 (Noon on CBS or FOX)

Game 4: Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024 (3:30 on CBS)

Game 5: Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024 (7:00 on NBC)

Game 6: Monday, Jan. 15, 2024 (7:15 on ABC/ESPN)

The 2024 NFL Playoffs start with Wild card games on Jan. 13, 2024, and continue through to the AFC and NFC Conference championship games which will take place on Jan. 28, 2024.

NFL Playoffs 2024 Key Dates

Wild-card rounds: Jan. 13-15, 2024
Divisional playoffs: Jan. 20-21, 2024
Conference championships: Jan. 28, 2024
Pro Bowl: February 4, 2024
Super Bowl LVIII: Feb. 11, 2024

Teams that clinched the NFL playoffs 2023-24

AFC Conference:
Baltimore Ravens (12-3) (First-round bye)
Miami Dolphins (11-4)
Kansas City Chiefs (9-6)
Jacksonville Jaguars (8-7)
Cleveland Browns (11-5)
Buffalo Bills (9-6)
Indianapolis Colts (8-7)
NFC Conference:
San Francisco 49ers (11-4)
Philadelphia Eagles (11-4)
Detroit Lions (11-4)
Tampa Bay Buccaneers (8-7)
Dallas Cowboys (10-5)
Los Angeles Rams (8-7)
Seattle Seahawks (8-7)

Divisional Round

Game 1: Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024 (Time and Channel TBA)
Game 2: Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024 (Time and Channel TBA)
Game 3: Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024 (Time and Channel TBA)
Game 4: Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024 (Time and Channel TBA)

Conference Title Games

AFC Championship Game: Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024 (Time TBA on CBS)
NFC Championship Game: Sunday, Jan. 28, 2024 (Time TBA on FOX)

Pro Bowl 2024 Sunday, Feb. 4

The 2024 Pro Bowl between AFC at the NFL all-star game will be televised on ESPN, ABC, and Disney XD Kickoff is not set.

Super Bowl 58 2024! Sunday, Feb. 11

4:30 p.m. at Allegiant Stadium, Las Vegas, NV

Note: All times are Central. All CBS games can be streamed on Paramount+. All NBC, Fox and ESPN games can be streamed on FuboTV.

RAW BAR!

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11 AM - 9 PM

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LIVE MUSIC!
Wednesday and Friday Evenings

HAPPY HOUR!
3-6 pm Daily

Specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail!

Wild Card Round
Game 1: Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024 (3:30 on NBC/Peacock)




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Baby Back Ribs

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7 Days a Week, 8 am until 11 am

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Happy Hour 4-6 Enjoy \$7 Select Rolls

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EARLY BIRD DINNER SPECIALS

Mon.-Fri. 4-6 pm



Destin Harbor

Live Music on the Docks

172 Harbor Blvd. Destin
(850) 650-1200
TailfinsDestin.com

SEASIDE SCHOOL

continued from page 20

side Neighborhood School, the cornerstone of this institution, earned the prestigious National 2007 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools award, solidifying its position among the highest-performing middle schools. The commitment to academic prowess is further exemplified by the school's attainment of high-performing charter school status in 2011 and the esteemed title of a "pioneer charter school" in 2016, bestowed by the Florida Department of Education.

The accolades for The Seaside School paint a stunning picture of a top-rated combination charter school in Florida. Consistently ranking in the top 1% statewide for math and science, the institution proudly holds the #1 position in Walton County. Notably, it has maintained an "A" grade for over 20 consecutive years, reflecting a sustained commitment to excellence that resonates through every aspect of its educational journey.

Open Enrollment: Shaping Futures, One Student at a Time

As The Seaside School continues to make strides in education, it opens its doors for enrollment from January 5th to February 15th. Prospective students and their families are invited to join a community where innovation, excellence, and a commitment to the whole child have been the driving forces for over two decades.

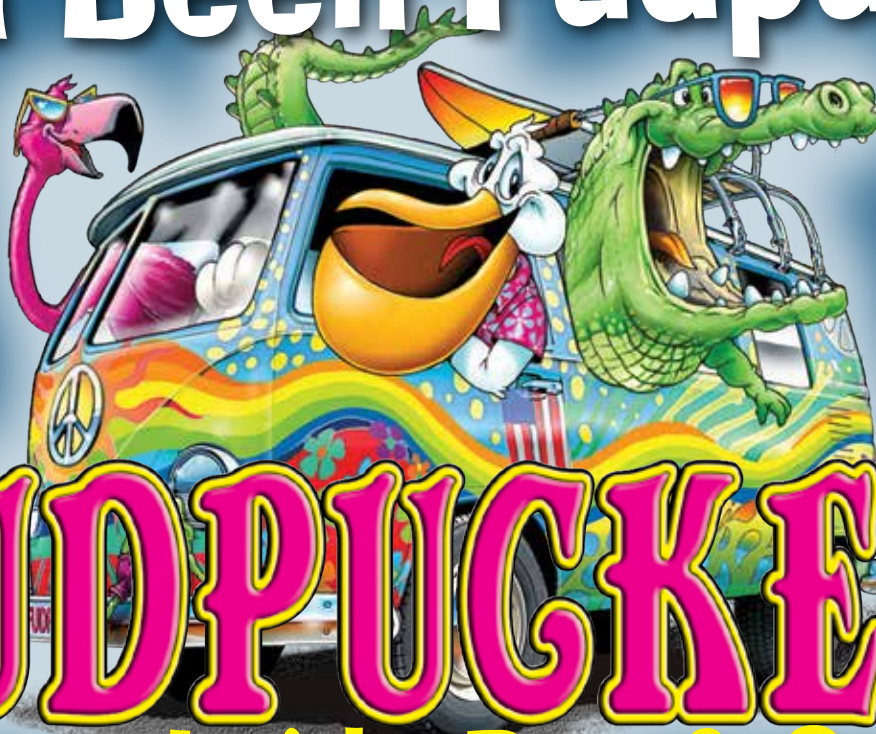
Seaside School, Inc. stands not only as an educational institution but as a beacon of inspiration, illustrating what can be achieved when a community comes together to invest in the future. With eyes set on continued growth and innovation, The Seaside School, Inc. remains dedicated to nurturing minds and shaping futures for generations to come.

For more information about The Seaside School, Inc. and the enrollment process, please visit SeasideSchools.net.



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Café Destin

Looking for dining the entire family can enjoy? Looking for a place to work with free WiFi while enjoying your cup of coffee? For breakfast and lunch, Café Destin offers an expanded menu serving breakfast staples such as pancakes, waffles with Nutella, omelets, eggs benedict, biscuits and gravy and more. For a lighter take, it also has a variety of fancy toasts (avocado, salmon and more), along with pastries and muffins. For lunch, choose from a variety of burgers, sandwiches and salads. You will love the full-service coffee shop, offering everything from hot or iced fresh, local Amavida coffee to espresso and lattes. And there are diverse fresh fruit smoothies and a variety of tantalizing teas. Check out the special kids menu, too. Indoor and outdoor seating on the large covered patio are both available. Book after-hours for private events or special occasions. Open for breakfast and lunch every day, 7 a.m.-2 p.m.

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34940 Emerald Coast Pkwy.

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emeraldcoastoliveoil.com

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar



& Grill in Destin has been locally owned and operated since inception in 1982. Fudpucker's restaurant stands out by being dedicated to its owners' three favorite "F" words: Food, Fun and Family. And, you can be assured that there's plenty of each when you visit Fudpucker's restaurant in Destin. Fudpucker's is not just a restaurant, it's not just a bar, and it's certainly not just a "tourist" place – it's a one-of-a-kind entertainment experience, and one that can be enjoyed by locals, kids and families of all

ages and all occasions with plenty of fun included!

(850) 654-4200

20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy.

Destin

fudpucker.com

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights has expanded with the opening of its new Pastry Bar and the launch of a new culinary brand, "Brother Tim's Sweet Heat Collection." Known for its sweet and savory dishes and spectacular custom cakes, Lady Ray's sets its sights on the late afternoon/post dinner crowd. The Pastry Bar offers a mouth-watering 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. The Pastry Bar is open for Coffee, Pastries and Libations Thursday-Saturday 2-8 p.m. and offers brunch on Sunday from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. A different flavor of French Toast is highlighted each week!

833 Harbor Blvd Unit 19,

Destin

(850) 269-0763

lady-rays-culinary-delights.
myshopify.com**Melting Pot Destin**

You've got to experience it to believe it! Melting Pot has just introduced a new over-the-top Ultimate 5-Course experience that will dazzle all five senses! It features a lavish celebration, from Chef-Crafted Cheese Fondue with NEW! Double Dippers to Premium Entrées to the grand finale with a Chocolate Explosion Fondue that arrives with fire and sparkles. Available every day—advanced reservations required. To reserve a table, visit <https://www.meltingpot.com/ultimate-five-course-experience.aspx>.

Melting Pot is also celebrating its 20-year partnership with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Now through Dec. 31st, guests can donate \$10 to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and receive a Donate and Dine Card valid for \$20 off a future purchase of \$50 or more. Or guests can choose to donate \$20 and receive a new Donate and Dine Card valid for \$40 off a future purchase of \$100 or more. Valid for dining now through

Aug. 31, 2024. Visit <https://www.meltingpot.com/donate-anddine.aspx>.

(850) 269-2227

11394 US-Hwy. 98

Miramar Beach

www.meltingpot.com/destin-fl**Ovide at Hotel Effie**

An elegant, culinary adventure, Ovide brings together classic Gulf Coast flavors and southern culinary traditions. Every dish is fueled by a passion for sustainability and seasonality that gives each bite incredible flavor unlike anything you've tasted before—you will want to savor every bite, from an intimate meal for two to a get-together for 10 or more. Ovide embraces the local food and cherished flavors of the Gulf Coast and presents them with a sophisticated, refreshing French influence and southern flair.

Hours: Breakfast 7 - 11 a.m. Mon-Fri. Lunch Closed. Dinner 5 - 9 p.m., Sunday-Thursday; 5 - 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. Brunch 7 a.m. - 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

(833) 873-3343

Hoteleffie.com

Grand Sandestin Blvd.,

Miramar Beach

Hoteleffie.com

Pecan Jacks

Nothing says sweets like Pecan Jack's! The Destin locals' new passion is a wildly popular ice cream and candy store. Not your chain ice cream store, with more than 40 flavors of homemade ice cream, specialties include Oreo ice cream, Bailey's salted caramel and banana pudding. The Pecan Jacks candy is as singular as its ice cream. It includes Southern praline, Caribbean Rum and lots of brittle. The candy, like the ice cream, isn't just kids' stuff. It includes flavors like Espresso, Amaretto and Bourbon. The pralines come in flavors such as Traditional, Caribbean Rum, Bourbon and Sweet Heat, while the brittles embody Pistachio, Cashew, Bayou Pecan and Picante. A great gift for your little ones, you can find Theo the Turtle there, too! Pecan Jacks Ice Cream is sure to add that extra touch of sweetness to your birthday celebrations. And don't forget those gift cards—the sweetest gifts of all for any occasion!

Hours Noon to 9 p.m. daily.

(850) 427-3080

535 Harbor Blvd. (98 West) in

Destin

www.pecanjacks.com

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Embarking on a Culinary Adventure: City Food Hall Redefines the Food Court Experience

BY BOBBY PARKER

In the heart of Destin where the emerald beaches meet the vibrant coastal energy, a culinary revolution is underway at City Food Hall in Destin Commons. This innovative food hall is rewriting the script on traditional food courts, transforming them from ordinary to extraordinary. With a fusion of culinary creativity and communal dining, City Food Hall has become a premier destination that transcends the conventional dining experience.



setting new standards for casual dining in Destin.

City Food Hall: A Premier Destination for Elevated Dining

City Food Hall stands as the epitome of the elevated food hall concept, offering a culinary adventure that tantalizes the taste buds and sparks social connections. Step inside, and you're greeted with a tantalizing array of flavors curated by over 10 local chefs showcasing their culinary prowess. From authentic ethnic dishes to innovative fusions, the food hall becomes a global journey for your taste buds, ensuring there's something to satisfy every palate. The ambiance and design transcend the traditional with comfortable seating, vibrant décor, and a lively atmosphere. The central bar, serving one-of-a-kind craft cocktails, anchors the space, creating a true gathering place for the community.

A Glimpse into Food Court History: From Humble Beginnings to Suburban Staples

The concept of the food court emerged in the post-World War II era, born out of the practical need to provide convenient and affordable dining options for the growing suburban communities and shopping malls. These early food courts, characterized by fluorescent lighting and a limited selection of

chain restaurants, served their purpose but lacked the culinary diversity and ambiance desired by modern diners. However, fast forward to the present, and a renaissance is taking place, redefining food courts into vibrant hubs of culinary creativity and social engagement. This evolution reflects a shift from utilitarian spaces to dynamic culinary destinations that cater to the diverse tastes and desires of today's discerning patrons.

The Rise of Elevated Food Halls: A Culinary Revolution

In recent years, a culinary revolution has swept through the world of food courts, and elevated food halls, exemplified by City Food Hall in Destin, have taken center stage in this renaissance. Going beyond the ordinary, these spaces curate a diverse selection of local chefs and artisans, offering a wide range of cuisines from around the world. City Food Hall, at the forefront

of this movement, embraces culinary diversity to create an atmosphere catering to everyone, from the pickiest eaters to the most adventurous foodies. No longer confined to sterile, utilitarian spaces, elevated food halls prioritize ambiance and design, providing inviting and engaging environments. At City Food Hall, this experience is elevated even further with a central bar serving one-of-a-kind craft cocktails, making it a true gathering place for the community and

Continued on next page

Free TOPGOLF

Enjoy a free 30-minute TopGolf session for two when you bring in this ad.



Weekly Events

MONDAYS

Military Monday
1st Drink Free + All Day Happy Hour

Run Destin | 5:45 PM
Music Bingo | 6 PM - 8:30 PM

TUESDAYS

Tequila Tuesday
\$3 Off Tequila Pours + \$6 House Margaritas + \$4 Modelo Bottles

WEDNESDAYS

Whiskey Wednesday
\$3 Off Whiskey & Bourbon Pours + \$8 Whiskey & Bourbon Cocktails

THURSDAYS

Ladies Night
\$5 Tito's Martinis [Lemon Drop, Cosmo, Espresso, & French]

Karaoke | 6 PM - 8:30 PM

SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS

Game Day Specials

HAPPY HOUR | MON-FRI 3 PM - 7PM

**DESTIN'S FIRST & ONLY
FOOD COURT-STYLED CONCEPT**

featuring

**10 LOCAL CHEFS, 1 CENTRAL BAR,
& 2 TOPGOLF SWING SUITES**

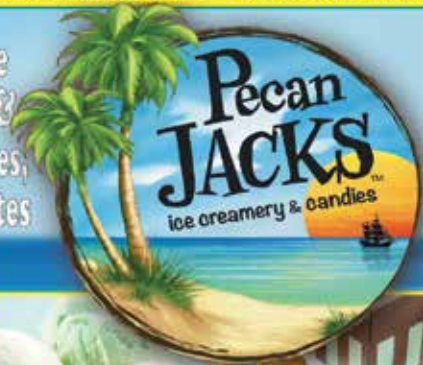
Located at
Destin Commons

No purchase necessary. Coupon cannot be combined with any other promotions or offers. Availability of the TopGolf Swing Suites is first come first served. Coupon must be presented to redeem offer.

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Authentic Candy & Ice Cream Store for Kids & Adults, Making Candies, Hand Dipped Chocolates and Ice Cream on site



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CITY FOOD HALL

continued from previous page

City Food Hall goes beyond being a dining destination; it's a place for people to come together, connect, and share a culinary experience, fostering a sense of community and making it more than just a place to eat but a space to create memories. With the added allure of TopGolf Swing Suites, City Food Hall provides not only a unique din-

ers will have up their sleeves.

Entertainment and Play: Unwind and engage in friendly competition at the TopGolf Swing Suites, where you can test your golf skills while enjoying delicious food and drinks.

Community and Social Gathering: Connect with friends, family, or fellow diners in a vibrant and inviting atmosphere, fostering a sense of community and shared culinary experiences.



ing experience but also a space for entertainment and play, solidifying its position as a premier destination for elevated dining in the heart of Destin.

Top 5 Reasons to Visit City Food Hall:

Culinary Diversity: Indulge in a culinary journey around the world, savoring flavors from Asia to the Mediterranean, all within one vibrant space.

Local Flavor: Support local culinary talent and experience the authentic flavors of Destin, crafted by passionate chefs who bring their unique culinary perspectives to the table.

Craft Bar Delights: Quench your thirst with an extensive selection of craft cocktails, local brews, and an array of non-alcoholic beverages. Plus, you never know what new creations their skilled bartend-

City Food Hall at Destin Commons transcends the ordinary notion of a mere dining destination; it's an immersive experience that elevates the food court concept to unparalleled heights. This culinary haven seamlessly brings together diverse flavors, fosters community connections, and becomes the backdrop for creating lasting memories. Embark on a culinary adventure and explore the extraordinary dining experience that awaits at City Food Hall, where the convergence of food, community, and entertainment creates an unforgettable fusion. Whether you're a local resident or a visitor to Destin, City Food Hall stands as a destination that invites you to savor the remarkable and redefine your culinary expectations. To learn more about City Food Hall, visit CityFoodHall.com.



ovide

An elegant, culinary adventure, Ovide brings together classic Gulf Coast flavors and Southern culinary traditions.



Located at Hotel Effie Sandestin. Open to the Public.

No Boat? No Problem?



Destin boasts a reputation as the “World’s Luckiest Fishing Village.” While many visitors envision deep-sea excursions when thinking about fishing on the Emerald Coast, there are other opportunities for anglers who prefer to keep their feet on solid ground. From the sandy beaches to the tranquil waters around Okaloosa Island and Navarre Beach, fishing without a boat on the Emerald Coast offers a unique and rewarding experience. Here are four ways to savor the thrill of fishing without ever setting foot on a boat.

BY CALI HLAVAC,
TO DO IN DESTIN

Nestled along the picturesque shores of the Gulf of Mexico,

Surf Fishing: Destin’s sugar-white sands provide an idyllic



perience, paddleboard or kayak fishing is an excellent choice. Launch your vessel from any of the county or city public boat launches, where the absence of a boat motor allows you to sneak quietly into calmer, shallower areas. The Choctawhatchee Bay and the calm waters around Crab Island are particularly popular spots for kayak and paddleboard anglers. Grab the necessary fishing

ates a welcoming environment. Drop your line into the depths and try your luck at reeling in king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and even the occasional cobia. The piers are ideal year-round, but the winter months offer a quieter experience with fewer crowds.

Park Fishing: Destin and its surrounding areas are full of beautiful county parks that offer excellent fishing opportunities. Thomas Pilcher park, under the 331 bridge, is one example of an area where anglers can cast their lines from the shore or elevated platforms, along with plenty of parking and bathrooms. The parks provide not only great fishing but also a chance to appreciate the unspoiled beauty of the Emerald Coast. The cooler months are particularly inviting, with comfortable temperatures and a higher likelihood of reeling in a variety of species.

And don’t forget - If you are looking for a little more guidance while fishing, there are a variety of private charters or party boat options available to book in our area. Private charters are a flat rate small group fishing, where as a party boat is more affordable and priced per person. There are so many affordable ways to enjoy fishing in our lucky fishing village!

backdrop for surf fishing. The fall and winter months, particularly from November through March, offer the perfect conditions for catching a variety of species. Anglers can cast their lines into the gentle waves, targeting redfish, pompano, and bluefish. Set up your beach chair, let the soothing sound of the waves serenade you, and wait for the tug on your line.

gear and head out in search of speckled trout, flounder, and sheephead.

Pier Fishing: For those who prefer solid ground beneath their feet but want an elevated fishing experience, the piers at Okaloosa Island and Navarre Beach are prime locations. These piers provide easy access to deeper waters, attracting a diverse range of fish species. Whether you’re an experienced angler or a novice, the friendly atmosphere on the piers cre-

Paddleboard / Kayak Fishing: For those seeking a more adventurous angling ex-

Tailfins Island Adventure Adds Tiki Boat Cruises!

DAILY CRUISES

Introducing Tailfins Island Adventure! Departures seven days a week aboard “Always Workin’,” Tailfins’ 45-foot-long cruiser, and “Talk of Town” Tikis, Tailfins’ newest, one-of-a-kind tiki boat.



Both feature on-board restrooms and certified captains. Talk of the Town tikis are the only Coast Guard certified Tiki boats in the United States! Enjoy the Destin Harbor and Crab Island like nev-

er before. Choose between the three-hour tour, sunset cruise or Thursday night’s spectacular fireworks cruise. Book online: tailfinsislandadventure.com.

DEPARTURES 7 DAYS A WEEK **CRUISE FIRST CLASS**



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CRAB ISLAND • DESTIN, FLORIDA



“Always Workin’”
48 passengers, 45 ft. long



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6-15 passengers, capt. operated, restroom

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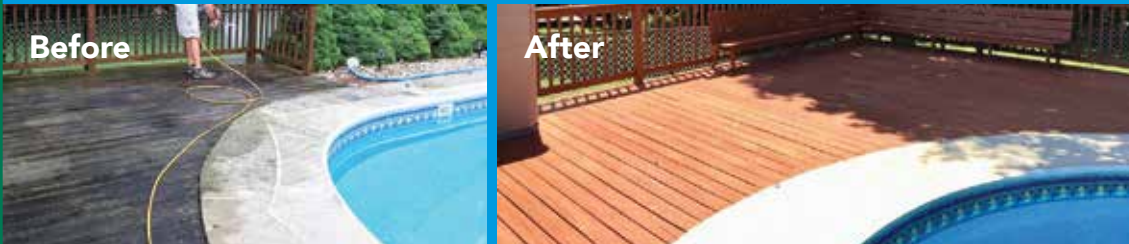
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The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA) and South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA) are proud to reveal the nine new sculpture designs, chosen by jury for permanent exhibition in the fifth installation of the Underwater Museum of Art (UMA).

The 2024 installation will include the following pieces of sculpture: The Lost Kingdom of Artemis by Denna Ameen (New Orleans, LA), Mermaid. Siren. Galatea. By Raine Bedsole (Santa Rosa Beach, FL), Deep Sea Three by Matthew Gemmill and David Showalter (Baltimore, MD), Sea How We Flow by Elise Gilbert (Santa Rosa Beach, FL), Among the Anemone by Frank Henderson (Evanston, IL), Poseidon's Throne by Nathan Hoffman (Highlandville, MO), Bubby Barnacles by Donna Conklin King (East Orange, NJ), Sunken Spores by Ashley Rivers (Gulfport, FL), and Ring My Bell by Bradley Touchstone (Santa Rosa Beach, FL).

Named in 2018 by TIME Magazine as one of 100 "World's Greatest Places," the UMA is presented as part of CAA's Art In Public Spaces Program and augments SWARA's mission of creating marine habitat and

expanding fishery populations while providing enhanced creative, cultural, economic and educational opportunities for the benefit, education and enjoyment of residents, students and visitors in South Walton. The UMA recently received the 2023 CODAAward for Collaboration of the Year.

UMA sculptures are deployed with SWARA's existing USACOA and FDEP permitted artificial reef projects that includes nine nearshore reefs located within one nautical mile of the shore in approximately 58 feet of water. The 2024 installation will join the 40 sculptures previously deployed on a one-acre permit patch of seabed off Grayton Beach State Park, further expanding the nation's first permanent underwater museum.

Deployment of the 2024 UMA installation is slated for Summer with support from Visit South Walton. Visit UMAFL.org for more information on timeline and events surrounding UMA's launch. Project and sculpture sponsorships are available. Please contact Gabby Callaway at gabby@culturalartsalliance.com for sponsorship details.

ATTENTION

**KEENAN'S KIDS FOUNDATION
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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
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SO IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE COMPLETE THE
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Seacoast Collegiate High School Celebrates Track & Field Star Jonah Kirspel's Commitment to Florida

Seacoast Collegiate High School, The Seaside School, Inc.'s high school, announced that senior standout Jonah Kirspel has signed a letter of intent to join the University of Florida's Track & Field team on a prestigious full-ride academic and athletic scholarship. Jonah, a two-time consecutive state champion in the 800-meter dash, will graduate from Seacoast Collegiate High School with his AA degree from Northwest Florida State College through the dual enrollment program.

With a stellar 4.0 GPA, Jonah has exemplified academic and athletic excellence throughout his high school career at Seacoast Collegiate High School. His dedication to balancing high-intensity sports and academics has not only resulted in remarkable achievements on the track but has also paved the way for a bright future at one of the nation's top universities.

Reflecting on his journey, Jonah Kirspel shared, "Seacoast Collegiate High School has provided the perfect environment for me to receive an exceptional education while fully immersing myself in high-intensity sports. The continuous support from the school has been instrumental in my success. Becoming a two-time state champion demonstrates that hard work pays off, and signing with the University of Florida feels like a significant milestone, but I'm far from finished."

Jonah's parents, Cory and Christy Kirspel, expressed their gratitude for Seacoast Collegiate High School, saying, "Jonah's experience at Seacoast has been truly exceptional. The dual enrollment program during his junior and senior years has allowed him more time to focus

on his training. Academically, Jonah has thrived, and the opportunity to dual enroll for 60 credit hours before college is invaluable. We are immensely proud of Jonah. His commitment to the University of Florida is a dream come true, and we eagerly anticipate the next chapter of his journey."

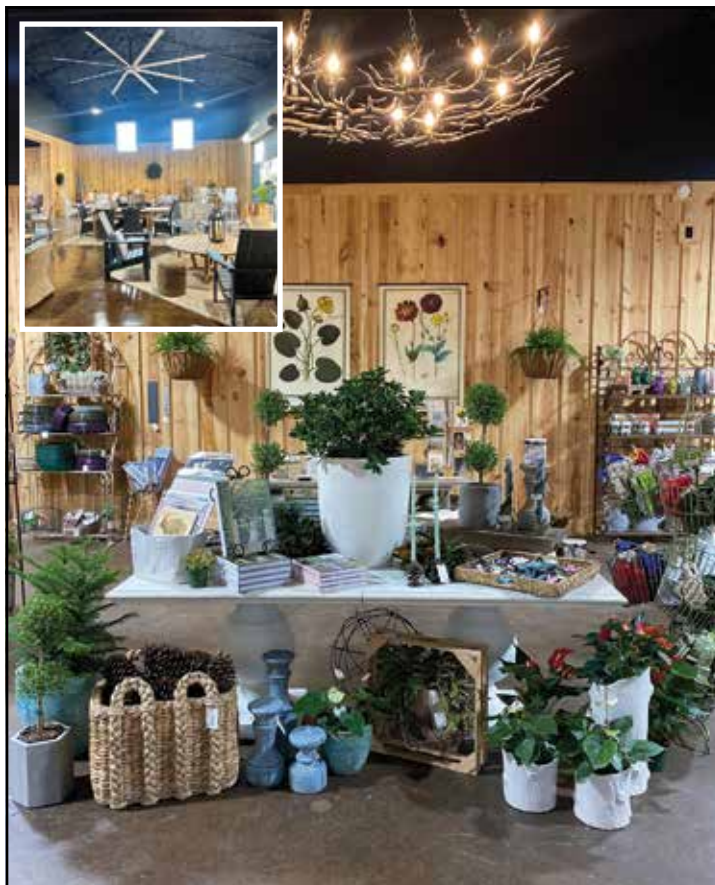
Coach Willie Parker, who has played a pivotal role in Jonah's athletic development, shared his thoughts on Jonah's achievements and commitment to the University of Florida. "Coaching Jonah has truly been an incredible experience. His dedication, work ethic, and natural talent set him apart as a standout athlete. Jonah's accomplishment of two consecutive state championships is a testament to his unwavering commitment to



Jonah Kirspel with Parents and Coach Parker. From Left to Right: Cory Kirspel, Coach Willie Parker (Back), Jonah Kirspel, and Christy Kirspel.

excellence, and his decision to join the University of Florida is well-deserved. I am confident that Jonah will continue to make a significant impact at the collegiate level and his potential beyond UF is boundless. I foresee him leaving an indelible mark on the world of Track & Field."

According to the NCAA, only about 2% of high school athletes receive some form of athletic scholarship to compete in college, making Jonah's achievement even more remarkable. Seacoast Collegiate High School takes pride in nurturing well-rounded student-athletes and congratulates Jonah Kirspel on his outstanding accomplishments.



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Register for the 22nd Annual Seaside Race Weekend!

Feb. 16th - 18th, Benefiting The Seaside School, Inc. Public Charter School

The Seaside School Half Marathon & 5K, presented by SEASIDE®, is back, launching its 22nd year of racing. Registration, presented by Visit South Walton, is now open for Race Weekend February 16-18, 2024, further establishing this event as a signature running event and paramount fundraiser in Northwest Florida. Every year, athletes from around the world converge in Seaside, assisting in funding The Seaside School, Inc.

“We’ve witnessed tremendous growth and transformation over the years, not just in numbers, but in the quality of the educational experience we provide,” commented Teresa Horton, Executive Director of the Seaside School Foundation. “Each year, Race Weekend is a true testament to the collective passion and commitment of our community. 2024 promises an exhilarating experience for everyone!”

This year’s race will embrace a dynamic superhero theme.

Participants and spectators alike are encouraged to immerse themselves in the spirit of the event, donning attire inspired by their favorite superheroes, and celebrating the strength and resilience that defines the Seaside community. There will also be first time exclusive VIP experiences for racers and spectators.

“Each registration for the Race Weekend directly fuels our mission-based programming at The Seaside School, Inc. Whether it is enhancing educational experiences for our students through new technology, exploratory programming or gaining access to higher levels of our collegiate curriculum, every race participant plays a pivotal role in our students’ success,” said Dr. Tom Miller, the new Executive Director of The Seaside School, Inc. “Their financial support resonates throughout every classroom, enriching their lives and inspiring the next generation of leaders to live a life of personal growth and prosperity.”



The weekend experience commences with the coastal cuisine extravaganza, Taste of the Race, on Friday, February 16, 2024, promising culinary delights, celebrating local flavors, and culinary maestros. Saturday will be bustling with activity at the Race Expo, where participants can gather their race packets and bask in the pre-race excitement at the Seaside Lyceum. The main event is set for Sunday, February 18, with the out-and-back half marathon starting at 7 a.m. and the 5K at 7:30 a.m. starting and concluding in Seaside.

“Seaside’s deep-rooted history with the Seaside School Half Marathon & 5K, now spanning

22 years, embodies our shared ethos of community, vitality, and a commitment to excellence,” said Micah Davis, President of Seaside Community Development Council (SCDC). “As Seaside continues to flourish, it’s rewarding to see parallel growth and achievement in The Seaside School, Inc., honoring the vision of my parents and our town founders Robert and Daryl Davis.”

Registration this year comes with delightful surprises, notably swag from The Seaside Style, this year’s swag sponsor. “It’s genuinely a mammoth effort, requiring the dedication of over 400 volunteers including students, teachers and parents from Seaside Neighborhood School and Seacoast Collegiate High School, to bring this weekend to life,” added Kim Mixson, Principal of the Seaside Neighborhood School at The Seaside School, Inc. “We’re immensely grateful for the community’s unwavering support.”

Registration for the 5K is

\$95, and the half marathon is \$130 and 100% of the proceeds benefit the Seaside School Foundation. Exclusive VIP experiences for both racers and spectators are also available for \$125 with dedicated parking or \$95 without parking. Kids can also take part in the VIP experience for just \$25 [limited to two kids per adult]. Weekend parking passes are also be available for purchase. Military personnel, first responders and teachers are eligible for a \$20 discount upon presentation of valid identification.

The 22nd annual charity Race Weekend will kick-off on Friday, February 16th with an evening under the stars at the official race pre-party, Taste of the Race. Party-goers can attend this delicious Seaside party that features local chefs and restaurateurs competing for the top culinary awards including the coveted Chef’s Choice

Continued on page 35



The 22nd annual running of the
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Self-Care Corner: A New Year of Benefitting Your Body



BY KRISY ANDERSON, OWNER, BEVERLY HILLS DAY SPA

Is your New Year's resolution to exercise more for health reasons, alleviate pain, destress and relax? One of the most beneficial ways to do this is through massage—especially when increasing your work outs! And it's not just for women; men, you deserve to feel good, too. A massage has incredible benefits for your physique and, for those who exercise, soothes your sore muscles even more than stretching after a workout.

Pain Relief: Next time you think about popping that pain pill, make an appointment for a massage instead. Soreness and stiffness result when overworked muscles produce waste products like lactic acid, and massage can help by improving the circulation to muscles to

flush these out. Tense muscles can also compress blood vessels and nerves, and massage leads to a gradual release that eases the pain. Just be sure to let your massage therapist know if your pain is caused by stress, injury or surgery.

Improved lymph movement: Lymph is the milky-white fluid that drains waste from the cells. The pumping effect of muscle contraction moves lymph through the body, and massage (as well as exercise) can facilitate the process. The pressure of massage also increases blood flow that can help reduce swelling after surgery.

Increased circulation: The manual pressure of massage increases blood flow to the treated areas. The increased blood flow brings more oxygen and nutrients to the muscles to help repair and revitalize the body.

Better skin: Massage helps the skin by stimulating the sebaceous and sweat glands. Increased blood flow also has a positive effect on the skin by supplying the cell with nutrients and oxygen. More blood at the skin's surface also leads to a rosy, healthy glow.

Positive attitude: Massage has been shown to increase the body's protection of "feel-

good" endorphins and the mood regulating hormone serotonin and decrease levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

Balance the nervous system: Stress revs up the nervous system, leading to restlessness, hyperactivity, anxiety, muscle tension, cardiovascular stress and even abdominal problems. Massage helps reduce stress and the body's reaction to it, bringing your nervous system back into harmony.

More perfect posture: Muscles that are too tight or too slack can throw off your pos-



ture. To compensate, your body will utilize other muscles, which can eventually become accepted by your body and lead to permanent imbalance and chronic muscle pain. Massage can loosen those areas and help bring them back into balance.

Questions? I'm here to help with a customized massage tailored to your needs and would love to talk with you. Visit beverlyhillsdayspa.com or call me, Krisy, at (850) 654-8544.

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Meet The Therapist Kathlyn White

Integrating Faith and Therapy for Positive Counseling

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

During a time when people are struggling with mental health, it's good to know that support is so readily available. One hometown hero who is invested in seeing our community live fully is counselor and author of "The Therapist: Stories about Parenting, Narcissists, Combat, Abuse, and Marriage," Kathlyn C. White, who is with Carpenter House in Niceville.



Carpenter House is a faith-based counseling center and Kathlyn remembers how it came to be named. "I was sitting in traffic one day in Niceville and the car in front of me had a bumper sticker that said, 'My boss is a Jewish carpenter.' Wow. Right in that moment I thought, 'If I ever have a business, I will call it Carpenter House,' because my boss is a Jewish carpenter too."

Kathlyn has always had a passion for mental health. But, it wasn't until she was in her 30s and working on her Master's, that she was saved and decided to integrate her new faith into her work. Since then, she has been helping people by weaving Christianity, faith and the Bible into counseling.

"When you become a Chris-

tian, you have this hunger for knowledge. I always say that cognitive behavioral therapy started in the Bible. The Bible tells us to think on positive things, and that's cognitive behavioral therapy."

So, what is the difference between Christian and secular counseling? One example she cites is in marriage counseling. "I do my best to keep the family together. It's not possible 100% of the time, but I am not leaning toward divorce, like some counselors are, especially if the counselor has been divorced. You really never want to see a marriage counselor who does not have a successful marriage, because they don't know how to stay married. I've been married for 43 years. I know how to stay

married and include a chapter in my book about how to have a healthy marriage."

Kathlyn suggests additional qualifications to look for when seeking out mental health professionals. "I think you need a counselor with some experience. I've had experiences in all kinds of places because we were a military family. I started out in an inpatient treatment facility with patients who had what's now called dissociative identity disorder. I've helped people recovering from satanic cults and have worked in domestic violence shelters. I've worked with people who are low income and with children who were navigating the foster system. You want to look for someone with a wide base of experience, who thoroughly understands the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders), and can speak to all these situations, because all these things are very complicated."

Psychology Today is a source that can offer a list of local counselors, but once you're ready to meet, Kathlyn suggests there are aspects to the counseling you should look for that will help your success.

• Trust your intuition that it

will, or won't, be a good fit.

• Ask how many patients a counselor is seeing a week. The more they talk to people, the more experience they have to offer your session.

• Look for a counselor who is willing to set goals with you so you can see how much progress is being made.

• You might not know what to say to a counselor, especially in the beginning. But, a counselor who is able to ask open-ended questions will be able to help you open up.

After a patient suggested that Kathlyn write down her own experiences, "The Therapist" was born. One of the most rewarding experiences from her book was with a young woman called "B," who was only 14 when they met. "When I met her, she

didn't know she was psychotic. She thought she had a friend, Max. But, he was a hallucination that began when she was sexually abused. Max helped get her through her troubles. I had to break it to her that her best friend wasn't real."

In the course of their therapy over the next year and a half, Kathlyn was able to help "B" feel what had been suppressed in her childhood, so she could live out a healthier adult life—something we all want to experience.

For more information, visit carpenterhouse.net or go to Amazon for your copy of "The Therapist: Stories about Parenting, Narcissists, Combat, Abuse, and Marriage."

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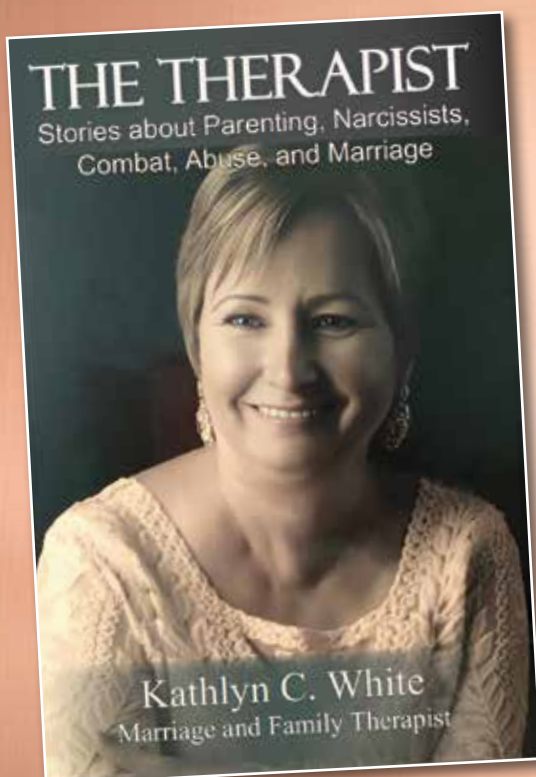
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BY DR. RICHARD CHERN M.D.

Intimacy over 50 remains a topic shrouded in unnecessary mystery. As age encroaches, couples often retreat from discussing or embracing their changing sexual health needs. Dr. Richard Chern, MD, situated in the heart of Miramar Beach, Florida, is championing a new narrative – that intimacy and fulfillment are not exclusive to youth, but are vibrant at any age.

Understanding the physical shifts that come with age is paramount to sustaining not just sexual health but the deeper emotional bonds that thrive on intimacy. Women may grapple with the repercussions of menopause, while men might confront testosterone decline, with both scenarios impacting confidence and the intimate dynamic of a relationship. Recognizing these shifts and addressing them head-on is where Dr. Richard Chern, MD, and his team excel.

Routine lab work is the cornerstone of Dr. Richard Chern's practice, providing crucial insights into hormone levels and overall health, which in turn produces personalized treatment plans. This proactive approach can dispel myths sur-

rounding the inevitability of diminished intimacy with age.

Dr. Richard Chern's clinic offers more than just medical evaluations; it provides a holistic approach to intimacy post-50. With a compassionate, knowledgeable team, inclusive of Sue Griffin, ARNP, the clinic fosters an environment where sensitive discussions are met with expertise and care. Their dedication to health and vitality is reflected in the clinic's platinum status with BioTE, signaling a premier standard in hormone therapy and patient satisfaction.

An invitation is extended to all ages especially those over 50 in the Miramar Beach area and beyond: embrace the possibility of a rich, fulfilling intimate life with the support of Dr. Richard Chern, MD. It is never too late to address sexual health, to rediscover connection, and to experience the joy and pleasure of closeness. With two decades of military precision and a commitment to education and excellence in hormone therapy, Dr. Richard Chern's clinic stands apart as a sanctuary for those seeking to reclaim or enhance their intimacy.

The clinic's pledge is to guide each patient through the nuances of aging with grace, care, and the latest in medical advancements. Visiting Dr. Richard Chern, MD, is not just about getting lab work; it's about taking a definitive step towards a rejuvenated intimate life. Here, in the tranquil surrounds of Mi-

SEASIDE RACE

continued from page 32

Award, last year won by Wild Bill's Beach Dogs operated by the Dawson Group, and the People's Choice Award, won by The Red Bar.

Packet pick-up is Sat., Feb. 17, at the Seaside Neighborhood School and Expo taking place in the Seaside Lyceum. The half marathon (13.1 miles) starts at 7 a.m. and the 5K (3.1 miles) at 7:30 a.m., on Sun., Feb. 18. Both races – the half marathon and 5K – start in the town of Seaside with an out-and-back run along the coastal dune lakes of Scenic Hwy. 30A.

“The race is really important to me because I love Seaside, and without this race, our school might not be here. It's so much fun to participate, cheer for the runners, and hang out with my friends,” said Charlotte Stuble, a 7th grade student at Seaside School. “Organizing it takes a lot of effort from our staff, students, and board members. Like my dad always says, ‘many hands make light work.’ I'm thankful everyone comes together to make this event so special.”

For more information and to register, visit runseasidefl.com.

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tate the course of your intimate life. Reach out to Dr. Richard Chern's clinic, where your journey to a vibrant, intimate future is just a phone call away. Sched-

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Point Washington Medical Clinic Opens New Facility

The Point Washington Medical Clinic (PWMC) is pleased to announce the official Ribbon Cutting and Reception of its new stand alone 4,750 sq. ft. facility located at 1321 N. County Hwy 395 in Santa Rosa Beach. The press and public are invited to attend the event beginning at 4 p.m. with a ribbon cutting on Thursday, January 25, 2024. Following the ribbon cutting there will be a reception with live music and tours of the building.

Founded by Drs. Hillary Glenn, DNP, APRN and Patsy

Vargo, MD, Point Washington Medical Clinic provides free medical care to those who need it thanks to their dedicated team of volunteers, from doctors and nurses to various community members who assist with health education, translation, and administrative tasks.

Their new facility, beautifully situated on the Point Washington United Methodist Church campus in Point Washington, was designed by architect Zack Quinn with interior design by Suzanne Rester Watson. Woodruff Construction handled the



construction and Bradford Davis Landscape Architect the environs.

Co-Founder and Executive Director Dr. Hillary Glenn, DNP shares, "This building is by the community, for the community. We wouldn't be here without the many contributions of our generous supporters, and we're incredibly excited to expand our services and hours to serve our neighbors even more. Designed with the patient in mind, the building's intentional details are all planned to ensure privacy and provide a calming comfortable environment, as well as being organized so the volunteers and team are able to easily access the tools they need." Dr. Glenn continues, "Unique attributes of the facility include a children's educational play area, a state of the art classroom with a teaching kitchen, and a meditation prayer garden. To support the calming environment, we leaned into the natural landscape. This is seen with the oversized windows in the lobby looking out over the beautiful

native forest, the dental operatories line up with large windows so patients will be looking out at trees while being treated and our partnership with the CAA and their Arts in Public Spaces program will enhance the interior beauty by bringing in works from local artists of our local environment inside."

The new clinic will provide more space for volunteers who serve the clinic in various administrative, clinical and hospitality roles. It will also include six exam rooms including a pediatric exam room, an increase from two in the current pop up clinic. This means the team will be able to serve 850+ patients a month in the future, an increase of 300%. The clinic will expand its preventive and primary care services with the addition of dentistry, mental health services and expanded onsite lab testing. Wellness, nutrition and educational classes will now be possible because of the new teaching kitchen and meeting space. This will enable the PWMC to further its mission of building a

stronger and healthier community by providing high-quality primary health care regardless of the patient's means or access.

The PWMC staff, Board of Directors and volunteer team are all excited for what the new facility means for the growing roster of patients as well as the greater Northwest Florida region. For the past six years, operating only two days a week, they have provided over \$3.5 million in healthcare services on site and have had over 15,000 patient visits.

Once the volunteer-driven clinic is able to expand their service hours, they expect to be able to see close to 10,000 patients annually providing over 1 million dollars in healthcare services per year.

A fundraising campaign continues to support construction. Those interested in volunteering or contributing to the building campaign can visit thepwmc.org/donate to learn more and make a donation.

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NEW YEAR

continued from page 1

that motivates them to want to spend time with me. Character traits to consider addressing to help this desire become a reality: Are you currently patient? Are you currently asking curious questions and listening? Are you currently communicating support? Choose the area where you need the most growth.

Notice patterns and situations related to your growth area. If your growth area is patience, notice when you tend to rush others. Notice when you are short with others. Notice the frequency of the character struggle and the situations in which it occurs.

Identify and increase understanding regarding the origin of the character pattern and how it is impacting your current life. Did your family of origin value being kind? When did being kind feel like a problem for you when you were younger? Counseling may be a helpful tool if you struggle to understand the ori-



gins of your character pattern.

Determine what you need to know inside to be able to let go of the current character pattern in favor of the character you are trying to grow. To embrace more determination, you may need to know that you can do

hard things. To embrace more curiosity, you may need to know you don't have to know everything.

Try a new way. Notice when you want to judge others rather than extending kindness. Stop. Breathe. Remember what you are growing toward.

Try suspending judgment, then asking a curious question truly seeking to understand. See how it feels. Notice the result.

Embrace the discomfort that comes with releasing the way you are used to doing things. Remind yourself that it is okay to feel uncomfortable releasing the past way to create space for more helpful character growth.

Repeat to sustain growth. Keep slowing down

and trying the new way of being. You are rewiring your brain through repetition and over time, it will become more natural.

As you develop an internal character trait, remember to notice how that change supports other external changes you are hoping to see in your life. Be patient with yourself. Change takes time. Connect with us at Journeybravely.com for support along your journey.




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Homeowners' Association and Property Insurance



By JULIE A. MARTIN

When you live in a community governed by a Homeowners Association (HOA), you might feel like your options for homeowner's insurance are limited. However, working with an independent insurance agent can help you find the right coverage that meets both your needs and the requirements of your HOA.

For instance, some townhomes are covered by a COA,

Condo Association, and the Association assumes responsibility for the exterior walls and the roof of the buildings, so that the unit owners only require coverage for the inside of the dwellings, from the drywall in, as well as their personal property, liability, mold coverage, etc.

Homeowners Associations generally require their unit-owners to purchase insurance coverage that includes coverage for the exterior walls and the roof, in addition to coverage for liability and even flood insurance on that townhome.

An independent insurance agent is not tied to any specific insurance company. So, they can provide you with a range of options and help you choose the one that best suits your situation. They have the knowledge and experience to navigate the complex world of insurance policies and can help you understand the various types of cover-

age available. This is especially important when dealing with an HOA, which may have specific requirements for the insurance coverage you need.

An independent insurance agent can help you find the right policy that meets these requirements, while also ensuring that you have the appropriate level of coverage for your individual needs.

Furthermore, an independent insurance agent can help you identify potential gaps in your coverage that you may not have considered. For instance, if you have valuable jewelry or art, you may need additional coverage beyond the standard policy. An independent insurance agent can help you identify these gaps and recommend coverage options that meet your needs.

In the case of Jewelry or fine arts and other related types of valuable personal property, the



property itself is more likely to be lost through theft or mysterious disappearance than any other type of peril. There are 12 categories of personal property that require appraisals for full coverage in the event of theft, breakage, or mysterious disappearance.

Carriers require a current appraisal, usually within the last 36 months, along with a picture of the item or set, and a full description. Additionally, they may require the type of location of the item such as in your home or in a bank vault, and rate at least partially based on the location given.

Working with an independent insurance agent also provides the added benefit of having a personal relationship with your agent. You can build a relationship of trust and confidence with your agent, who can provide ongoing support and guidance throughout the life of your policy. They can help you navigate the claims process and make sure that you receive the coverage you need when you need it most.

Finally, working with an independent insurance agent can

save you time and money. They can help you compare policies from different insurance companies and find the best coverage at the most competitive price. They can also help you identify discounts and other cost-saving opportunities that you may not be aware of.

In conclusion, when you live in an HOA-governed community, it is important to work with an independent insurance agent to find the right homeowner's insurance policy that meets both your needs and the requirements of your HOA.

An independent insurance agent can provide you with a range of options, help you identify potential gaps in your coverage, build a personal relationship with you, and save you time and money. Don't leave the protection of your home and personal belongings to chance — work with an independent insurance agent to ensure that you have the right coverage for your needs.

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From Zero to Hero: Unleashing Your Inner Superhero to Join the Elite 3% Club!

By **BILL MASON**,
ROCKET FUEL COACH

Have you ever wondered how some achieve their Big Harry Goals while others only daydream? Get ready for enlightenment! There's a secret society of extraordinary achievers, a select 3% who conquer goals with a superhero-like spirit. And guess what? You're invited to join their ranks!

It all begins with a look back into the past into 2023, like a brave hero contemplating the battles won and triumphs achieved. Take a moment to revel and celebrate the glory of your past victories, no matter how modest they may seem.

Did you finally master the art of crafting the perfect meeting? Or maybe you've effortlessly mastered something that provokes you and stirs anger within you? It could be learning how to better network with clients. Regardless of its scale, each triumph stands as a resounding testament to your unwavering resilience and determination.

Next, embarking on this remarkable journey requires look-

ing forward to the adventure in 2024. Dreams and goals for the year will serve as your unwavering North Star, an illuminating beacon guiding your path. However, we do not speak of commonplace goals. Nay, we delve into the realm of minimum, target and stretch goals.

Envision this:

Minimum goals (earning what I earned the previous year), shall accompany you as steadfast sidekicks throughout your odyssey. They are realistic, attainable, and designed to keep your motivation aflame despite adversity.

Target goals (earning 25% more than made the previous year), on the other hand, assume the role of your primary missions. They are both challenging and attainable, serving as the driving force that propels you out of bed each morning, brimming with determination and ready to conquer the world. Stretch goals (earning 50% more than made the previous year) represent the ultimate bosses of your grand saga. They are Big Harry Goals and may even induce a tinge of trepidation. Yet, when you emerge triumphant from the crucible, the ensuing euphoria is truly unparalleled and can drive success without crippling you if you do not reach them.



ed throughout every twist and turn.

Throughout this extraordinary journey, always remember that every step taken forward constitutes progress, regardless of its magnitude. No superhero has ever soared to great heights without experiencing a few missteps. So, don your metaphorical cape, embrace the hero within, and join us in the illustrious 3% club. Here's to a future where your goals transcend the realm of mere dreams and become your tangible reality. So, my valiant friend, are you prepared to leap into the extraordinary?

As we enter 2024, remember that you don't have to embark on this journey alone. Let's collaborate and explore the possibilities ahead. Together, we can turn the impossible into the possible and make your dreams a reality. Bill Mason, ICF PCC, CPLC, 850-855-3430.

Bill Mason

What is a superhero without a loyal and trusted ally? Forge an unbreakable bond with a mentor, coach or resolute friend who shall serve as your unwavering support amidst the tumultuous

chaos of life. They shall extend a helping hand when you find yourself swinging precariously through the intricacies of existence, ensuring that you remain focused, motivated and ground-

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Musing

Sean of the South: A New Year



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Long ago, my college professor told us to choose a poem to recite in class. Students chose lofty selections from the greats. Whitman, Dickinson, Frost. I consulted Daddy's Hank Williams songbook.

10:40 P.M.—New Year's Eve. Hank Williams is on my radio. My wife is sleeping in the passenger seat. My coonhound is in the backseat. To bring in the year, we've gone for a drive on county roads that weave along



moon. It's almost like poetry. Long ago, my college professor told us to choose a poem to recite in class. Students chose lofty selections from the greats. Whitman, Dickinson, Frost. I consulted Daddy's Hank Williams songbook. He'd given it to me before he died. He'd wanted to be a guitar player once upon a time, but he was god-awful. He gave the instrument to me. I recited, "I'm So

Lonesome I Could Cry," and made a D. I wasn't doing it for the teacher.

11:40 P.M.—my Coke is almost empty. I'm parked on the edge of the bay to watch fireworks. My coonhound is looking at me with red eyes. And I'm writing you, just like I do every day. Listen, I don't remember how I started writing, or why. I have nothing valuable to say, I don't know any big words, and I'm as plain as they come. But I won't lie to you, it has been precious to me. And so have you. These are my last words of the old year, my first words of the new: I love you. Happy New Year.

the Choctawhatchee Bay. There are no cars out. The highway is vacant—except for police cruisers. I've never welcomed in a year like this. As a boy, my father and I brought in holidays with shotguns. We'd march to the edge of creation and fire twelve gauges at the moon. Then, I'd sip Coca-Cola; he'd sip something clear. Another year goes by without him.

11:02 P.M.—my tank is on E. I stop at a gas station. The pump card-reader is broken. My wife is still out cold. I go inside to pay. The clerk is a young girl with purple hair. She wanted to be with her kids tonight, but someone called in with a sinus infection. I buy a Coca-Cola

in a plastic bottle. I also buy a scratch-off lotto ticket. The last few minutes of the year, I'm feeling lucky. I use my keys to scratch the ticket. I win five bucks. So, I buy another two. I win another dollar. "Lucky you," the cashier says. "Wish I could buy one, but it's against store policy." To hell with policy. It's New Year's Eve. I buy her one. She swipes a coin from the take-a-penny tray. She scratches. She wins ten bucks. We high-five. It's only ten bucks, but seeing her win makes my year.

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

VET RIDES

continued from page 16

ing – dubbing – working with award-winning director Benh Zeitlen, who won an Oscar for "Beasts of the Southern Wild." "He was the nicest, sweetest guy," Kevin remembers. One of Kevin's favorite roles was that of Mr. X in a short indie film titled "X's and O's." An actress played Mrs. O in the film, which won the audience award at the 2015 Kite Film Festival in Destin. "It was very good expo-

sure," he says.

While acting looks easy, sometimes it's difficult. Kevin's toughest role was in a series out of Milton called "Kookville." "I got two days' notice," Kevin said. "An actor had dropped out and I got his role."

On top of that, he says, "The script was so wordy, there was so much to say. It was hard for me to retain all the lines."

What does the future look like for Kevin?

"I hope to keep working," he says. "As you get older, parts are

few and far between on camera, but voice is alive and well." To that end, he has acted in several audio drama series, the newest of which is "The East Haven Eight." "All I have to do is get the scripts, do my lines and send it in," Kevin says. The series is about eight teens who, caught in an exploding building, develop superpowers. He plays the hard-boiled news reporter constantly grilling the kids about their powers.

He's also signed for an upcoming local documentary about a man who helps people. He's not well-to-do, but has made helping others his life work.

It's been an interesting trip for Kevin Gaddie, from two decades as a Navy journalist to voice-over actor to the silver screen. But it's not over yet. "I'd like to say I'm thankful and humble for all the good fortune I've had in film and voice-over in these last 10 years," he says. "I wish I had found this years ago, but it's not too late."

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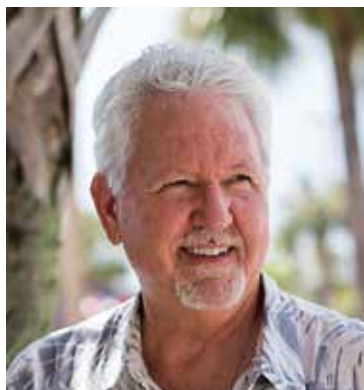
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A Pastor's Ponderings: Where Does Our Peace Come From?



BY PASTOR DAVID HOLLAND

The world broils with conflict. Can you imagine living in Israel with rockets lobbed into your neighborhood at random times? Or, in Gaza, where the country is being reduced to rock and rubble? Or in Ukraine, where soldiers rot entrenched in freezing fox holes. They fight a war nobody wants, but a lone madman in Moscow. Where does peace come from?

Yes, chaos reigns in the world. Twenty-two veterans a day commit suicide. Three of the leading causes of death among teenagers are accidents, homicide and suicide. The United States records close to 700,000 divorces per year. Bad news abounds, but good news is on the way.

Christians have downloaded the free Bible App, YouVersion, over a billion times as they seek to learn more from the Word of God. What are these billion people looking for? In three of the last four years, the most common search on this app is not for scriptures relating to success, prosperity or healing. The most common search is "Fear not, for I am with thee."

People are searching for peace, the antidote to fear. They are fearful about their future, finances and families. But we do not find peace in financial security, nor is it found in political consensus. We find peace in a person, and his name is Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Jesus said in John 14:27 (NIV), "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Peace is a gift Christ wants to give. He wants to give it to us far more than we will ask for it. You have not because you ask not.

The Lord's presence conveys peace to us. According to Isaiah 43:5 (NIV) God says, "Fear not, for I am with you." Fear has no foundation. We have no reason to fear because God is with us. He is with us in Destin. God is with people in Israel, Ukraine, Syria, and Gaza. He is for us and not against us. The sunlight of His favor is shining on us if we will open our eyes to see it.

I remember my ex-wife once saying I dressed like a Sear's mannequin. That is bland and blasé, lacking style. As a pastor, I felt I needed to dress in a neat but non-controversial manner. One of the church members once referred to me as "Robo-pastor" because, no matter what happened, I kept going about my duties. I prided myself on not reacting to circumstances emotionally. Clearly, I needed God's work in my heart.

Following my divorce in 2005, I remember seeing my future, dying alone and uncarved for. The thought terrified me and left me depressed. When I



attended worship, I would weep uncontrollably. It was embarrassing. Long suppressed emotions were boiling over. My life and my peace were shattered. As I left a church in San Antonio, unable to control my feelings, the Lord whispered into my heart, "You are angry with Me. You thought your life, family and future were secure, but you trusted the wrong things. Will you trust Me now?"

I turned away from my anger and self-justification. God's presence in my heart was restored. My peace came from the Lord.

God's presence guarantees His peace. The remedy to fear and insecurity rests in faith in God's faithfulness. Healing for broken emotions flows in God's presence. Will you invite God into your life

in 2024? Turning to the Lord is our barrier to depression, worry and anxiety. Allow peace to flow into your heart.

This article is an excerpt from Dave Holland's devotional, "Christmas Jesus." Start your new year in the word of God with Dave Holland and his daily devotional, "Every Day Jesus." This devotional-Bible study is based on the Gospel of Luke. You can get a copy of his books from the website, DaveHolland.org or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach at churches and conferences.

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 Arts & Music

What Could Go Wrong?

BY ANNA FISHER, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ECTC

In 2012, The Mischief Theatre Company dreamed up a worst-case scenario play where absolutely everything that can go wrong, does go wrong. It is the stuff that us theatre-makers have nightmares about, like set malfunctions, missed cues, and actors getting bonked on the head. It first premiered at the Old Red Lion Theatre in London and due to its success eventually moved on to the West End. Coincidentally, film and TV director JJ. Abrams had been filming Star Wars: The Force Awakens in London in 2014 when, on a day off, he popped into a West End theater to see The Play That Goes Wrong and absolutely loved it.

"I just became obsessed with this idea of trying to help in any way that I could if it were ever

to move to Broadway," Abrams said, adding that he soon teamed up with veteran theater producer Kevin McCollum (Rent, Avenue Q) to do just that.1

In 2017, The Play That Goes Wrong premiered on Broadway with Abrams making his theatrical debut as director.

From London, to New York, and now Emerald Coast Theatre Company in Miramar Beach, this show is like the "Little Engine That Could." The humor, the writing, and the over the top scenarios make it such an audience favorite that it has won multiple awards including a Tony and Drama Desk Award. I am thrilled to say that we open what The Times calls a "masterpiece of malfunction" next month in January.

As if that wasn't exciting enough, we are also opening The Marvelous Wonderettes:



Caps and Gowns in January. This is the follow up show to ECTC's The Marvelous Wonderettes which you may have had the pleasure of seeing in Season 9. The four friends are now at their 1958 high school graduation and beyond, performing all of the favorites like "Rock Around the Clock" and "At The Hop."

And since it's kind of cold in January and February, ECTC has a third offering to keep you



indoors and entertained. Pulitzer prize winning play Crimes of the Heart opens in February. This darkly comic show is about three eccentric sisters and a murder charge in a small southern town. We are going to make everything go right for The Play

That Goes Wrong and these other fabulous winter offerings January through March. I hope you'll join us for some good stories, warm coffee, and a laugh or two, because the heart of ECTC is you!

Begin the New Year with Stories in Song!

Top Performances from the Largest Gathering of Nationally Recognized Songwriters on The Florida Coast Perform Jan. 12-15

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

What makes your favorite song your favorite? I've always said it's likely the story it tells.

And that's what is so special about the 30A Songwriters Festival. On Jan. 12-15, 2024, South

Walton will be transformed into a story-in-song paradise and the "hottest" mid-January mecca for music fans. And the best part? It's right in our back yard!

For the past 15 years, fans locally and from throughout

the world converge at the 30A Songwriters Festival, which attracts thousands of dedicated live music fans to hear original songwriters spanning multiple genres perform their songs—the largest gathering of national-

ly recognized songwriters performing right here locally!

Scenic Highway 30A is home to 30 venues presenting more than 180 songwriters and 280+ solo, band and in-the-round performances throughout the

weekend. These featured songwriters come from varied careers including local performers, aspiring Nashville artists and ones who've performed at

Continued on next page



ON STAGE
JANUARY 19 - MARCH 3

MARVELOUS WONDERETTES

Featuring "Rock Around the Clock," "At the Hop," "River Deep, Mountain High," and 25 more hits, The Marvelous Wonderettes: Caps & Gowns will have you bopping down memory lane and "Dancing in the Street!"



ON STAGE
JANUARY 26 - FEBRUARY 4

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

Called "the funniest play Broadway has ever seen," this classic murder mystery by award-winning Mischief is chock-full of mishaps and madcap mania! This hilarious and unique show will have you laughing for days.









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STORIES IN SONG

continued from previous page

sold-out arenas.

This year, the Festival turns 15 with performances on the main stage at presenting partner Grand Boulevard's Town Center with headline performances by renowned artists Jeff Tweedy, Elvis Costello and The Imposters, Grace Potter, Rosanne Cash and KT Tunstall. Twenty-one newly confirmed artists to add to the 2024 line up include John Driskell Hopkins (Zac Brown Band), John Paul White, Kevn Kinney, Chris Stills, Wyatt Durrette, Ethan Hulse, Duncan Phillips, Boukou Groove, Donnie Sundal, Katie Martin, Larry Mitchell, Ken Johnson, Andi Zack-Johnson, Alex Rogers, The Rough & Tumble, Amanda Donald, The Krickets, The Late Night Losers, Gileah Taylor, Kyle Lamonica and The Mosleys.

Local amphitheaters, town halls, restaurants, theaters, bars and covered patios will be converted into unique music venues with state-of-the-art sound systems and capacities ranging from 100 to 1000 seats indoors and 6,000 outdoors.

Co-produced by Russell Carter Artist Management and the Cultural Arts Alliance (CAA) of Walton, the festival's net proceeds support the CAA's mission to advance the Arts in our area.

"We are thrilled to host Elvis Costello in January 2024," comments Russell Carter, President of Russell Carter Artist Management and Festival Co-Producer. "Most Artists who break commercially do so after many years of hard development work. Elvis Costello flat out burst on the international scene with his debut album My Aim is True. Seemingly out of nowhere he appeared on Saturday Night Live with a name borrowed from Presley and looks apprehended from Buddy Holly. He proceeded to rage like the British punk and pub rocker that he was. His debut record demonstrated a melodic sense on par with Lennon & McCartney and a lyrical and poetic prowess comparable to Dylan. Over several decades of album releases, Elvis has recorded amazing songs encompassing R&B, country, jazz, baroque pop, Tin Pan Alley and classical music. It is with tremendous pride that we introduce Elvis

Costello, one of my very favorite artists and one of our generation's greatest songwriters, to the 30A Songwriters Festival.

"As we approach the 15th anniversary of the 30A Songwriters Festival, we want to acknowledge how fortunate we are to have hosted so many world class musicians in our small beach community," says Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County Executive Director and Co-Producer Jennifer Steele. "We gambled in 2010 that touring musicians would enjoy spending an extended weekend performing along the uniquely beautiful coast on the Gulf of Mexico, and fortunately Jackson Browne, Emmylou Harris, Jason Isbell, Mavis Staples, John Prine, Indigo Girls, Brian Wilson, Brandi Carlile, Grace Potter and hundreds more have proved us right. Our Festival is a partnership with venues, resort communities, rental agencies and hotels along Hwy. 30A and beyond, along with important regional and national business sponsors who all benefit from the exposure to the many thousands of music lovers the Festival attracts. Most importantly, our local community benefits as



JEFF TWEEDY



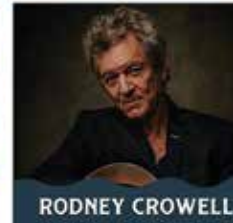
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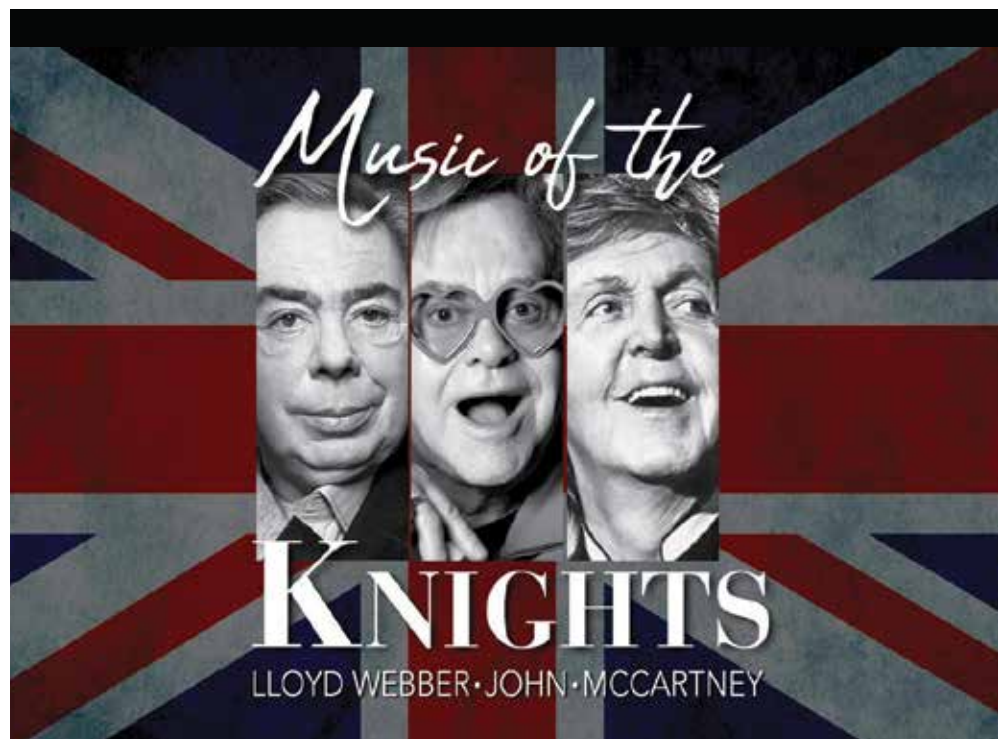
100% of the Festival's net proceeds are further invested in our mission to foster creativity and our vision of a thriving Walton County where everyone experiences the power of the Arts."

Adds Carter, "There is a direct correlation between the success of the 30A Songwriters Festival and the richness of cultural arts experiences in our communities, including an Art in Public Spaces program (murals and sculptures), The Foster Gallery that supports local artists, professional theatre, the Underwater Museum of Art, Flutterby Children's Arts Festival and the ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival."

Festival Weekend Passes

are currently available at www.30asongwritersfestival.com. VIP tickets that include premium seating and complementary gourmet food and drinks in the VIP tent on Saturday and Sunday afternoons are also available. For a full description of each ticket package including VIP mainstage and full weekend transportation packages for groups of 2 up to 12, visit www.30asongwritersfestival.com.

The 30A Songwriters Festival is presented by Grand Boulevard with additional support from Visit South Walton, the Florida Department of State Division of Arts & Culture, WaterColor Inn and Resort and ASCAP.



MUSIC OF THE KNIGHTS

Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024 | 7:30 PM

Destin-FWB Convention Center

From Broadway to the top of the pop charts, these musical geniuses each created an incredible individual musical legacy. Music of the Knights honors their lasting musical influence with hits like *Memory*, *Yesterday*, *Don't Cry for Me, Argentina*, *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*, *Circle of Life*, *Hey Jude*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and more.

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Arts & Music

ECTC's Nathanael & Anna Fisher Win Florida Theatre Conference 2023 Distinguished Career Award



Marci Duncan presenting the Distinguishing Career Award to Nathanael Fisher at the Florida Theatre Conference in Winter Haven in November with ECTC's Jr Company High School Troupe.

A Taste of Mardi Gras, this year's Food and Wine Tasting Festival supporting the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra's youth programs, will feature a jazz combo, tastes of 40 different wines, local craft beers and samples of cuisine from area restaurants, such as Aegean Greek Restaurant, Cafe Bienville, Carrabba's Italian Grill, Magnolia Grill, Peppers Mexican Cantina, Red Lobster Seafood Restaurant, Brozzini's Pizzeria and several others.

Scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024, from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Raider Central of North-

west Florida State College in Niceville, the event will also include a silent auction containing a variety of items such as gift cards, art, jewelry and gift baskets.

Sponsored by the Northwest Florida Symphony Guild, the event raises funds to support the Symphony's youth programs, such as the fifth-grade concerts and the annual John Leatherwood Concerto Competition.

Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased by calling the Mattie Kelly box office at 850-729-6000 or online at www.MattieKellyArtsCenter.org.

Sinfonia Gulf Coast Presents 'Music of The Knights' Jan. 20

The British are coming! Sinfonia Gulf Coast "redefines the symphony experience" once again with Music of the Knights. This entertaining celebration of UK music legends is set for Saturday, Jan. 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center on Okaloosa Island in Fort Walton Beach.

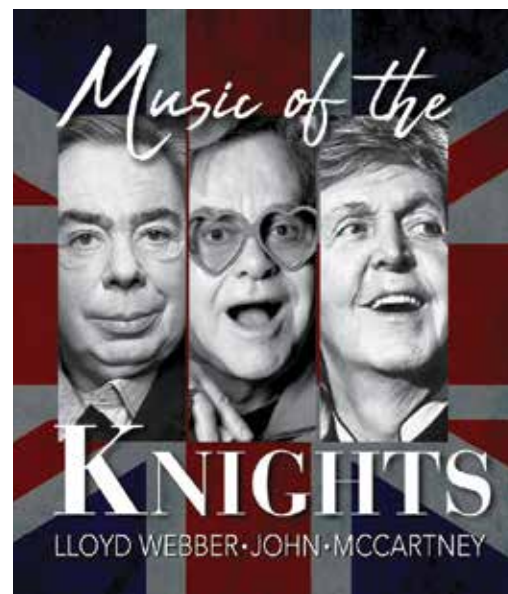
Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, Sir Elton John, and Sir Paul McCartney, each knighted by the Queen of England, are three of the world's most successful songwriters. From Broadway to the top of the pop charts, these musical geniuses each created an incredible individual musical legacy. Music of the Knights honors their lasting musical influence with hits like Memory, Yesterday, Don't Cry for Me, Argentina, Can You Feel the Love Tonight, Circle of Life, Hey Jude, The Phantom of the Opera, and more.

Music of the Knights features accomplished vocalists Scott Coulter and Jessica Hendy.

Scott Coulter, esteemed New York vocalist, boasts five MAC Awards, five Bistro Awards, and two Nightlife Awards for Outstanding Vocalist. His remarkable performances grace top NYC venues like Birdland and

54 Below. Coulter's self-titled debut CD, honored with a MAC Award, was hailed Best Recording of the Year by TheatreMania and Cabaret Scenes magazines. Renowned for his direction and starring role in A Christmas Carol: The Symphonic Concert, he collaborated with legends like Stephen Schwartz and Ben Vereen. Coulter, a versatile artist, created, arranged, and directed various touring shows, including Music of the Knights and Total Eclipse of the Chart: The '80s.

Versatile artist Jessica Hendy, celebrated for her vocal, acting, and writing skills, brings her memoir to life in the acclaimed show Walking With Bubbles. Notable for her roles in Broadway's Cats revival and original production, she debuted as Grizabella. Her Broadway credits extend to Aida and Amour. Hendy shone at Radio City Music Hall in The New York Spring Spectacular and toured nation-



ally and in Canada as Grizabella and Joseph's Narrator. Awarded for her role in Next to Normal, she's graced regional productions like Miss Saigon, Songs For A New World, and Mamma Mia. A frequent headliner at 54 Below, Hendy captivates audiences in pops and symphony concerts across North America.

Accompanying Coulter and Hendy on piano is music director John Boswell. Boswell, celebrated for his role as musical director for artists like Judy Collins and Andy Williams, has showcased his talents on notable platforms such as The Tonight Show and CBS This Morning. Boswell's diverse career includes touring as Moose in Crazy For You, playing piano on The Facts of Life, and performing in Broadway and Off-Broadway productions. He excels in symphonic concerts, contributing to shows like Jerry Herman: The Broadway Legacy Concert and Music of the Knights. With a rich discography of nine original piano CDs and a 10th in progress, Boswell is a recipient of the Frank Sinatra Award during his UCLA years.

Tickets are \$30-\$55 per person. Preferred seating at tables of 10 — \$55 per person. Discounts for students and active-duty military with valid ID.

Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its education and community outreach engagement initiatives throughout Northwest Florida.

Purchase tickets online at SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or call (850) 460-8800.



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Embrace Musical Theatre

Attending musical theatre can offer a wide range of benefits for all ages, embracing both entertainment and personal development. Here are some key advantages:

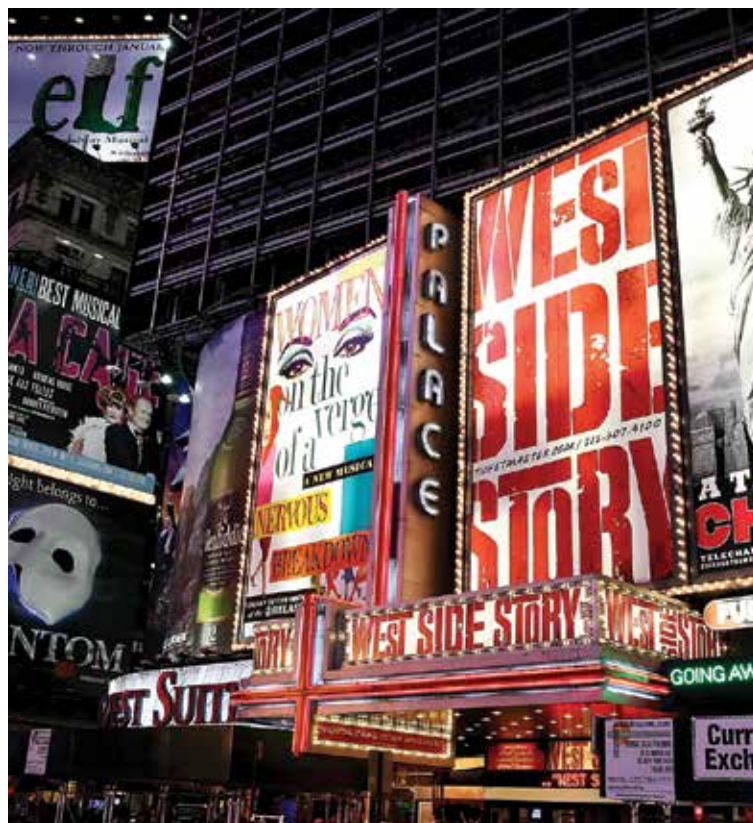
Cultural Enrichment: Musical theatre often explores diverse themes, cultures, and historical periods, providing audiences with a broader understanding of the world. This includes music, dance, and storytelling.

Artistic Appreciation: Attending musicals or operas allows individuals to appreciate various art forms, including acting, singing, dancing, set design, and costume creation.

Emotional Connection: Musical theatre has the power to evoke strong emotions. Whether it's through a heartfelt ballad, a comedic number, or a dramatic scene.

Entertainment and Escapism: Live performances offer a unique and immersive experience, allowing the audience to escape from everyday life and be transported into the world of the story.

Social Experience: Going to musicals is often a social ac-



tivity, providing an opportunity to share the experience with friends, family, or fellow theatre enthusiasts. Discussing the performance afterward can enhance the enjoyment and create lasting memories.

Educational Value: Musical theatre can be an educational tool, especially for younger audiences. It introduces them to various art forms and can stimulate interest in history, literature, and different cultures.

Supporting the Arts: Attending musical theatre helps support the performing arts industry. Your attendance contributes to the success of the production, encourages the growth of the arts community, and supports the livelihoods of performers, directors, designers, and other professionals.

Live Performance Experience: Unlike recorded entertainment, musical theatre is a live performance, and each show is a unique experience.

Stress Relief: The combination of music, storytelling, and visual spectacle can provide a welcome break from the

pressures of daily life, offering a chance to unwind and recharge.

Overall, attending musical theatre can be a multifaceted and rewarding experience for both children and adults, providing entertainment, cultural exposure, and personal enrichment.

A Taste of Mardi Gras: Food, Wine, Craft Beer and More

A Taste of Mardi Gras, this year's Food and Wine Tasting Festival supporting the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra's youth programs, will feature a jazz combo, tastes of 40 different wines, local craft beers and samples of cuisine from area restaurants, such as Aegean Greek Restaurant, Cafe Biverville, Carrabba's Italian Grill, Magnolia Grill, Peppers Mexican Cantina, Red Lobster Seafood Restaurant, Brozinni's Pizzeria and several others.

Scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024, from 1 to 4 p.m. in the Raider Central of Northwest Florida State College in Niceville, the event will also include a silent auction containing a variety of items such



as gift cards, art, jewelry and gift baskets.

Sponsored by the Northwest Florida Symphony Guild, the event raises funds to support the Symphony's youth programs, such as the fifth-grade concerts and the annual John Leatherwood Concerto Competition.

Tickets are \$50 and can be purchased by calling the Mattie Kelly box office at 850-729-6000 or online at www.MattieKellyArtsCenter.org.

Savvy Leigh

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Ask Destinites: Possible Amphitheater by Marler Bridge



BY PATRICIA LEE, OWNER DESTINITES.COM

Destin Councilmember Kevin Schmidt has proposed turning the vacant lot by the Marler Bridge into an Amphitheatre and area for the community. The idea is, thus far, being well received by area residents. The city agreed to buy the vacant lot in July 2023. The lot has a slight slope making it perfect for an amphitheater-type environment with the stage at the bottom by the water. Schmidt would also like to see the existing magnolia tree and other nature to be incorporated into the design. He feels the natural slope to the area would negate having to bring in bleachers or other seating. The grassy and sandy tiers would en-



courage picnics and recreation. Schmidt says the stage angle would project sound toward the Emerald Grande and Destin Harbor rather than the nearby residential area.

Councilmember Schmidt proposed that an area toward the top, by the road, could provide space for food trucks, thereby offering dining options. He would also like to see educational areas representing the history of Destin and Choc-

tawhatchee Bay and maritime culture. Docks provided could accommodate vessels and possibly even a ferry service.

John and Allie Stephens, owners of Luther's in Destin, corroborated with Councilmember Schmidt on the amphitheater idea and design. They are focused on the opportunity for a mooring harbor and oyster farming. Mr. Stephens said, "Right now, in the whole Panhandle, there is no mooring

harbor. So, we're missing out on the Loopers." He continued, "When I say oyster farming, it's not to eat, but it's to actually use the oysters to create more living shores in our area." Mr. Stephens would like to see a Harbormaster's office and welcome center placed there at the Amphitheater as well.

Councilman Stephens is interested in hearing public opinions, but did emphasize the use of the area should be for public enjoyment. The city will be hosting workshops to hear and entertain other ideas for the vacant property. Check out the schedule to attend a meeting or workshop at www.cityofdestin.com.

If you are a Destin resident or in the close surrounding area, I invite you to join our private group at www.facebook.com/groups/Destinites with more than 9,200 members (Est. Oct. 2018). Check out our monthly newsletters and sponsored local business directory at www.Destinites.com.



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