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Destin High School Expands with New Additions and Educational Offerings

By WILL ESTELL

If you've been a resident of Destin or the nearby coastal communities of Miramar Beach, Fort Walton Beach or Niceville for any length of time, you've probably heard a great deal about Destin High School, and the immense dedication and work of those involved in making the much-needed home of education a part of Destin's growing list of improvements for the families who call America's Luckiest Fishing Village home.

With a brand new, three-story multi-use building, state-of-the-art classrooms and the remarkable Tripp Tolbert Up To It Weight Room and Training Facility, the recent, and coming, additions to the ever growing Destin High School campus are definitely impressive. Currently the school encompasses 20 classrooms, consisting of over 20,000 sq. ft. of learning space on the beautiful new campus located just off Des-



tin's Commons Drive. However, with the addition of a new building, Destin High will be adding 23 classrooms, and over 25,000 sq. ft., including a spacious science lab; thus, bringing the new total size of the school to more than 45,000 sq. ft. of educational space.

Destin High School is a tuition-free, public charter school, which gained its state charter and became a part of the thriving Destin community for the 2021-2022

school year. The high school is funded through the support and donations of generous businesses, organizations and members of the surrounding Northwest Florida Gulf Coast community, in conjunction with the events and fundraising efforts of its board members, educators, parents and students.

Destin High School currently offers a complete comprehensive experience including all of the expected core curriculum areas, along with

instruction in the fine arts, business disciplines, foreign languages, physical education and fishing. Additionally, the school is looking at partnerships to expand their career and technical offerings, starting in Fall of 2024.

As a somewhat unique example of Destin High School's feel for educating outside the box, its fishing education program offers students the

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Off the Couch and Into Creation Real Faith, Real Adventure Await Viewers

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

When missionaries, Mike and Libby Wild, began making videos with their four sons in 2011, no one in the family dreamed it would one day become Wild Brothers Productions. In less than 10 years, what started as a video series for friends and family in the Niceville area, has now become a multimedia business with brothers Morgan (25), Hudson (23), Kian (21) and Asher (19) at the helm. It is through their company they are bringing their adventures

OFF THE COUCH

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DHS*continued from page 1*

opportunity to learn about the charter and commercial fishing business, and even provides a path by which its students can earn their captain's license while still in high school! How's that for educating our students in something that actually makes a remarkable difference for our community's future too?

As part of its growth, Destin High School recently celebrated a ribbon cutting celebration on January 25. It included a Town Hall event where interested parties and parents could learn more about all the new school additions—and what Destin High School as a whole has to offer both students and our Destin community. The event was widely attended and, I believe, went a long way in painting an accurate picture of what the founding board members, community stakeholders and parents have been working tirelessly to achieve for years. The school and its new additions will serve our wonderful city and families for decades upon decades to come.

Heidi LoCicero, President of the Governing Board of Directors and Founding Board Member of Destin High School, told me, "Once students take a tour of the remarkable campus, they are hooked on attending Destin High. Pun intended!" Heidi went on to say, "The footprint in Destin continues to grow, our students' impact is impressive and our legacy is firmly rooted in the community's foundation.

The Destin community has truly embraced local education and provided the funds to support our students' success. Our teachers are dedicated to their students' success. Destin High has built-in academic support programs to help with students' rigorous course loads. All of our teachers are focused on helping students build confidence in their areas of study and reduce anxiety, as they learn new subjects. Students reap the benefits of small classes with individual attention and their grades show it."

I asked Heidi why she and others involved feel the new building is so important to Destin High School's future success, and she explained, "The new building allows appropriate space for the school to continue to grow and thrive. Space constraints in the existing footprint, and an upward trajectory in student enrollment, caused us to have to adopt a split schedule in the fall to accommodate all students. The additional square footage effectively doubles our classroom space and allows us to continue adding enrollment and unique programs while combining our student body back into a common schedule. For example, with additional space, our fishing program was able to expand into two classrooms, and now has a proper lab space to allow students to partake in fishing labs. Additionally, our new band program will no longer have to share space with our drama program. We've also added appropriate state-of-the-art science labs which are instrumental in



preparing students for college and career trajectories."

I asked Mr. Donald "Willy" Williams, Jr., Executive Director of Destin High School, what he is most proud of about the new school: "As the executive director, I am most proud of the vibrant and flexible culture of the school. Students are happy to be at Destin High School, and teachers are happy to be part of an amazing team. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done—especially when considering all of the construction, moving and split schedules. But, I haven't once had anyone say 'We can't do that.' Everyone, from the students and teachers to our governing board and stakeholders has a can-do attitude. I'm proud to be part of a high-will team! It has been amazing to walk into a place where education is valued, excellence is expected and community support is 1000%! I am a huge fan of 'Aesop's Fable, The Tortoise and the Hare,'" he continued. "The story of Destin High School reminds me that slow and steady wins the race. There are a million competing priorities in every school. And when we try to focus on all of them, we can focus on nothing. It may take us awhile to address everything coming at us each day. But, I see a willingness and understanding in all stakeholders that slow and steady will really win this race!"



As is often the case with any new school, people want to know how they can be a part of the solution and future growth. "Destin High School needs volunteers to assist," said Heidi. "All kinds of research indicates [that] the presence of multiple adults in a student and young adult's life significantly enhances their chances of success in life," she said. "We, as a school, need tutors. We need adults who are willing to come in and be a part of our lunchtime mentoring, monitoring and serving. We need people who are willing to help us get clubs going; we need volunteer coaches; we need support at games and competitions. We need everyone in this community to rally around the school, our students, and to celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of our community who have made DHS a true success story."

Well spoken, I would say, as I could immediately tell Heidi lives, breathes and speaks, "Go Sharks!" The process for getting involved is simple she says. "Just email a letter of interest and your skill set details to info@DestinHighSchool.org and a pass the Okaloosa County School District background check. For those wanting to

give a gift of any amount to the school, Destin High School has legacy gift opportunities, and even building naming rights available."

The open enrollment period for the next school year began in January available at: <https://destinhighschool.org/admissions/>

In addition, campus tours may be requested online at destinhighschool.org/campus/ www.destinhighschool.org

Will Estell is a writer, media entrepreneur and real estate professional with over 600 published magazine features in an array of publications from tourism, real estate and automobile editorials to celebrity interview magazine cover features. He is the chief creative officer of Estell Hussey Media, LLC, and over the past 26 years has been instrumental in co-founding 12 new magazine titles as well as serving as editor in chief for numerous others. Originally from the backwoods of rural Mississippi, Will is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre, along with his wife, WEAR ABC 3 Pensacola news anchor, Laura Hussey. Will is a regular contributor to Life Media's family of publications.

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A Rare Gem: McCaskill & Company Celebrates 30 Years

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

What was once a childhood dream for a young boy, William “Bill” Campbell, has grown into three decades of one of the most successful jewelry design businesses in the Southeast. McCaskill & Company owners, Bill & Elizabeth Campbell, have established an exciting jewelry business foundation and impeccable customer service philosophy that continue to propel McCaskill & Company to the forefront of the jewelry industry.

Bill’s passion and love of jewelry stem from he and his grandmother, Gussie McCaskill Campbell, spending hours together marveling over the jewels and gems that his great-grandfather brought home from his travels around the world. Here the seeds of his appreciation for fine jewelry were sown from the McCaskills and Campbells, some of the earliest settlers in Walton county. Never did he imagine that the precious time spent with his grandmother would one day culminate into a coveted business where he could

fulfill his dream of one that is loved by McCaskill’s many devoted customers.

Like many jewelers, owners Bill and Elizabeth Campbell started with humble beginnings—first a small kiosk in Seaside (1994) and later a storefront at the Market Shops at Sandestin (1995).

As the business grew exponentially, it was a sign for Elizabeth to join full time after her 25-year-career as a licensed therapist. In 1999, with determination and passion, the Campbells opened their current free-standing location.

McCaskill & Company became a true, next-generation family business in 2008, which also included their next milestone, an accessory boutique, Sarah Carolyn, adjacent to McCaskill & Company, opened by their daughter, Carolyn Campbell Brigman. It later became a luxurious bridal design gallery (2015). Now serving as vice president, Carolyn grew up learning the jewelry business, while managing the former boutique served as the perfect



Rendering of Future McCaskill & Company Expansion



Carolyn Campbell Brigman, Elizabeth and Bill Campbell

training ground for running all aspects of the business.

Carolyn feels the brand’s success through three decades hinges on its unique ability not only to adapt to some trends, but also to maintain the classic, memorable and timeless jewelry designs coveted by customers. “It could largely be attributed to our vigilance in anticipating, recognizing and choosing jewelry that moves us in hopes of moving our customers as well,” Elizabeth continues. “We cherry pick our pieces, favoring one-of-a-kind designs,” she says.

Never stuffy or pretentious, Bill, Elizabeth, Carolyn and the

entire McCaskill staff strive to offer the most memorable experience possible, from the time you enter the store. “We realize for some it can be intimidating,” says Elizabeth. “But we are actually very down to earth. It’s important for us to help people feel warm and invited.” For example, each morning, the staff offers chocolate chip cookies and coffee. “We want people to feel at home, welcome and enjoy their time here,” says Carolyn. “They can even shop in their beach attire!” Bill delights in sharing his knowledge and intricacies of jewelry pieces, often relating interesting tidbits about

MCCASKILL & COMPANY
— Finest Jewelry & Watches —

the designers, all of whom he knows personally. Elizabeth considers herself a detail-oriented influence where customers receive the special “touches” she invokes on a day-to-day basis.

At the core of the Campbells’ successful venture is relationship. “This is a relationship business,” says Carolyn. “You don’t stay in business 30 years without building trust and customers knowing you care. We care so much about the crafts-

Continued on page 14



IT ALL STARTS WITH A GEMSTONE

MCCASKILL & COMPANY
— Finest Jewelry & Watches —

13390 Hwy 98 W, Destin, FL

Community

Cali's To Do In Destin! FEBRUARY 2024

..... 8

2024 Artificial Reef & Lionfish Workshop | 8am | Destin-Fort Walton Convention Center

Mini Makers & Experimenters Lab | 10:30am | Emerald Coast Science Center

Grand Canine Carnaval | 3:30-5:30pm | Grand Boulevard

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Mardi Gras Mambo | 6pm | Maxine Orange Art Gallery

Ladies Night & Karaoke | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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Fire Pit Fridays | 4pm | 30a Distilling Co

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Bonfire & Family Night | 5pm | 3rd Planet Brewing

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB

Walton Area Chamber Annual Gala | 5:30pm | Hilton Sandestin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Emerald Coast Science Center

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac

..... 10

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Camellia Festival | 10am-2pm | Eden Gardens State Park

Mardi Gras Celebration | 2pm | Harborwalk Village

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Valentine's Day Sweetheart Ball | 6pm | American Legion 235

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

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Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin

Mardi Gras Brunch | 10am | AJs on the Bayou

Toast 'n Jam feat. Brubeck Brothers Quartet | 10:30am | Henderson Beach Resort

Melodies & Mimosas | 2pm | Harborwalk Village

Mardi Gras Parade | 2pm | Baytowne Wharf

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

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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

Downbeat Jazz Orchestra Show | 7pm | Fudpucker's Destin



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Lulus 25th Anniversary Party | 5pm | LuLu's Destin

Pink Pasta Class & Seltzers | 6pm | Palm Folly

Singo | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB

Mardi Gras Street Pardi | 6pm | Baytowne Wharf

Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Lone Wolf Pizza Destin

Taylor Swift Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer

Open Jam Night | 8pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

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Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay "Dinner to Die For" Murder Mystery Show | 6pm | AJs on the Bayou

Paint Party | 6pm-8pm | East Pass Seafood

Valentine's Day Karaoke Party | 6pm | AJs on the Bayou

Valentine's Day Dinner | Primrose | Henderson Beach Resort | Reservations recommended

Valentine's Day Dinner | Beach Walk Café | Henderson Park Inn | Reservations recommended

Trivia Night | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB

Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

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Bubbly Baytowne | 5pm | Baytowne Wharf

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Ladies Night & Karaoke | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons

Trivia | 6pm | The Island Hotel

Planetarium Night | 6pm | Emerald Coast Science Center

Spill The Tea Poetry Night | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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Fire Pit Fridays | 4pm | 30a Distilling Co

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac

Seaside Taste of the Race | 6-9pm | Seaside School & Lyceum

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Son of a Beach 5K | 8am | Back Porch

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Zumba on Tap | 10am | 3rd Planet Brewing

Tropical Re-Union Vow Renewal | 1pm | LuLu's Destin

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Karaoke | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

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Seaside 5K/Half Marathon | 7am | Seaside

Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin

Bridal Show | 12pm | Hotel Effie

Melodies & Mimosas | 2pm | Harborwalk Village

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

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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

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Adventure Marine Business Mixer | 4pm | Adventure Marina

Singo | 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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Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Ladies Night & Karaoke | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons

Spill The Tea Poetry Night | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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Fire Pit Fridays | 4pm | 30a Distilling Co

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Gumbo Festival Kick Off Party | 5pm | HammerHeads Bar & Grill

55th Annual All Sports Association Awards | 6:30pm | Destin FWB Convention Center

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac

..... 24

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Sandestin Gumbo Festival | 12pm | Baytowne Wharf

Shrimp & Grits Festival | 12pm | Brotula's

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

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Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin

Farmers Market | 11am | Destin Commons

Spring Fashion Show | 12:30pm | Hilton Sandestin Golf & Beach

Melodies & Mimosas | 2pm | Harborwalk Village

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

..... 26

Blood Drive | 11-4 | Destin American Legion

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

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Singo | 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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Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Ladies Night & Karaoke | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons

Spill The Tea Poetry Night | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... March 1

Fire Pit Fridays | 4pm | 30a Distilling Co

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

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

..... 2

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Sealight Festival | 5pm-9pm | Seascape Resort

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

..... 3

Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin

Sealight Festival | 5-9pm | Seascape Resort

Ocala County's Got Talent | 5-9pm | The Sound Cafe + Enlightened Studios

..... 4

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

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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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Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Gala | 6:30pm | Hilton Sandestin

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Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Golf Tourney | 10:30pm | Kelly Plantation Golf Club



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All Things GUMBO!
Pursue the Roux at the
35th Annual Sandestin
Gumbo Festival

Friday, Feb. 23, 5-7 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 24, 12-4 p.m.

Known as one of the largest and most popular winter food events along our Emerald Coast, this exciting, Gumbo winter festival is back for its 35th year!

Kick off your tasting days, Friday, Feb. 23, with a traditional, Seafood Boil Kick-Off Party at Hammerhead's Bar & Grille from 5-7 p.m. with live music starting at 4 p.m.

On Saturday, Feb. 24, Gulf Coast restaurants will feature their top-secret gumbo recipes and compete for your vote at the Sandestin Gumbo Festival. Dark or light roux? Chicken, sausage or seafood? Sample the variety of gumbos and vote for your favorite as the "People's Choice" winner. Celebrity judges will name the "Area's Best." Serving up fun for everyone, listen to live music from Dikki Du and the Zydeco Krewe and enjoy free kid's activities while you taste varieties of gumbo from restaurants in 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 judge those, too. Vote for your favorite and help contestants win the title of "Best Bloody Mary at The Beach."

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



**It's Mardi Gras
Parade Time!**
Sunday, Feb. 11, 2 p.m.
No Cost to Attend.

Join the Village of Baytowne Wharf as the Village streets are filled with costumed dogs and their humans, along with unique and colorful floats, golf carts, vehicles, pick-up trucks and Mardi Gras cheer for the Baytowne Mardi Gras parade. 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. To participate, register by Friday, Feb. 9, at 5 p.m. at baytownewharf.com.

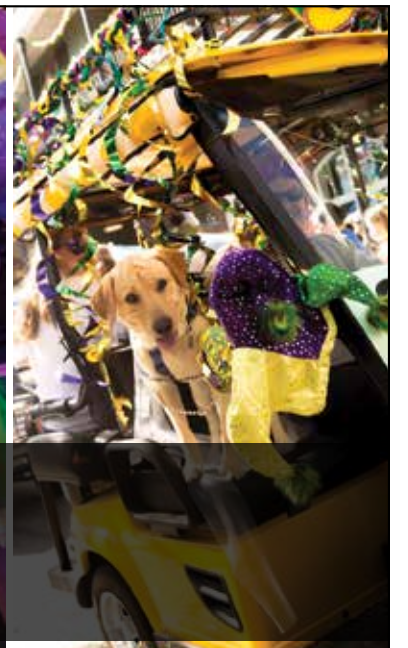
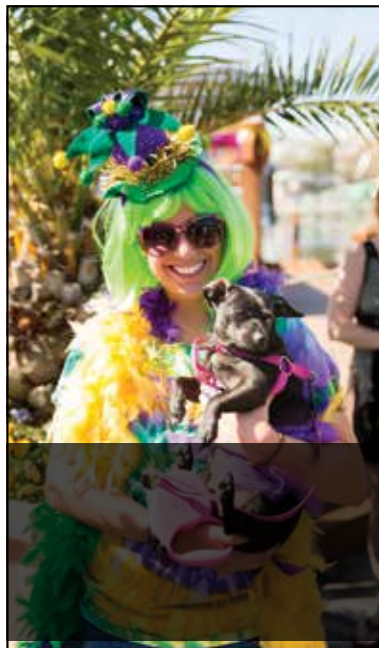
**Laissez Les Bon Temps
Rouler! Baytowne Mardi
Gras Street Pardi**
Tuesday, Feb. 13, 6-8 p.m.
No Cost to Attend

On Fat Tuesday, 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.



Mardi Gras

The Village of Baytowne Wharf presents

Mardi Gras Parade

Sunday, February 11th
Time: 2pm | No Cost to Attend

Baytowne Mardi Street Pardi

Tuesday, February 13th
Time: 6-8pm | No Cost to Attend

FOR MORE INFO VISIT: WWW.BAYTOWNEWHARF.COM



Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

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. Mayor Bobby Wagner and I chose a

topic that speaks to the hearts of many.

TY: Fittingly, February is declared American Heart Month. At a recent City Council meeting, you had the City of Destin join other cities around the nation in proclaiming February 2024 as Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Month. How did that proclamation come about?

BW: This idea was presented to me in the form of a challenge from a friend and employee of the City of Fort Walton Beach.

After hearing his family's testimony, I was moved and wanted to help however I could.

TY: As a small show of support, we're joining some other neighboring cities this month in collecting pop tabs – those little aluminum tabs from cans – for Ronald McDonald House Charities. We're collecting them at City Hall, the Community Center and a few other places through February 29th. Any words of encouragement to get people to do a last-minute push to donate?

"Reel Talk" from the City of Destin A Cause Everyone Can Love



BW: Have fun with it! This is going to be a fun community challenge that stretches beyond our city limits and will benefit a wonderful mission serving our local area. I am asking everyone to please share this message with your family, friends, classmates, and coworkers. My goal for the City of Destin is to contribute 1,000 tops to the challenge. Keep a look out for updates online on our social media platforms.

TY: I've heard you say many times what a giving community this is, and this type of fundraiser is a good reminder that anybody at any age can jump in and help. What are a few of your fa-

vorite ways to be involved giving back in a non-monetary way?

BW: As a cash-strapped politician, I find myself devoting my time and energy to our local nonprofits instead of donating money. For those interested in getting involved with a nonprofit whose mission resonates with them and is actively making a difference in our community, I always recommend reaching out to the United Way of the Emerald Coast. They have an extensive and varied list of approved nonprofits that cover all areas of humanitarian and environmental causes. The bonus is that their entire team is incredibly fun and gets things done!

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Boats, Fun and More Await You at the Emerald Coast Boat & Lifestyle Show March 1-3

For some of us, it is inevitable. It happens every year around this time. It's a cumulative effect. The sun sets later. Temperatures creeping up to feeling very Spring-like. And even though we don't want to let our thoughts wander from our current task, we can't help ourselves. We cannot ignore the symptoms of our ailment. We think about being on the water. We think about being on a boat. We think about being on our boat. We think, "I should just go ahead and buy that new boat!"

We have a full-blown case of Boat Fever! And no amount of online browsing, video watching or magazine reading can alleviate our pain. We need to see boats in person. We need to climb up on them. We need to open hatches. We need to compare them side-by-side. We need to be around shiny new boats, and we need to be around a lot of them!

Luckily for us, the Emerald Coast Boat and Lifestyle Show will soon be here, and it's just

what the doctor ordered!

The annual show, which has become one of the can't-miss events of the early Spring, returns to its' picturesque home venue at Aaron Bessant Park, adjacent to Pier Park in Panama City Beach, March 1-3.

Each year, the show features the top dealers representing the best brands of boats and personal watercraft, and this year is no different. There will be more marine dealers than ever at the show, drawing from all across the region. Boats will be on display from dealers in Dothan, Panama City Beach, Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, Shalimar, Eastpoint, Bonifay and Orange Beach.

With more than \$40 million of marine inventory in the park, dealers will be featuring 'A Boat for Everyone.'

From entry-level boats to quad-powered, 45' center console fishing rigs that always draw big crowds, fishing boats, wake boats, cruising boats, personal watercraft and outboard manu-



facturers are on site offering best-of-year financial incentives and unbeatable 'Boat Show Pricing,' which is indeed a real thing!

In addition to hundreds of boats, the Emerald Coast Boat and Lifestyle Show lives up to its billing with an ever-expanding line-up of products for anyone who loves living or visiting the Emerald Coast. Street-legal golf carts, paddle boards, electric bikes, personal watercraft, fishing tackle and seminars, outdoor furniture and service providers for everything from boat maintenance to installing your new dock will be at Aaron Bessant Park the first weekend in March.

For a complete list of exhibitors, more information and to purchase tickets online, visit EmeraldCoastBoatShow.com.




EMERALD COAST
BOAT & LIFESTYLE SHOW
 PANAMA CITY BEACH, FL

REAL. FUN. BOATS.



March 1 - 3 at Aaron Bessant Park

EmeraldCoastBoatShow.com



 Community

OFF THE COUCH

continued from page 1

from around the world right to your home. They still make videos to entertain and educate our locals, but their efforts are now inspiring people around the world.

Morgan shares that growing up as missionaries positioned the Wilds to share experiences that no one else was having back home. “In 2003, my family moved to the country of Indonesia as Christian missionaries to serve the Wano, a community of approximately 1500 indigenous semi-nomadic people living in the Highland jungles. They were a beautiful people, but they were burdened by sickness and tribal warfare that led to a lot of hardship in the village.

We lived among them as stu-

dents of their culture, spending the first five years just learning their language, worldview and culture. As we were building relationships, we served them through my parents’ medical clinic, even before we could speak fluently.”

Back in the United States, friends and family asked questions about their day-to-day life. In response, with their parents’ encouragement, the boys began to film their many adventures. “In 2011, on a short furlough here in America, we came back for a few months, and our parents produced a series of 15 videos for our church called Growing Up Wild. That was developed as an elective for a homeschool curriculum. This show was the starting point of our filming career.”

Over the next several years, the brothers continued to docu-

ment their lives overseas, collaborating in their distinct talents and learning how to get better. Their goal was to be authentic and unscripted so their audience could truly be with them in the moment. Over those 10 years, they would grow up with scientists from around the world who provided an amazing education, footage and distinct opportunities. They were able to produce reality show content and documentaries, even partnering with Answers in Genesis. Without Wi-Fi, however, they were unable to take full advantage of the internet to reach an international audience. That would change in 2020 when COVID brought the family back to the United States. “We were in different stages of education, most of us in college. We had always imagined that we were going to go our separate ways. But, when



COVID shut everything down, we were doing a lot of online school together and learned very quickly that America is expensive. We decided that instead of branching off and doing our own thing, we could take this love for filmmaking and turn it into something that would be more sustainable for us.

We already had 10 years of footage. So, that’s when we began wildbrothers.tv It’s where people can see all our shows for a small subscription fee, and we have new content dropping every Saturday. We’re excited about the community we’re building there. Our members can engage with our content and other members, they can post their pictures and videos, and we do live stream each month. That’s the shift in our business and where we see the future.”

As a team, everyone takes turns holding the camera. But, each brother has also taken on specific roles to advance the company. Morgan and Kian are the main producers and directors, Hudson is in charge of the business and its correspondence, and Asher handles customer service while being their licensed drone pilot.

The Wild brothers’ newest show, Off the Couch Into Creation, began when they wondered if their days of adventure could ever be captured

again. “When we moved back to America, we found ourselves on the couch a lot and we began to doubt that we could replicate the exploration of our childhood. About a year ago, we set the challenge to experience Niceville and our state of Florida. It set us on an amazing journey where we are learning that you don’t have to be on the far side of the world to have adventure. Locals will be excited to see how the show highlights the natural beauty and iconic atmosphere of Niceville, Bluewater Bay and Destin.”

What makes Wild Brothers Productions unique is the message that faith, scientific discovery and adventure go hand-in-hand. “Our brand, in a nutshell, is Real Faith, Real Adventure. On the screen, we want to show what a holistic Christian life looks like. That life has adventure and excitement. Too many people use faith to disrupt communities. We want to bring back unity through what we do.”

Have ideas or access to new adventures? Connect to the Wild Brothers community, starting with a free trial, at wildbrothers.tv, subscribe to their YouTube channel (The Wild Brothers), find them on Instagram and Facebook (@thewildbrothers) or download their app (Wild Brothers TV).

21
CENTURY 21
Blue Marlin Pelican

Looking for The Ideal Resort Condo To Stay, Play, and Invest?
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This conveniently situated condo features two large bedrooms (not the smaller junior suite bedroom as most of this resort’s units offer), an open concept living dining area, two full baths, brand new paint on walls, trim, and ceilings, and this is one of just two units at this affluently appealing resort to feature three separate decks! This condo features direct views over Destin’s largest zero-entry lagoon pool, complete with waterfall, additional heated pool, huge 20 person hot tub, splash pad, on-site restaurant, bar, coffee shop, state-of-the-art large fitness center, ball courts and playground. The resort also features a three story parking garage, and is conveniently situated less than 1/8 mile to Destin’s world famous white sand and emerald water. Want convenience and security? This unique unit is situated on the second floor, first door from elevator and stairs, sold furnished, and your HOA fee includes electricity, water, trash and internet. Available for only \$524,900, and the current soon relocating military couple owners are even willing to lease back from buyer at \$3,000 per month through May 2024.

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What is Post-Acute Care?

The Benefits of Post Acute Rehabilitation

By TERESA HALVERSON, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, DESTINATION HEALTH & REHAB

If you or your loved one are recovering from a serious injury, illness or surgery, post-acute rehabilitation can be a crucial step in the recovery process. Short-term rehabilitative therapies (physical, occupational and speech therapy) can help patients regain independence in daily activities, improve mobility, reduce pain, prevent future injuries and independence so that they can return to their normal routine.

While there are many benefits to post-acute rehabilitation, the primary goal is to help patients become more self-sufficient. This is especially important for patients who have suffered from a stroke, heart attack, surgery, Parkinson's Disease or a serious injury. Participating in a specialized therapy program can help patients regain strength, balance and coordination which results in making it easier to perform everyday tasks. An additional



benefit is the emotional support provided during treatment. Recovering from any illness or injury can be a stressful and overwhelming experience. Working with experienced and knowledgeable therapists will help provide patients with the support and encouragement needed to stay motivated and focused on recovery.

Skilled nursing facilities provide a wide range of therapies and specialized treatments to meet the unique needs of each patient. The team of experienced therapists and healthcare professionals work together to develop personalized treatment plans that are tailored to each patient's specific needs and goals. Whether you choose in-patient or outpatient post-acute rehab,

it is important to discuss with your health care provider about the benefits and how it can improve your quality of life.

Destination Health and Rehabilitation is Destin's newest skilled nursing facility. If you or a loved one needs post-acute re-

hab services, long-term care or respite care, call 850-654-4588 for a tour or more information.

It's Miss Destin Time!

Miss Destin's primary function is to represent the Destin Fishing Rodeo at the weigh-ins every day during the month of October. Destin resident high-school girls vie for the title of Miss Destin, which among other things, provides at least a \$2,000 academic scholarship.

The young lady who receives the title of Miss Destin is judged on personality, maturity, communication skills and availability to fulfill the duties of Miss Destin at the 76th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo. She serves as a public figure throughout the year, representing Destin at many functions, including the annual Destin Fishing Rodeo.

Applications are available at Destinfishingrodeo.org, Destin Community Center and the Destin Fishing Rodeo Office. Or e-mail fishing@destinfishingrodeo.org or telephone 850-837-6734 to receive one by mail.

All contestants must be Sophomore, Junior or Senior high school students on the day of the contest, must reside within the 32541, 32540 or 32550 zip code, be single and never married, and must live within the boundaries of Destin Bridge, South shore of Choctawhatchee Bay, Eastern boundaries of Sandestin and the Gulf of Mexico. Application Deadline is Tuesday,



March 26, 2024.

Scholarship recipients must attend an accredited U.S. college or university. Recipients must be registered and accepted for the fall term of their freshman year the year immediately following graduation from High School.

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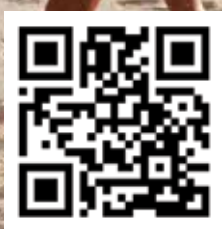
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People want them for family traditions, new names upon marriage, new babies, new homes with the family's personal home insignia or a beach house name. People love to feel connected to their ancestors and history. For many, monograms are a popular way to pass on their heritage, especially on pieces of jewelry. These personalized items become treasured

heirlooms to pass down from generation to generation. The monogram trend isn't new, especially in the South. Rulers as far back as the early Greek and Roman history would put their seal on currency to help identify from whence it came. In the Middle Ages, artists took the

idea and applied monograms to their work as signatures. Even later, the Victorians also made monogramming their own to show off their wealth and status by wearing precious jewelry and expensive embroidery with their initials. Now's the time to start your collection!

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"We hired Brian to help us navigate 30A's tough real estate market. He has serious negotiating skills and expertise. Because of his efforts and strategies that he details in his book, we quickly sold our Destin home and bought a 30A beach front home, below asking price," said client, A. Albright.

Destin Life readers can get a FREE copy of the book, for a limited time, by emailing Brian@BeOnTheCoast.com or give him a call at (850) 739-3800.

That Hair. Those Lips. That Sparkle! Pure & Couture

At Pure & Couture, Valentine's Day is no problem. Tell your sweetheart to skip the flowers + chocolates this year, because that mermaid hair you've been wanting is the new perfect gift. Give a gift certificate from Pure & Couture and watch their affection for you soar; they'll more than appreciate a beautiful or handsome signature makeover. Give this gift to someone special and, voila, witness their transformation! How about hair extensions? Like magic, Pure & Couture's hand-tied hair extensions are a thoughtful gift for anyone wanting to add thickness and volume—a BIG answer for hair struggles! Or give your sweet Valentine the gift of color, styling, makeup, spray tanning, a pampering facial, therapeutic

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Cheers to Sparkly Love! Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

It's a month full of romance! And what goes better with romance than exquisite jewelry—diamonds and much more! Specializing in diamond, gemstone and precious metal jewelry pieces, the Beyond Measure Jewelers' showroom, in its location at The Market Shops, is full of one-of-a-kind diamond and gemstone bracelets, rings, necklaces and earrings—just right for your one-of-a-kind. Owner Ashleigh Woolly is passionate about exquisite and custom-designed jewelry and selling it. 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 designs hundreds of custom projects! Valentine's Day is a perfect time for an engagement! Whether it's an engagement, wedding or special day for love, you can trust your custom project to Beyond Measure. "I am grateful 'be-

yond measure'!" says Ashleigh. No matter what your taste, plan to be amazed! At Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry, a one-on-one exquisite jewelry experience is waiting!

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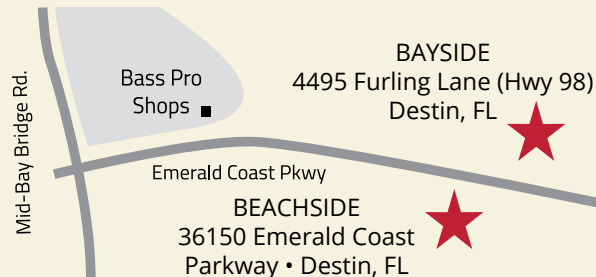


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Insights for Investors:

Health and Wealth – What are the Key Drivers?



BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

Keith Knight spent over 50 years in the investment and financial services business before retiring to the Emerald Coast of Florida. During his years advising clients and consistently across the beach towns, you could hear his often-repeated refrain: “Money never sleeps.”

Following on to this, we are pondering what drives building and maintaining wealth in this life as well as building and maintaining health in this life. The Declaration of Independence speaks to the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To that end, what or

how does someone make that happen? Morgan Housel in his book “The Psychology of Money” wrote that a key driver to wealth in this world is not necessarily knowledge or education. It is trumped by behavior. Yes, behavior.

Identifying objectives, risk tolerances and time frame help form the plan for building wealth. The same can be said for health (which makes up about 18% of the U.S. economy or gross domestic product). Health care spending topped \$4.2 trillion in 2022, according to data from Statista. While knowing the answers to the big three are important, the results to our health and wealth are driven by our behaviors. Housel writes that people should save out of pessimism, but invest out of optimism. He notes that optimism must be realistic. In other words, the eternal optimist is probably more complacent than optimistic. The compound effect, per Housel and countless others, is a result of behaviors of consistency, patience and determination. It takes time and consistency to build assets, and



the compound effect can illustrate that.

Behaviors can also work against us. Sometimes in investing, people are driven to chase returns of a stock or a fund or some other asset. And many times, we might hear what has worked so well for someone (think a particular stock), the resulting behavior is motivated by FOMO: Fear of Missing Out. The problem with chasing returns and acting on limited input (a friend's experience or something overhead at a cocktail party) is that we always hear about the incredible successes but how often do we hear about the incredible failures? We have all heard it before: Past performance is no indication or guarantee of future performance. No one can time the market, or can they? Many will say that they have and that they can. Sooner or later, what goes around comes around. Someone who might have been correct before might not repeat again for a while. We believe that behavior trails persistence, patience and, ultimately, the compound effect.

What about living off our investments (now or in retirement)? We believe that investors should focus on maintaining principal and living off income produced (stocks, bonds, real estate, CDs or money markets) vs. the gradual selling of principal to maintain income. That might

mean sacrificing some appreciation in up markets, but it also means not selling principal in down markets. It is a concept known as the sequence of returns. Put another way, don't cut the branches of the trees that are producing the fruits or vegetables. That is behavior driven.

Think about the compound effect in weight loss, weight gain, muscle loss or muscle gain. Nothing happens quickly and there is no proven way or shortcuts to success. We think investors can and should contemplate that behavior can drive desired outcomes in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

What about saving and investing behaviors? Housel also speaks to the 50/30/20 rule: Spend 50% of income on what it takes to run your life and household. 30% on what you enjoy and 20% on saving. That saving we think includes your retirement savings. And take a cue from what behaviors it takes to get out of debt, should you find yourself in debt: You need to drive income up and or expenses down. A key behavior is to work toward growing your income faster than your outgo. That takes behavior vs. education, knowledge or skill.

What about time? Warren Buffet has been quoted repeatedly about how time is something that cannot be created or

gotten back. Time (unlike energy), once used, is gone. The behavior of how we spend our time will (via the compound effect) produce a given result. If we spend our time studying nutrition, exercising and eating right, that, over time, could lead to a healthy state. Same for wealth. Energy is interesting in that we hear that energy cannot be created or destroyed, only transformed from one form to another. So, if we put our energy into reading, researching, saving, exercising, eating right, getting enough sleep, drinking enough water, investing, applying and investing our time, what might the results be for health and wealth?

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

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White-Wilson Call for Grant Apps

The White-Wilson Community Foundation is currently accepting applications for its Grant Program. Since 2014, the foundation has awarded 39

grants totaling over \$300,000 to nonprofit organizations seeking to make unique and powerful health and wellness programs possible throughout Okaloosa,

Santa Rosa and Walton Counties. To learn more or to apply, visit whitewilsoncommunity-foundation.org/giving/.



BY GREG DURETTE, FLORIDA HEALTH CONNECTOR

As many times as I have said the term “age-in” to folks when discussing Medicare, it has never failed to elicit a visceral response such as, “What do you mean with this age-in thing?!” or “I don’t feel aged-in!”

The fact of the matter is, “aging-in” means you are turning 65 soon, and it is a good thing. There are many we all know that didn’t make it to that milestone. Bravo for making it and cheers for many more.

Yes, we are in the middle of the Open Enrollment Period which runs from January 1 – March 31 of every year pre-dominantly for Advantage Plan members (you can re-read my article from last month for more information about the ins and outs of that). But, that does not change the fact many people have birthdays all year long and are actually aging-in during this time as well.

What Does it Mean to “Age-In” to Medicare?

What generally happens is, folks get confused between what they see on TV with all the pitches about “time running out,” and what they can actually do during the aging-in period. Let me attempt to de-mystify it a little bit here.

There is a period of time when a person ages-in and becomes eligible for Medicare. Typically, this period of time is three months before the month in which they turn 65 and three months after the month in which they turn 65. Do the math and you will see this is a seven-month period of time around your birthday. There are a few other exceptions to this eligibility period, but those will have to be saved for another article or very long-winded phone call for the braver among us!

The first order of business is to obtain your Part A and B (if desired or needed) through Social Security. Without adding a litany of boring details as to qualifications for each, suffice it to say Part A is typically \$0 premium for most folks and Part B for 2024 will typically cost \$174.70 per month. The Part B premium is means tested and can get a little complicated—certainly more complicated than can be described in this article. Again, suffice it to say, some could pay much more or much less, depending on your

Modified Adjusted Gross Income from two years prior unless you apply for a break based on current income. We have a form for that.

If you wish to avoid the LIFE-LONG penalties, you will have to have Part B and Part D (prescription coverage) in place at the time of first becoming eligible. As a reminder, eligibilities are one of those things unique to each person’s circumstances. So, it is important to know how these things apply to you.

If you choose to obtain a Supplement, commonly called a “Medi-Gap” policy, you will need to also obtain a separate Part D prescription plan as Supplement plans **DO NOT INCLUDE** such. If you choose to obtain an Advantage plan, the Part D prescription coverage is typically **INCLUDED**.

As you can see, this can, and usually is, a very confusing time for most folks used to having traditional insurance their entire lives. Suddenly, you are thrust into this new system where everybody and their cousin is calling and/or mailing you every single day with their “better option.”

Your best option is the one that best suits you. Maybe it is a great price. Maybe it is a great network of providers. Maybe it is just the peace of mind knowing you have

someone you can rely on for information when you need it.

If there is only one take away you receive from this article, it would be to work with someone, like me, that can help you navigate the local landscape and help you completely understand this otherwise very confusing time in life.

Happy New Year!

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



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 Community

Protecting Your Treasures



BY JULIE A. MARTIN

During the holiday season, many beautiful baubles are bought, beautifully wrapped and gifted to loved ones to smile, ooh and ah over. Rings, and earrings, and bracelets and necklaces, Oh My! Now that you have these beautiful gems, gold and silver, too, how do you insure these beautiful treasures?

There are two ways to insure your new valuables. One is to schedule your new jewelry onto your existing home insur-

ance policy for its specifically appraised value. It will be necessary for you to have the item or set appraised by a licensed or certified jewelry appraiser prior to insuring them. Many insurance companies allow appraisals up to 36 months old, while some require new appraisals every 12 months. Please review the terms of your policy to find out what the rules require.

The other way to insure your valuables is on an Inland Marine Floater policy. These policies typically cover for the perils of theft, breakage or mysterious disappearance, but are not tied to your home insurance.

One advantage of having an Inland Marine Floater policy over scheduling on your home insurance is that, if there is a claim, it won't count against your home insurance policy itself. It will still count as a claim, but not the same way.

There are 12 categories of

personal property that are typically classified as Scheduled Items:

- Jewelry, goldware, silverware, pewterware
- Furs
- Sports equipment
- Firearms
- Artwork
- Antiques/collectibles
- Stamps
- Coins
- Rare books and Manuscripts

The rating basis of the item or items in question has to do with the current value of the item or set, where it is kept, either in the home or in a safe, as well as the condition of the item.

In the event of loss by theft or mysterious disappearance, there would need to be a police report filed as well as the claim itself.

Many carriers offer discounts for the scheduling multiple items on one policy. For example, if

you have a 10K ring and your husband has a Rolex, scheduling them together under one policy would reduce the premiums for both, as it would make more sense than to have a separate policy for each item.

For any older yet still valuable items that fall into this category, please make sure to keep appraisals current to get full value in the event of a claim. If your last appraisal showed a value of 15K, but the current value is 20K, you will not be able to collect on the difference, if you have an old appraisal that is outside the bounds of the underwriting guidelines.

You may also add other items to the same policy such as rare

books, antique firearms or other valuable items from the list, provided they have been appraised within the timeframe of the carrier's rules, usually either 12 months, or sometimes up to 36 months, depending on the carrier.

Your treasures carry more than monetary value; to you they would mean the world. So, protecting them to the fullest extent possible is a logical next step, and will be much less expensive than you think.

It's a good idea to sit down with your Independent Insurance Agent to talk about your options, and outline a good plan to protect your treasures in a way that makes you feel comfortable.

MCCASKILL

continued from page 3

manship and, so we work to give customers the best—in style, color and customer service. And they trust us to do it.”

Having started with only a small case of pearls and other gems, today McCaskill receives recognition from the world's finest designers. McCaskill & Company is host to some of the world's most exclusive jewelry designers and watches such as Rolex, David Yurman, Erica Courtney, Kwiat, Oscar Heyman and many others. It's been recognized by Harper's Bazaar as one of the “Best Jewelry and Watch Retailers in America” and repeatedly honored as “the Best of the Emerald Coast,” “Best in Destin” and “Finest of the Emerald Coast.” Locals and out-of-towners attend McCaskill & Company events such as trunk shows. “We're in a unique position because of location to choose designers that appeal to the customers in this area all under one roof—a very broad, distinguished collection,” says Elizabeth. “We have people that come in from all over the world, and say they've never seen a better selection of colors or variety of designers across the United States,” says Carolyn.

In its 30 years, McCaskill & Company has had a valuable impact in our communities, donating to more than 50 charities. For example, this past December, McCaskill invited customers to vote for their fa-

vorite charity, then donated to the winners.

Moving forward, the Campbells have no plans to just sit back. “You could say part of our 30th Anniversary on April 1 will be an expansion,” says Elizabeth. “Even after 30 years, it's amazing how many things we keep coming up with to grow and evolve.” Having already expanded to a staff of 18, McCaskill & Company has purchased two lots next door and will be expanding its building by doubling its showroom size. “We plan to create an atmosphere of relaxation and spa-like experience with details such as music, scent and touch,” says Carolyn. There will also be an enlarged Rolex environment where you'll be able to view watch makers on site. “We just started with wanting more parking,” laughs Elizabeth.

When you walk into McCaskill & Company, you'll find an array of delightful jewelry pieces from exquisite diamonds, varying colors of pearls and gemstones, gold and silver pieces artistically formed into bracelets, earrings, watches, necklaces, rings and more. And, you'll make new friends!

McCaskill & Company is located at 13390 Highway 98 W., between Destin and Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, just two miles east of the Mid-Bay Bridge. Hours: 10 a.m.- 5:30 p.m., Monday-Saturday. (850) 650-2262.



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What the Happiest Retirees Know: Five Habits for a Healthy, Secure and Joyful Life



BY RANDAL LOCKLIER,
PRESIDENT, GULF FINANCIAL

Establish satisfying daily routines that allow you to interact with the community around you. Structure and routine can lead to a feeling of inclusion and well-being. Make plenty of friends with similar interests and your calendar will be as full as you like. Maintain a schedule, but not like before you retired. Think a daily walk along our white sand beaches, a weekly visit to the gym, a Sunday church service, regular lunch or coffee with friends, volunteer work, hobbies and activities, and virtually anything you enjoy. The choice is yours. Get involved, make friends and you will foster social connections (not Facebook but Face to Face!) Social isolation has been linked

to higher rates of heart disease, stroke, and increased risk of dementia, and shorter life span. Get out there!

Take your health seriously. Retirement is not a time to indulge unhealthy habits. Eat right, get plenty of regular moderate exercise, and you will feel great. Don't let smoking, alcohol abuse, physical inactivity, or obesity wreck your retirement. Local senior centers are a great resource for information on healthy living and plenty of fun activities and events to keep you motivated and moving forward.

Invest for income, not for growth. One thing retirement should absolutely NOT be is a time of uncertain income. That problem will only add anxiety and discomfort to your life. Once we retire, we have exited

the Accumulation Phase and entered the Distribution Phase of retirement. At this point risk reduction and income creation are paramount. This not only requires planning, but also someone (whether a Financial Advisor, friend, or yourself) that will keep tabs on your investments and knows to buy things that have income streams like CD's, Dividend Stocks, Structured Income Notes, Annuities, I-Bonds, and Investment grade Corporate Bonds. Think of your retirement as a time to relax and live well off income, not a time to focus on expanding your portfolio. This mistake can expose you to Sequence of Returns Risk, the biggest retirement wrecker of all. That's when you are spending at the same time the markets are falling. You would do well to em-



phasize low risk income over growth in retirement and sleep peacefully.

Help Somebody. Did you know that study after study reveals that retirees are three TIMES more likely to say helping people in need brings them more happiness in retirement than spending money on themselves? I can promise you there is no shortage of people in need along the Florida Panhandle. Opportunities abound to work with churches, community groups, and charitable organizations focused on helping the less fortunate. Help somebody and help yourself to a joyful retirement as well.

Begin a Spiritual Journey. Reframe aging from a time of physical and mental decline ending in death to a spiritual transition

from our earthly realm to the next. We can release our former identities, transcend our ego, and move toward the fulfillment of God's promise as children of the Most High. This promise is

true, and for all:

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal."

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Community

March 9, 2024
WOMEN UNITED
Brunch & Bubbly

Mark your calendars and join the ladies of Women United for our 3rd Annual Brunch & Bubbly fundraiser! Wear your favorite pink dress (or blouse) and hear from passionate female leaders discussing the work of United Way Emerald Coast and Women United in providing women and girls access to mental health resources and education in Okaloosa and Walton counties.

Visit www.united-way.org/womenunited for more information.

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Paradise Music Festival

Tributes to Elton John, the Eagles, Journey, Jimmy Buffet and the Beach Boys

By WES FELL

The only three-day, indoor music festival ever held in this area is coming to the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center Friday-Sunday, March 8-10. Event Promoter Wes Fell with Paradise Promotions of the Emerald Coast has contracted with seven awesome classic bands to perform, featuring four national, touring tribute bands and three Northwest Florida local bands to appear on the Florida Power and Light Stage.

The Friday lineup opens with Jessie Ritter and Jessica Heit, a country duo with Nashville roots and amazing talent. Jessie Ritter is a rising country singer who will someday win a CMT award. And Jessica Heit is a violin/fiddle player extraordinaire who has worked with many bands locally and in Nashville. Following Jessie and Jessica on Friday night will be one of the best local bands in Northwest Florida – the awesome Paradise Bayou Band who plays Classic Rock, Country, Motown and lively dance tunes.

Friday night's headline band – back for a repeat performance from 2023 – is the 7 Bridges Eagles tribute band that will make sure you "TAKE IT EASY." Rolling Stone magazine proclaimed 7 Bridges the Greatest Eagles tribute on Earth. The Saturday lineup features two great national touring tribute bands beginning with Departure from Atlanta, Ga., advising you to "DON'T STOP BELIEVING" with an incredible tribute to a favorite—Journey. Headlining the Saturday lineup will be "STILL STANDING" with a tribute to Elton John. They'll have you chanting, "SATURDAY, SATURDAY" over and over again. On Sunday, we open with a fantastic tribute to the Man, the Myth, The Legend – Mr. Jimmy Buffett. Nashville recording artist and Destin resident Chuck Lawson, along with his awesome partner, Cheri Salvetti – the duo SHACK N UP, will take you down memo-



ry lane as you are "WAISTING AWAY AGAIN IN MARGARITAVILLE" dressed in your favorite Parrot Head attire. And to keep the beach theme going, the show will close with the best Beach Boys tribute band on the planet known simply as ENDLESS SUMMER. You will be feeling many "GOOD VIBRATIONS" as you are dreaming of "SURFIN' USA."

As mentioned, this one-of-a-kind event will take place in air-conditioned comfort at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, with 1000 seats each night, including 700 reserved table seats and 300 general admission seats. There will also be a spectacular light show, food and beverages, as well as vendor booths with band merchandise.

Ticket start at only \$35 each night and can be purchased online from Eventbrite by visiting ParadisePromotionsFL.com. This event is sponsored in part by Life Media, Cox Media, Florida Power and Light, Omni Broadcasting, Fast Signs, T-Mobile and ZooGraphix Online—another great Paradise Promotion!

The 2024 Paradise Music Festival

March 8, 9, 10, 2024

At The Beautiful Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

Featuring Seven Incredible Bands with Tributes to the

Eagles • Journey • Elton John • Jimmy Buffett • The Beach Boys

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2024

3:30PM - 4:45PM
JESSIE RITTER & JESSICA HEIT
 Country Duo

5:30PM - 7:00PM
PARADISE BAYOU
 Classic Rock • Country • MoTown

7:30PM - 9:30PM
7 BRIDGES
 Proclaimed by Rolling Stone Magazine as the Greatest Eagles Tribute on Earth

SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2024

5:30PM - 6:30PM
DEPARTURE
 Journey Tribute Band



7:30PM - 9:30PM
STILL STANDING
 Elton John Tribute Band

SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2024

5:30PM - 6:30PM
CHUCK LAWSON & CHERI SALVETTI
 Tribute to Jimmy Buffett

FPL
 OMNI BROADCASTING

7:30PM - 9:30PM
ENDLESS SUMMER
 Beach Boys Tribute Band

to Purchase your Prime Reserved Seats. SCAN the QR Code Above
 or go to www.ParadisePromotionsFL.com

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This Is Another Great Paradise Promotion

Destin American Legion Hosts Student Competition for Oratorical Scholarship

By JIM WOOD

In January, Davis-Sikes Destin American Legion Post 296 hosted its local competition for the National High School Oratory Scholarship Program. The purpose of the program is for high school students to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States and is open to grades 9-12 who are U.S. citizens.

Post 296 hosted three area high school students from both Destin High School and Fort Walton Beach High School. All participating students must learn four speeches and each level of competition selects one for use in their event.

Each student is then required to make two presentations:

1) Students prepared an original, 8-10-minute oration from memory on a phase of the U.S. Constitution, which gives emphasis to the attendant duties and obligations of citizens to our government. 2) Additionally, each student presented a 3-5

minute assigned topic on one of the following subjects:

Amendment 2: A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment 5: No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself; not be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment 23: The District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall appoint in such manner



Front row: Oratory Program Chairman Jim Wood with Judge Catherine Card, William Kiker (1st Place), Celina Sanchez (2nd Place), Judge Destin Mayor Bobby Wagner and Judge Attorney Michelle Anchors. Back row: Cole Rewis (3rd Place) and Post 296 Commander Corlene Ziegler

as the Congress may direct. A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State; they shall be in addition to those appointed by the State, but they shall be considered, for the purposes of the election of President and Vice

President, to be electors appointed by a State; and they shall meet in the District and perform such duties as provided by the twelfth article of amendment.

Amendment 25: Section 3 Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of this office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

Program Chairman for the event was Jim Wood, who serves on the Executive Committee at the local American Legion Post. Event judges included Destin Mayor Bobby Wagner, Okaloosa County Public Schools Public Information Officer Catherine Card and Attorney Michelle Anchors. The winner of the local 2023-2024 competition was

William Kiker from Fort Walton Beach High School.

William will advance to a district competition followed by a Western Area competition, State/Department Championship and finally to the National Championship where scholarships of \$25,000, \$22,500 and \$20,000 will be awarded to the top three national winners. Only the winner at each level of competition advances to the next level.

Davis-Sikes Destin American Legion Post 296 would like to thank the students, local school officials who helped identify and prepare the students, as well as its volunteer judges and our local Post volunteers who served as timekeepers, score tabulators and in food preparation. Next year's local competition will be in early January 2025.

For more information, contact Jim Wood at (850) 502-9468 (call/text) or visit the Florida American Legion Website at <http://www.floridalegion.org/programs>.



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 Community

Celebrate Valentine's Day Destin Style

BY WILL ESTELL

The big day of candy hearts, rose boutiques and stuffed bears is right around the corner; however, that doesn't mean you have to celebrate this year just like everyone else. Here, I've chosen a short selection of unique and fun-loving activities, happening right here in your area, that any couple can find to be a memorable addition to those flowers, cards and sweet treats... Yes, even us guys.

Pose with Your Valentine

What better way to make a memory last than to pose together for a Valentine's Day special mini photo session with



Savvy Leigh Photo? Savannah Smith of Savvy Leigh Photo has become one of the most requested and reputable photographers in our area for unique couples' photos. Savvy Leigh Photo has previously been featured as one of the Destin area's Top 10 photographers, and as such is sure to provide you and yours with photos to treasure for years to come. Best of all, you receive all the edited digital images! Savannah also does family, baby and bridal photos.

Visit SavvyLeighPhoto.com or text (205) 567-2779 to book.

Take a Romantic Dinner Cruise on SunQuest Cruises' SOLARIS

How is cruising aboard a yacht, indulging in a wonderful chef-prepared meal, and dancing under the stars on a 125-foot yacht for a little local celebration on the water? You and yours can experience romance between the sea and sky aboard SunQuest's SOLARIS yacht. All three Valentine's Day events aboard SOLARIS are adult-only, exclusively for guests 18+. You can choose between a sunset dinner cruise on February 10 or a moonlit dinner cruise on February 16.

SunQuest's Valentine's Day dinner cruise includes the three-hour cruise, a chef-prepared

four-course meal, live entertainment, and iced tea, coffee, and water. A bar is available on-board and beer, wine, and cocktails are available for purchase. A guaranteed private table by the window upgrade is available for \$75/table, for up to 10 guests per table. If your party is larger than 10 guests, an additional table upgrade will be required. Romance packages are also available to be delivered to your table on-board. As a plus, the SOLARIS yacht is conveniently docked at the Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort Marina, making it a great opportunity to stay at Hotel Effie or another Sandestin property after your

Continued on page 26

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Craft, Learn, Beach, Repeat!

BY SCOTT THOMAS

As we cozy up indoors during this chilly weather, thoughts of sunny spring days filled with gardening and crafting activities dance in our minds.

Drawing from over 50 years of gardening and crafting expertise, Scott Thomas shares a few gardening tips.

Tip #1: When acquiring seeds for your vegetable garden, carefully explore seed catalogs. Opt for cost-effective options by choosing seeds labeled "OP" (open-pollinated) or "Heirloom." These varieties allow you to save seeds for the next season, offering both savings and the promise of better germination and tastier vegetables compared to the basic hybrid seeds.

Tip #2: Trim expenses on plant purchases by directly sowing seeds for crops like

sweet corn, beans, cilantro, and peas. Many garden centers offer seedling plants that become more budget-friendly and easier to cultivate when planted directly in your garden.

Tip #3: In Florida, where the soil resembles beach sand, ensuring good drainage, incorporate compost into the sandy soil during garden bed preparation. This addition is crucial for retaining moisture, fostering healthier plants in Florida's distinctive gardening environment.

Don't miss the opportunity to learn from Scott! He'll be leading the Gardening 101 class at the upcoming **Freshie & Craft Expo** taking place **March 7-10, 2024**, at The Island Resort. Register to attend on their website: freshieandcraftexpo.com.



Craft, Learn, Beach, Repeat!

March 7-10, 2024 at The Island Resort

Use code **LOCAL** for 20% off registration!

Learn more about attending or becoming a vendor on our website!

freshieandcraftexpo.com

Around Town Events



The Sealight Festival Debuts at Seascape Resort

A dazzling world of light featuring more than 1,000 handmade Chinese lanterns comes to the Panhandle following roaring success in New York City, Atlanta and Washington D.C. The SeaLight Festival is making its Florida debut following three consecutive years of sell-out runs in New York City, Atlanta and Washington D.C., where it welcomed more than 500,000 guests. On Thursdays – Sundays from 5-9 p.m., Feb. 1 to March 31, 2024, Seascape Resort will undergo a breathtaking transformation into an extraordinary world of illumination. This captivating spectacle will feature over 1,000 handcrafted Chinese lanterns and lights, guaranteeing an unforgettable experience. Tickets, all ages, start from \$17.99 children and \$25.99 adults. Purchase at sealightfestival.com.

Grand Canine Carnaval Feb. 8!

A Brazilian Carnaval Doggie Social, Dog Harmony's inaugural Grand Canine Carnaval, will be held Feb. 8, 3:30-5:30 p.m. at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin and will feature a carnival-themed doggie dance party and contest, photos of your pups, music, treats for both dogs and owners and a chance to win fabulous prizes. For information, contact fundraising@dog-harmony.org.

Camellia Festival Feb. 10

The majestic grounds of Eden Gardens State Park in

Point Washington have more than 370 camellias and many will be in bloom for the annual Camellia Festival on Feb 10, 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Every February, The Friends of Eden Gardens State Park and guests pay tribute to the Camellias, provide an array of educational displays and presentations, and invite visitors to stroll through the Camellia gardens and grounds. There will also be Camellias for sale as a fundraiser for the park! Between the months of November and April, the Camellia bushes bloom. The camellias at the park were strategically selected and planted to provide blooms throughout the cooler months. The event is free with paid park admission (\$4 per car). Additional parking is at Bay School with tram service. There will be educational stations throughout the park and camellias available to purchase. Summer Kitchen will be selling delicious food and drinks near the pavilion and Bo Adams will be playing music from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on the Bayou stage.

Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler Feb. 11

It's the Annual Mardi Gras Parade on Sun., Feb. 11, 2 p.m. at the Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin. No cost to attend, the Village streets will be filled with costumed dogs and their humans along with unique and colorful floats, golf carts, vehicles, pick-up trucks and Mardi Gras cheer. Let the good times roll with dressed-up marchers in their Mardi Gras best and Mardi Gras music filling the air as four-pawed friends and parade participants shower parade-goers with a barrage of beads, moon pies and other trinkets. Baytowne is looking for Krewes to join in the Mardi Gras festivities. To participate, register by Friday, Feb. 9, at 5 p.m. at baytownewharf.com.

Participants who register by Feb. 5 will receive five points added to their score.

Toast 'n Jam Featuring Brubeck Brothers Quartet Feb. 11

Savor the exquisite blend of jazz mastery at Toast 'n Jam featuring the Brubeck Brothers Quartet on February 11th at 10:30 a.m. in the Crystal Ballroom of Henderson Beach Resort. Indulge in an elegant brunch, complemented by a Bloody Mary and Mimosa Bar, as the Brubeck Brothers Quartet pushes musical boundaries, seamlessly fusing funk, blues and world influences into their spellbinding straight-ahead jazz style for an unforgettable morning of melodic majesty. Tickets: <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?ticketing=sgc>.

Baytowne Mardi Gras Street Pardi Feb. 13

Break out the beads and get ready for a night to remember at the Baytowne Mardi Street Pardi Tues. Feb. 13, 6-8 p.m. 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. No cost to attend.

Register for the Seaside Race Feb. 16-18

Benefiting the Seaside School, Inc., public charter school, the Seaside School Half Marathon & 5K, presented by SEASIDE®, launches its 22nd Race Weekend, Feb. 16-18.

Registration for the 5K is \$95 and the half marathon is \$130. 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 available for purchase. Military personnel, first responders and teachers are eligible for a \$20 discount upon presentation of valid identification. 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. To register, visit runseasidefl.com.

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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.

We are proud to announce Ecco Motors HarborSide!

As the pioneer of the golf cart and LSV business in the area, Ecco Motors is excited for this additional location to better serve our West Destin and Fort Walton Beach clients and friends.

Come explore our new location on Mountain Drive in Destin and be one of the first to experience the new Gorilla Ride!



Ecco Motors.com

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Commissioners Ask Eglin Air Force Base if Okaloosa County Can Manage Beach Property by Destin Bridge

BY CAROLYN NEWCOMER KETCHEL

Several years ago, in May of 2020, Eglin AFB decided to close the beach to the west of Destin

Bridge due to large amounts of trash and unauthorized commercial activity on federal property. Fences and barriers went up to keep the public from entering

the area that locals have longed called Redneck Beach. Local residents groaned at the loss of this magnificent beach property which had long been a favorite

destination for family outings for decades.

During a regular Tuesday, January 16th Board Meeting, Commissioners considered and passed a motion to send a Letter of Intent to Eglin AFB to open the beach. This area of beach lies in my district and has been a problem area for a number of years.

A 1988 Congressional Act designated the land to provide for continued public access. In recent years, a lack of resources to handle visitors forced the closure. There have been many discussions on what it would take to re-open this land to make it safe, clean and preserve the natural beauty. The county believes we now have a workable plan that will provide for more public beach while managing the natural resources of the area. Safety is foremost in the minds of everyone, as there have been many tragic drownings in the East Pass over the years.

I am hopeful for the reopening, not just for the expanded beach for the public, but also for the 12-foot-wide bike path on the south side, which will soon be a part of Hwy. 98 from Beasley Park to the Destin Bridge. With ADA compliant, organized and lined parking spaces and turn-around or resting space for bikers.

The county will invest in infrastructure to improve and manage the area. The improvements will be paid for with tourism development dollars. Some of the pro-

posed amenities will include life-guards, stationed marine patrol, county maintenance, which includes trash removal and control, bathrooms and entrance signs. The area would have barriers to landscaping, designated environmental areas, law enforcement and park rangers, turtle safe lighting and educational information. The proposal includes cameras in the parking area and fencing where necessary. Once again, a sign will announce the entrance to "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village."

Destin area residents have long needed more public beach access. This property, well managed, will be a big win for the Destin community. The availability of this open beach will help alleviate the necessity of Destin area residents traveling further westward on Okaloosa Island to enjoy the many lovely beaches with ready access ways on the island.

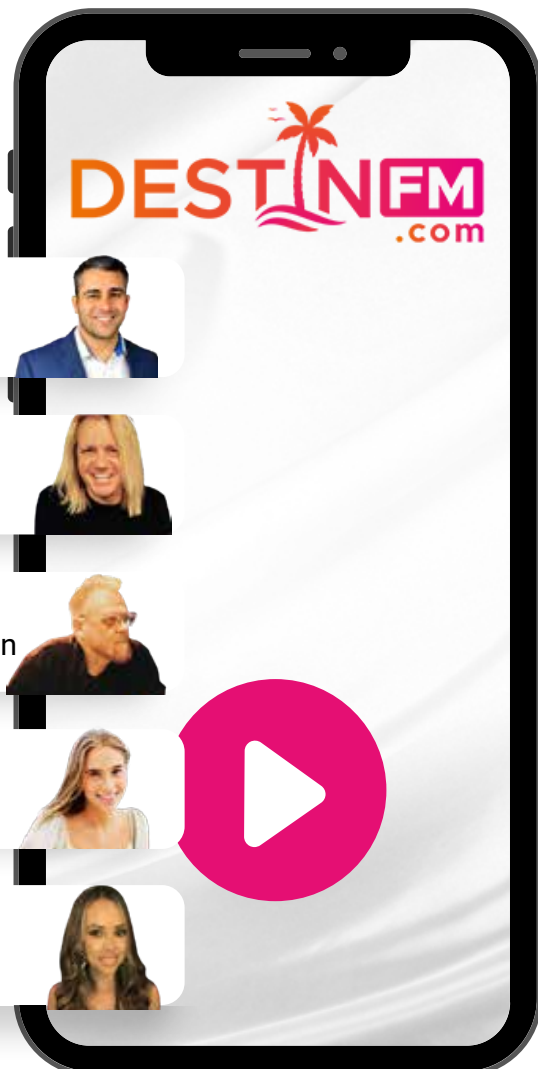
If you have ideas of what you would like to see as part of the beach on the west end of the Destin (Marler) Bridge, please let me know. We enjoy many wonderful partnerships with Eglin AFB and we want to be good stewards of this land. I believe that with this proposal for management, we have struck just the right balance for a compatible solution that will be win for the military, residents and tourists.

~ Carolyn Ketchel is Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2. She can be reached at CKetchel@myokaloosa.com or 850-651-7105.

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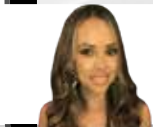
▶ Dan Collins
Crab Island Throw Down Sat 12n



▶ Ellie Adair
Weekends



▶ @The850Foodie Joanna Davis
Foodie Friday 7a, 8a, 9a



VISIT
MYDESTINLIFE.COM
TO READ THIS ISSUE
ONLINE



BY CHRIS BALZER, ECES

What does R-value mean?

R-value measures insulation's resistance to heat flow. It can also be referred to as "thermal resistance." The higher the R-value, the greater the insulating power. All materials having the same R-value, regardless of type, thickness, or weight are equal in insulating power. Don't forget that R-values are determined by material type, thickness, and installed weight per square foot, not by thickness alone. Insulation helps keep your home cool during the summer months and warm during the winter months.

How much will I save by adding insulation to the walls, ceilings and floors of my home?

Insulation saves money, increases your home's comfort and protects the environment by reducing energy use. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) shows that typically 44 percent of a homeowner's utility bill goes for heating and cooling costs. DOE also states that homeowners may be able to reduce their energy bills from 10 percent to 50 percent by taking certain steps. One of the major steps is increasing the amount of thermal insulation in their existing homes or purchasing additional insulation when building new homes. Unless your home was constructed with special attention to energy efficiency, adding insulation will reduce your utility bills. The amount of energy you conserve will depend on several factors: climate, size, shape and construction of your house, your living habits, the type and efficiency of the heating and cooling systems and the fuel you use. Energy conserved is money saved and the annual savings increase when utility rates go up, which many of us are experiencing. Insulation upgrades also instantly add value to your home and are a great investment. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 allows homeowners to claim significant tax credits for adding qualifying insulation products. Some projects qualify for 30 percent of the project up to \$1,200. (Consult your tax professional for details)

Homeowners' Frequently Asked Questions

How much insulation should I have? "Insulation," says Bob Vila, "is the most efficient energy-saving expenditure." Energy Star and ECES agree and recommend R-38 or about 10 to 14.5 inches, depending on the insulation type. Many homes we inspect are under-insulated. Even new homes only meet the minimum requirement of R-30. If your insulation is below R-30 or if your insulation is just level with or below floor joists, you should add more insulation. Take the time to understand how much insulation you have by using a measuring tape or have a professional inspect your home and offer available options and savings.

What words should I watch out for in contracts or job estimates? Once you have chosen an insulation contractor, make sure the contract includes the job specification, cost and warranty information. The contract should list the type of insulation to be used and where it will be used. Make sure that each type of insulation is listed by R-value. Beware of any contract or verbal offering that quotes the job in terms of thickness only (e.g., "14 inches of insulation"). Remember, it is the R-value, not the thickness that tells how well a material

insulates. Avoid contracts with vague language with the terms "plus or minus," "+ or -," "average," or "nominal." Also ask for before and after pictures. The installation team should be installing measuring sticks in the attic to determine the proper R-value.

Is there anything other than insulation to increase comfort and efficiency?

There are several innovative materials in the market that are not widely used by most insulation contractors. ERG window film is a smart tint material which can be applied to glass and is virtually clear. This film blocks 65 percent of solar gain heat and 99.9 percent of UV rays, protecting floors, furniture, you and pets from the damaging sun's UV. Some common applications would be any room with direct sunlight; sunrooms and offices are great areas to add ERG films. Another great product is Radiant Barrier, which is a reflective material installed in attic spaces which blocks 97 percent of radiant heat, reducing your overall attic temperature by 40 to 50 degrees in the summer. By reducing your attics heat signature, you increase your comfort and your insulation and HVAC systems work less, saving you money and extending the life of

HVAC systems. Radiant Barrier systems should be installed on rafters, just under your roof line and should not be installed lying on top of your insulation.

There are many ways to save energy and become more energy efficient. The first step is

understanding where and how your home is losing energy and then taking steps to increase comfort and save money.

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



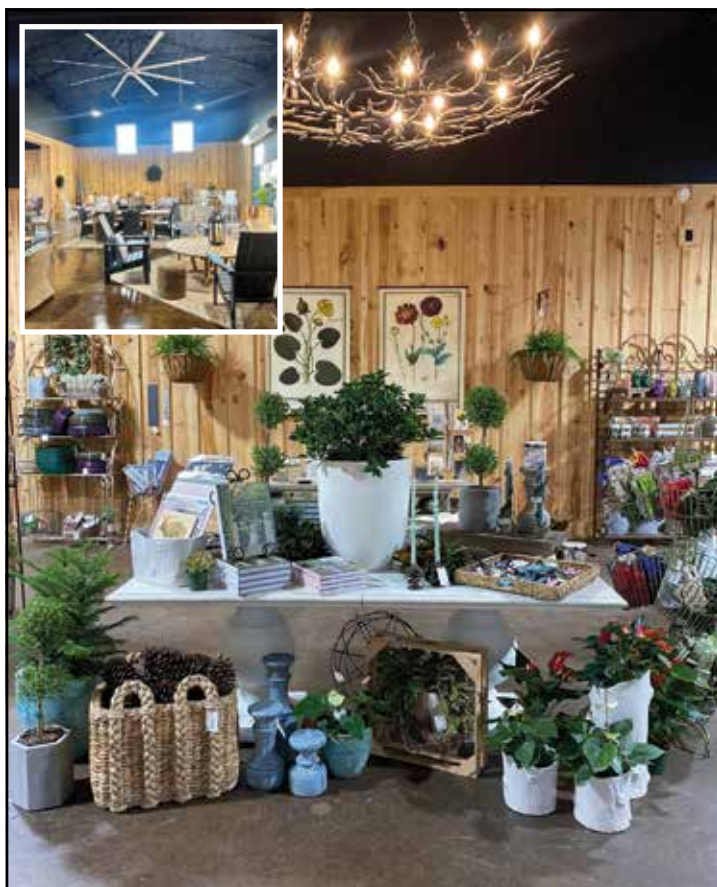
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 850-842-2221
shop@baldwinturfniceville.com

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1440 Live Oak Street, Niceville
 Open Monday-Friday 7:30-4
 850-897-9060
office@baldwinturfniceville.com

Should You Hire an Interior Designer?



BY KIM SCHNEIDER,
COASTAL DESIGN BY KIM

These days, many people

turn to TV shows, Pinterest, Instagram and other social media outlets to gain inspiration for their next project. Building a home or doing a renovation is fun and exciting. But, these projects also come with their challenges. It's crucial for you to collaborate with experts you can rely on such as your architect, builder, banker, etc. Interior Designers are included in this category of experts, but are sometimes overlooked due

to trying to save money or being ambitious enough to want to handle it yourself. However, Interior Designers are key when it comes to a smoother experience, and they can help to save you money, time and a lot of stress.

Do you have too many ideas? If your head is buzzing with a million different ideas and you're oscillating between styles, colors and material selections or if you can't pinpoint the

with you early in the process and help you go through your plans to ensure the foundation of your design aligns with your vision. Designers can also jump in at any phase of your project to help guide you in making decisions that are right for you and your family. Having a professional by your side will give you peace of mind knowing



vibe you're going for, you probably need some design help.

It's an interior designer's job to help you get to the basics and streamline your vision. This will save you a great deal of time and frustration, allowing the decision making process to be so much easier.

Do you and your partner see eye-to-eye? Most of the time the answer is a big NO. According to a survey on Houzz, renovations have been blamed for causing breakups, because the stress of a reno or build is overwhelming on the relationship. The main cause of tension is couples cannot agree on priorities and their tastes vastly differ.

In these cases, an Interior Designer wears their mediator hat when it comes to house-related decisions. Interior designers use their professional knowledge to make recommendations without any emotional involvement. Listening to both parties will ensure that each person's tastes and personality is addressed. It's a balancing act for the designer, but it's important that both parties feel valued and comfortable in their home.

Are you time-poor? Many of us have crazy busy lives. Our time is spent working, juggling kids' schedules, family time, pursuing life goals and spending quality time with our partner. Often times we're left with little to no time trying to fit anything else into our schedule. There's no time to review plans, select materials, finishes, colors or source furniture, let alone manage the project.

Interior Designers can work

you can delegate some decisions at any time that will help take the pressure off of you.

Is this your forever home? If you answered yes, you're building or renovating to suit you and your family's needs and lifestyle. It's not a home that's meant to please everyone else — it's all about you.

An Interior Designer will use their expert eyes to give you a unique perspective on you, your home and your lifestyle. They can make recommendations with the long term in mind, often steering you away from trendy one-offs and focusing on timeless design that will reflect you, your needs and most importantly your personality.

How do I find an Interior Designer? You can always ask friends and business associates. But, I recommend you also go through professional organizations like the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) or the Interior Design Society (IDS). Their members must meet specific standards such as related degrees, licensing exams and a number of years of work experience. Both have search tools where you can look for an accredited professional in your area.

Coastal Design by Kim is a full-service interior design company. Regardless of the size of your project, our team can help YOU bring beautiful, functional designs to life. Contact us at (850) 904-6622. www.coastaldesignbykim.com



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850.904.6622

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AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

"Let the Good Times Roll" at AJ's on the Destin Harbor Saturday, February 10th. The Mardi Gras Street Party kicks off at 2 p.m. with Dikki Du and The Zydeco Krewe playing on the outdoor Jumbotron stage and you'll be dancing in the street. AJ's will feature Hurricanes, a special New Orleans Cuisine menu for the day, and, of course, there will be lots of beads and moon pies to catch! The Mardi Gras Parade will roll through AJ's down the Destin Harbor to HarborWalk Village at 4 p.m. Since 1984, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. 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. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month.

(850)837-1913
116 Harbor Blvd.
ajsgdestin.com



Austons on 98

Offering an amazing raw oyster bar and the best happy hour in town, Austons is the place to be and home of the 102-foot bar, including 32 beers on draft. Some of the specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail. With big screen TVs all around 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 Mon.-Fri., 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.

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

Boathouse Oyster Bar

Oysters, live music and a local vibe, the Boathouse is where the locals go with live music every night all month long. Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, the Boathouse specializes in making oysters a delicacy. Boathouse's gumbo recipe was written by Mama Gumbo herself. And, of course, the oysters are raw, steamed or baked, just the way you like 'em. The first Friday of each month, The Boathouse hosts locals on the Destin Harbor from 5-7 p.m. Listen and move with live entertainment daily. See ad for bands and times. Music schedule subject to change. Follow on Facebook for updates.

(850) 837-3645
288-B Harbor Blvd., Destin
Boathouseoysterbardestin.com

Café Destin

Looking for dining the entire family can enjoy? Looking for a place to work with free WiFi while enjoying your cup of coffee?

For breakfast and lunch, Café Destin offers an expanded menu serving breakfast staples such as pancakes, waffles with Nutella, omelets, eggs benedict, biscuits and gravy and more. For a lighter take, it also has a variety of fancy toasts (avocado, salmon and more), along with pastries and muffins. For lunch, choose from a variety of burgers, sandwiches and salads. You will love the full-service coffee shop, offering everything from hot or iced fresh, local Amavida coffee to espresso and lattes. And there are diverse fresh fruit smoothies and a variety of tantalizing teas, plus a special kids menu. 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.

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

Emerald Coast Olive Oil

Enjoy some of the world's tastiest and healthiest Olive Oils and Vinegars. Olive Oils are 100% ultra premium-certified extra virgin (without defect). Emerald Coast Olive Oil's certification means they can trace the olives from the tree to the bottle, and every oil is independently tested to be sure they are free from fertilizers and pesticides. Whether you're shopping for

yourself or a friend, need a customized gift or interested in learning more about quality flavors and tastes, visit Emerald Coast Olive Oil for the highest quality olive oils and aged vinegars, spices, pastas, sauces, jams, and other gourmet specialties. Accessories include an array of cutting boards, utensils, bowls, towels, aprons, pillows and more. Gift cards and shipping available, too—all online.

(850) 460-2210
34940 Emerald Coast Pkwy.
Destin
emeraldcoastoliveoil.com



Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

Enjoy an evening of big band and contemporary jazz at Fudpucker's Feb. 12! The Downbeat Jazz Orchestra (DJO) consists of a diverse group of entertainers, ranging from professional musicians to music educators and jazz enthusiasts. FREE to attend, a cash bar, entree, ap-

petizer and dessert options will be available during the show. RSVP (850) 654-1544.

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. Fudpucker's is not just a restaurant, it's not just a bar, 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

Love of Lady Ray's Culinary Delights is in the air! The




Continued on next page

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- Thursdays:** 4pm: Flash Flood
8pm: Austin Jennings
- Fridays:** 4pm: Jason Findley
8pm: Airavata
- Saturdays:** 12pm: Rotating Spot
4pm: Flash Flood
8pm: Gunner
- Sundays:** 12pm: Rotating Spot
4pm: Shane Curle
8pm: Rotating Spot

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288 Harbor Blvd, Destin
(850) 837-3645

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

DESTIN DINING*continued from previous page*

recently expanded Pastry Bar and culinary brand, “Brother Tim’s Sweet Heat Collection” is known for its sweet and savory dishes and spectacular custom cakes as 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 Thurs.-Sat. 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! Place your Valentine’s Day orders now for a sweet surprise that will melt your love’s heart. Simply email Contact@ladyrays.biz.

833 Harbor Blvd Unit 19,
Destin

(850) 269-0763
lady-rays-culinary-delights.
myshopify.com

**Melting Pot Destin**

Known as the most romantic restaurant nationwide, Melting Pot Destin is offering amazing Valentine’s experiences all month.

Family Valentine’s Day: Enjoy Family friendly priced four-course fondue. Take home a family picture and enjoy conversation starters at the table. Sat., Feb. 3 & Sun., Feb. 4—noon to 3 p.m. Reservations Required. Four-Course Fondue, petit entrée. Includes Soda & Tea. \$119.95 per family (2 adults, 2 kids) \$39.95 per adult, \$19.95 per child.

“Gal”entine’s Ladies’ Night Out: Valentine’s isn’t just about couples, it’s also about love for your besties! Mon., Feb. 5, Tues., Feb 6 & Wed., Feb 7. \$36 - 3-course BFFF Cheese, Salad & Chocolate \$52 - 4-course BFFF Menu with Entrée.

Valentine’s Prix-Fixe Menu: Feb. 9th, 10th, 14th (Noon - 10 PM), 16th & 17th. ‘Due something romantic this Valentine’s Day. Celebrate love with 5 decadent courses! Tasty starters, creamy cheese fondue, premium entrée items, and delicious chocolate fondue are just the beginning. Add a bouquet of roses, a bottle of wine, and a candlelit table to your experience to wow your favorite person. Reservations recommended.

(850) 269-2227
11394 US-Hwy. 98
Miramar Beach
www.meltingpot.com/destin-fl

Ovide at Hotel Effie

There’s a new chef in town! Juan Bochenski is the new executive chef at Hotel Effie. Bochenski helms the kitchen at the hotel’s signature restaurant, Ovide, and oversees all aspects of food and beverage operations across the hotel’s four restaurant outlets and in-room dining. An elegant, culinary adventure,

Ovide brings together classic Gulf Coast flavors and southern culinary traditions fueled by a passion for sustainability and seasonality that gives each bite incredible flavor. To do that, Bochenski works closely with local farmers and vendors to serve farm-fresh and sustainable ingredients whenever possible. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Bochenski has worked at luxury resorts across the globe, including Arcis Golf in Dallas; Baker’s Bay Golf & Ocean Club on Great Guana Cay, Abaco, Bahamas; Resorts & Residences by Cuisinart on Anguilla; Jade Mountain and Anse Chastanet resorts on St. Lucia; and Rosewood Hotels & Resorts’ Inn of the Anasazi in Santa Fe, New Mexico; among others.

Ovide’s new dinner menu is available Friday through Saturday, from 5 - 10 p.m., and Sunday through Thursday, from 5 - 9 p.m. including choices from the raw oyster bar and delicious desserts. 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
Hotelfeffie.com
Grand Sandestin Blvd.,
Miramar Beach

Pecan Jacks

Nothing says sweets for your sweetie like Pecan Jack’s! The Destin locals’ 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 for Valentine’s Day, find Theo the Turtle there, too! Pecan Jacks Ice Cream is sure to add that extra touch of sweetness for your sweetie this month! And don’t forget those

*Continued on next page***RAW BAR!**

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DESTIN DINING

continued from previous page

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(850) 427-3080
535 Harbor Blvd. (98 West)
www.pecanjacks.com.

Primrose at Henderson Beach Resort

Named after Destin's first commercial fishing boat, Primrose presents a true gourmet menu designed by renowned Chef Tyler Simmons. On Valentine's Day, indulge in romance at the Primrose Restaurant at Henderson Beach Resort with Primrose's irresistible Valentine's Dinner special menu starting at 5 p.m.. Reservations required. Book at OpenTable.com.

HendersonBeachResort.com

Beachwalk Cafe at Henderson Park Inn

On Feb. 14, enjoy a Valentine's Day Dinner at Beach Walk Café. Revel in the romance of a four-course dinner at Beach Walk Café, set against the backdrop of tranquil waves, where each moment unfolds with breathtaking beauty. Reservations recommended.

Join Beach Walk Café on February 22 to indulge in a culinary experience at the Cache Creek Wine Dinner. Reservations required.

And don't forget Wine Down Wednesdays at Beach Walk Café. Sip, savor and unwind and enjoy a 20% savings on bottled wines with dinner.

Book at OpenTable.com.
HendersonParkInn.com

Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Hey sports fans, Tailfins Waterfront Grill is throwing a huge Super Bowl Party on Sunday February 11th. That's right y'all, the Big Game is here... Chiefs vs 49ers and there's not a better place to watch.

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 bottomless 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 \$22 domestic bottle buckets, \$5 house wines and well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas. Live music on the docks. Tailfins is the go-to destination for sports fans featuring more than 70 big screen TVs including the new Video Wall upstairs. 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! Choose between the three-hour tour, sunset cruise or Thursday night's spectacular fireworks cruise. Book online: tailfinsislandadventure.com.

(850) 650-1111

On the Harbor in Destin,
172 Harbor Blvd.

tailfinsdestin.com | tailfinstikis.com

Tequila's Sports Bar & Grill

Tequila's story is one of passion, tradition and a dedication to delivering the true essence of Mexican cuisine. As a family-owned business, it takes immense pride in its roots, infusing every dish with flavors passed down through generations. "We strive to create connections with our customers, making Tequila's not just a restaurant, but a welcoming hub for the community," says owner Oni. "Join us in celebrating the rich tapestry of Mexican culinary artistry, where every bite tells a tale of authenticity and love." Tequila's Sports Bar and Grill is a local favorite, with world class, jumbo-sized margaritas, Mexican food favorites inspired by years of tradition and authentic spices – a unique fusion of sports bar food and delightful Mexican dishes. Celebrate your sweetie this month with 2-for-1 margaritas on Taco Tuesdays! Lunch specials are offered Monday-Friday for \$8.99. You're sure to find your favorites here." Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner or call ahead to place your take out and to-go orders.

EAT. DRINK. FIESTA!
(850) 279.6402
11225 U.S. 98 W,
Miramar Beach
Tequilasmiramarbeach.com

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Mon.-Fri. 4-6 pm

Tailfins WATERFRONT Grill

Destin Harbor

Live Music on the Docks

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

VALENTINE'S*continued from page 18*

romantic dinner on the water. Did I mention there's music and dancing too?

Start booking at www.Sun-QuestCruises.com.

Chill With Your Significant Other at CRYO850

If you're ready for something chill (literally), and a little out of the ordinary, the two of you can have some fun getting your health on at Destin's CRYO850.



Amy and her attentive staff at CRYO850 are offering some great V-Day specials for couples, so the two of you can experience the remarkable bene-

fits of CRYO Therapy together this year. For more information about these specific specials and more, call (850) 279-4145, or simply visit www.Cryo850.com to book your special session today!

Take a Weekend Getaway Without Going Far at All at Hotel Effie

This impressive staple of Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort's property, Hotel Effie, is offering a Love's Retreat: A Valentine's Stay at Hotel Effie special package for you and yours.

Unlock the perfect Valentine's getaway and get 20% off your stay, a late checkout, and complimentary strawberries with sparkling wine in your room. Make your Valentine's celebration special with a scrumptious dinner at Ovide Restaurant while you're there, and you never even have to leave the Sandestin Resort property the entire day and night, once you arrive.

The Ovide Valentine's Dinner Experience is specifically crafted for you and your special someone, and you will enjoy a specially arranged table, a delightful menu and a complimentary sparkling wine toast. Secure your spot for this intimate evening for just \$120! That's definitely something to celebrate!

Call 1-833-873-3343 or visit www.HotelEffie.com.

Hit the Gulf Waters with Your Own Favorite Catch

Hit the Gulf together and experience what "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village" is perhaps most famous for! V-Day is a great time to do some deep-sea fishing as a couple, and there are more than a few charter businesses to help you and your catch, snag a catch for your table. Start planning your upcoming excursion by checking out www.Destin-Fishing-Fleet.com, or call (850) 837-1995, or the friendly folks at www.Charter-BoatOuttaLine.com, (850) 837-2320. The fish are waiting!

Rub it In With a Romantic Couples' Massage

Inhale, exhale and let it all go! It's time to relax this Valentine's Day. Check out a romantic couples' massage for the two of you, complete with champagne and chocolates at Destin's Beverly Hills Day Spa, (850) 654-8544.

For Valentine's Day away, the Hotel Effie spa will sparkle with candles and rose petals before sunset. Then the two of you can indulge in side by side massages. Something I bet you don't do every weekend away! February 14, 2024 from 5-7:30 p.m. Reservations required. Call 850-351-3020 to secure your spot.

Take in a Performance at Emerald Coast Theatre Company

I Only Have Eyes For You: Valentine's Day Musical Revue is being performed as a special one night show allowing you



and yours to celebrate the day with love songs from yesteryear performed by top vocalists and ECTC's live musicians. This very special evening can be complemented with a bottle of wine and a sweet or savory charcuterie box. This is a fun way to celebrate with your Valentine—or Galentine—and avoid the packed restaurants. ECTC has everything you need to spend a memorable evening with the love of your life... or just another date! Tuesday, February 13 at 7:30 p.m. Valentines Day show is Wednesday, February 14 at 2:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Visit www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org/special-events to grab your tickets today. Visit www.EmeraldCoastTheatre.org or call the box office at 850-684-0323.

Get Your Gumbo On!

Grab your tickets to pursue the roux with your significant other at the 35th Annual Sandestin Gumbo Festival Saturday, Feb. 24, 12-4 p.m. You'll have fun voting for Gulf Coast restaurants' top-secret gumbo recipes, live music and Bloody Mary's! Visit www.SandestinGumboFestival.com for tickets and details!

Rock it Out with Duchess at AJ's on the Bayou!

If you love 70's, 80's, 90's, and early 2000's rock, then you'll really love catching one of Northwest Florida's hottest rock bands, Duchess. The hard-rocking musicians play all your favorites, and do it as well, or better, than anyone I know. Best of all, you can enjoy a great Valentines Day dinner and some drinks, right beside the water while taking in the sounds and awesome stage show. Duchess hits the AJ's Bayou Stage from 6-10 on the Friday right after V-Day, making it a great celebration for those of you who may not do your partying during the week night work phase. Tell them I sent you! Check them out at www.DuchessBand.com.

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Artful Adventures at Fudpucker's

Have you ever wondered what a VW bus looks like when it's half-stuck in a building? Or how a T-shirt could become so famous it should probably have its own Hollywood Walk of Fame star? Well, wonder no more! Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill isn't just a place to satisfy your belly; it's a feast for your eyes too, with a side of artistic hilarity!

Original T-Shirt Artist: Bud Myrick

Let's kick off with the shirt that started it all. Bud Myrick's original airbrush Fudpucker T-Shirt is more than just a shirt; it's a piece of fabric history! This trendsetting tee can be ogled at the Fudpucker's Trading Company. And guess what? Bud didn't stop there. He took his talents to Tinseltown, working on blockbuster films. Talk about going from tees to the big screen! Check out his journey from shirts to stardom at www.budmyrick.com/traditional-art-work

Metal Flower: Alanas Authentics

Enter Alanas Authentics, the welding wizard. Her metal flowers at the entrance aren't just flowers; they're ironclad masterpieces, showcasing the delicate art of turning cold metal into warm welcomes. For more of her metal magic, visit www.instagram.com/alanas.authentics/

VW Bus: Joselyn Walsh

Now, about that VW bus... Joselyn Walsh transformed an ordinary bus into a Fudpucker's landmark, literally sticking it to the side of the building! It's a bird, it's a plane, no—it's a flying hippie bus! Catch more of JS Walsh's gravity-defying art at www.instagram.com/theblue-moose.

Second VW Bus: Anna Garman

And just when you thought one VW bus was enough, enter Anna's second VW masterpiece! Parked near the Down Under Bar & The Elevator, this selfie-ready bus boasts alligator wings (yes, you read that right!). It's a see-it-to-believe-it attraction that's as selfie-worthy as it gets. www.instagram.com/anacorninphoto



Down Under Bar & 3D Art: Andy Saczynski

Andy Saczynski's art at the Down Under Bar is like stepping into a 3D wonderland. His table art isn't just for resting your drinks; it's for tickling your funny bone too. Andy has led the way in culture and award-winning art with his unique and fun artistic vision. Dive into Andy's world at his local gallery on 30a or at www.andysaczynski.com/

Character Heads & Older Garage Door: Carlos Alberto Miranda

Carlos, the maestro of mas-

sive machete character heads, brings an edge to Fudpucker's. His art isn't just seen; it's experienced, especially at the Gator Point Bar. And let's not forget his garage door scene, turning a parking lot into an open-air gallery!

Building Art and Shirt Design: Steve Blair

Steve Blair, the Van Gogh of Fudpucker's, has his artistic fingers in multiple pies. In addition to the Elevator Art and VW Window Art, Steve has created more Fudpucker T-Shirt designs than any three artists, starting back in 1989 when he drew the iconic FISHBONE Beer logo! His designs bring the walls to life, making every corner a visual feast. Check out his portfolio at www.steveblairdesigns.com/portfolio/business-designs.



Big Deck Garage Door: Destin High School

The Destin High School Art Students put their stamp on Fudpucker's too. Their recreation of the "Surfer Fud" scene is a testament to the fresh artistic waves these young talents are making.

Other Artwork: Fudpucker Employees

Fudpucker's employees aren't just great at serving food; they're ace artists too! From Greg Kempton's physical recreation of "Fudpucker Directional Sign" from a T-Shirt to Miranda Elkin's Teen Night T-Shirts, the staff brings their A-game to the art game.

Fudpucker's Building: Tim Edwards

Tim Edwards, a.k.a. Captain Fud, is the mastermind behind the building's layout, turning architecture into art. His touch is everywhere, from elevators to alligator park, proving that Fudpucker's isn't just a building; it's a canvas.

Other Bits Of Art: Various Artists

Fudpucker's walls are a tapestry of talent, showcasing everything from sublime portraits to anime drawings, to the cast of characters from Aqua Teen Hunger Force (drawn by the artist himself). It's like a treasure hidden in every nook and cranny.

Graffiti Signatures: Fudpucker's Customers

Then there are the graffiti signatures. These aren't just names on a wall; they're the autographs of fun, memories, and good times. Each signature is a story, a laugh, and a part of Fudpucker's soul.

Patron of the Fud-Arts: a.k.a. Chester/Father Fud

And finally, the larger than life himself – Father Fud, who's keen vision of food and art has brought together this eclectic tapestry of fun and experience. No stranger to sticking his "Fud Junk" on the walls (in an artistic fashion reminiscent of a Jackson Pollock painting), his patronage of the arts has continued to make Fudpucker's a visually exciting place to eat.

So, there you have it, folks! Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill is where art meets heart, and every corner tells a story. It's a place where you come for the bites, but stay for the sights. So, grab a drink, enjoy the view, and maybe, just maybe, add your own artistic touch to this colorful canvas of chaos and creativity!

Visit www.fudpucker.com. Located at 20001 Emerald Coast Parkway. Phone (850) 654-4200.

 Off the Hook

Help Sustain Our Ecosystem

BY HEATHER BENNETT EYE

The ecosystem provided by the Choctawhatchee Bay and surrounding areas is vital for environmental balance and biodiversity, with its waterways and estuaries serving as crucial components. These aquatic habitats not only support diverse life forms but also play a key role in regulating temperature, nutrient cycles, and serve as breeding grounds. Additionally, these waterways are integral to the local economy, contributing to fishing, recreation, and tourism. Preserving their health is essential for clean water sources, flood mitigation, and regional resilience. Sustainable practices and conservation efforts are crucial for ensuring the ongoing well-being of this important ecosystem.

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) is a nonprofit organization formed in 1996 dedicated to promoting swimmable, fishable waterways in Northwest Florida through monitoring, education, restoration and research. In order to inspire water stewardship, they are working to grow a network of supporters to protect these precious natural resources. Here are some of the recent ways they've been able to drive that mission forward.

Through their education efforts, the CBA was recently able to bring hands-on science learning to over 3,600 students in our community through their Grasses in Classes program. Students grow shoreline grasses at their school, tend to salt



marsh nurseries throughout the year, and receive monthly education on local estuarine topics. At the end of the school year, students will then plant their shoreline grasses at a designated salt marsh restoration site along Choctawhatchee Bay. This helps support the CBA's living shoreline initiative.

In October, CBA's Executive Director Alison McDowell & Senior Restoration Program Manager Rachel Gwin, attended the 2023 Living Shorelines Tech Transfer Workshop, an event hosted by Restore America's Estuaries and Galveston Bay Foundation. Alison presented on how CBA sources plants for restoration, and they were able to see Galveston Bay Foundation sites to learn about oyster recycling, conservation lands and education programs.

The CBA relies on sponsors to enable their initiatives. One admirable supporter is Islander Coastal Outfitter, situated at the Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island. As a proud member of 1% For the Planet, they dedicate 1% of their annual sales to the CBA. Beyond financial support, they actively volunteer and have made a substantial impact by assisting with Grasses in Classes this year.

Another outstanding supporter is the beach and fishing apparel company, FL BABE. They endorse four nonprofits, including the CBA. In addition to shopping on their website, you can also explore information about conservation efforts across Florida on their blog. They've even featured our CBA in a November article.

If you're interested in supporting the CBA by volunteering, there are openings currently available with the Water Quality Monitoring and Monofilament Recycling initiatives. The CBA collaborates with the UF Florida LAKEWATCH program to conduct monthly water quality tests at 130 stations spanning Choctawhatchee Bay, the Choctawhatchee River, and the coastal dune lakes of Walton County. The CBA is actively seeking dedicated citizen scientists to contribute their valuable efforts and help ensure the program's effectiveness.

The Monofilament Recycling bins are located at various locations along Destin Harbor, Bluewater Bay Marina Complex, Veterans Park and Ross Marler Park on Okaloosa Island, as well as Nick's Seafood

Restaurant, Cessna Park and Thomas Pilcher Park. These bins play a crucial role in preventing fishing line from finding

its way into the water where it poses a threat to wildlife causing entanglement, starvation, loss of flipper, tail, or wings, and can even cause death. Volunteers are needed to maintain the bins, aid in outreach efforts and occasionally help with beach clean-ups.

For additional details on ongoing and upcoming initiatives and projects undertaken by the CBA, as well as opportunities for volunteering, please explore basinalliance.org. Remember that we coexist with a diverse range of wildlife that depends on the same water sources. Our actions can make a positive impact on their habitats. By being more mindful, we can contribute to the well-being of the creatures that share our environment.

Wait to Prune Cold Injured Landscape Plants

BY LARRY WILLIAMS, UF/IFAS EXTENSION AGENT, OKALOOSA COUNTY

Recent freezes have resulted in many people questioning whether to prune or not to prune cold damaged plants. The short answer is — wait. Winter's not over. Our winter temperatures go back and forth all season — one week it's winter, the next week we think spring has sprung and then winter decides to pay us a visit again. This is typical here in Northwest Florida.

It's difficult to tell how much damage has been done to plants in the winter. Pruning immediately after a freeze will cut away live wood that doesn't have to be lost. Also, leaves and branches, which have been killed, can help protect the rest of the plant when the next freeze strikes.

Some of the more tender landscape plants such as bananas, cassia, gingers, tropical hibiscus and many of the tropical perennials may have been killed back to the ground. Don't give up on them too soon. These plants may surprise you by sending up new shoots come spring. Some of these plants require warm soil temperatures before they'll

produce new growth. Many of the gingers, for example, may not show any signs of life until April or May.

Some winter and spring flowering plants such as camellias and azaleas may experience flower bud damage. This will be evident at blooming time with few to no flowers. Cold damaged camellia flower buds will either drop off the plant or only partially open showing brown centers. Stem damage will show up in spring and early summer when some of the branches die. Cold injured leaves will fall as new spring growth occurs.

Individual woody stems on some azalea and bottlebrush plants are likely to split or crack during a freeze. These injured stems/branches are subject to dieback the following spring or summer. It's best to wait until these branches begin to die before removing them, during spring or summer. When pruning, make sure to cut below the split or injured area into healthy wood.

When spring really has sprung, you'll know what survived and what didn't. That's the time to prune.



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Large Research Vessel Deployed for Artificial Reef

BY NICK TOMECEK,
OKALOOSA COUNTY PIO

The northern Gulf of Mexico has a new addition to its extensive artificial reef system with the deployment of the 239-foot R/V DEEP STIM III. The vessel, deployed on Jan. 30, 2024, joins hundreds of other artificial reefs already deployed off the shores of Northwest Florida and will serve as a haven to support various marine species while simultaneously providing the fishing and diving industry with an additional resource.

The successful deployment of R/V DEEP STIM III was accomplished through a Tri-County partnership between Tourist Development Councils in Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Panama City Beach and Walton County. Emerald Coast Reef Association and South Walton Artificial Reef Association provided funding for additional reef modules that were placed on the deck of the vessel adding to the complexity of the new site. Coastal Conservation Association provided funds for the towing fees necessary for deployment. "This collaborative effort is an example of excellence in Northwest Florida and a guide for future successes," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Paul Mixon. "We look forward to many more opportunities that will allow our tourism industry to thrive, while also creating a sustainable aquatic ecosystem benefitting



Collaborating with neighboring counties and communities on a large artificial reef project like this not only creates essential habitat off our coast but certainly moves the needle on establishing our area as a leader in adventure tourism," said Alex Fogg, Coastal Resource Manager for Destin-Fort Walton Beach.

The deployed vessel will benefit a wide range of coastal communities. It is located about 22 NM from the Destin East Pass, 29 NM from St. Andrews Pass and 16.5 NM south of Walton County.

marine life, tourists and locals."

The majority of the vessel deck sits at about 100 feet, ideal for an advanced dive experience. In addition to diving, the 65-foot high-relief site will provide an outstanding fishing location and habitat for popular species like amberjack. The added reef modules enhance the overall habitat and will attract fishing favorites such as grouper and snapper. "While fishing has always been at the heart of our region's history, creating sites that increase scuba diving opportunities is something we look forward to continue to develop.

"This collaborative effort with Okaloosa and Bay counties to provide a new artificial reef serves to illustrate what great things can be accomplished when we work together for the benefit of our residents and visitors alike," said Walton County Commission Chairman William McCormick.

While the Tri-County partnership involves three counties, large reef deployments like the

DEEP STIM III have the potential to draw in adventure seekers from beyond the borders of our counties and the state of Florida. "The Gulf of Mexico serves as a shared resource among our destinations, and we are thrilled to collaborate with our partners on this artificial reef project, said Visit Panama City Beach President and CEO Dan Rowe. "In addition to benefitting our region's diverse marine life, this joint effort will enhance the

spectacular diving opportunities for all residents and visitors in Panama City Beach."

Coordinates: DEEP STIM III artificial reef is located at: 30° 03.035' N, 86° 17.758' W

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Panama City Beach, and Walton County Tourism are destinations that foster ecological stewardship and embrace the fishing and diving opportunities provided in the Gulf of Mexico.

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Warrick Dunn to Speak at All Sports Association Banquet

By LORI LEATH SMITH

Each year at this time, some of the area's top high school, collegiate, amateur, professional, Special Olympics athletes and individuals who have fostered youth activities are honored during the annual All Sports Association's (ASA) Awards Banquet. The ASA is a Northwest Florida non-profit organization whose primary mission is to help raise money for local youth-oriented non-profit organizations with an emphasis on sports programs. The All Sports Association and its volunteers have raised over \$2 million in the last 10 years for our local youth and the promotion of youth athletics.

The annual awards banquet is used to identify, then recognize and honor some of the finest athletes from Northwest Florida who are contributing to their sports and their community. The recognized individuals not only excel in their sports, but also are at the top in academics and community involvement. Since 1970,

the ASA has brought together the finest athletes in Northwest Florida.

This year's speaker, Warrick Dunn, joins a growing list of impactful past speakers—Herschel Walker, Tom Glavine, Bo Jackson, Nick Saban, Bobby Bowden, Paul "Bear" Bryant, Tim Tebow and Herm Edwards.

Dunn, a prominent figure in both college and professional football, forged an inspiring path marked by remarkable achievements and a commitment to making a positive impact beyond the field. His football journey commenced at Florida State University, where he showcased his exceptional skills as a running back. His tenure with the Seminoles from 1993 to 1996 saw him leaving an indelible mark in college football history. Dunn's speed, agility, and versatile playing style made him a standout player. He finished his college career with over 3,000 rushing yards, displaying his prowess as a dynamic and multi-dimensional athlete.



In the 1997 NFL Draft, Dunn's talents were recognized, and he was selected as the 12th overall pick by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. His transition to the professional league was seamless, and he quickly became an integral part of the Buccaneers' offense. Throughout his NFL career spanning 12 seasons, Dunn played for both the Buccaneers and the Atlanta Falcons, leaving an enduring legacy.

Dunn's impact on the field was profound. He earned three Pro Bowl selections and surpassed the 10,000 rushing yards milestone during his tenure. His ability to maneuver through defenses with speed and finesse made him a formidable force in the league. Dunn's consistency

and dedication to his craft solidified his reputation as one of the league's premier running backs.

However, Dunn's contributions extended far beyond his accomplishments on the gridiron. His commitment to philanthropy and community service set him apart. He established the Homes for The Holidays program and the Warrick Dunn Charities, aiming to provide affordable housing to single-parent families. This initiative was deeply personal to Dunn, as he lost his mother, a police officer, during his college years, leaving him to take care of his siblings. Dunn's charity work reflected his empathy and desire to make a tangible difference in the lives of others.

In recognition of his contributions, Dunn received numerous accolades, including the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award in 2004, highlighting his excellence on and off the field.

Celebrating 55 years, the awards banquet will be held at the Emerald Coast Convention

Center on Feb. 23 from 6-9 p.m. Other events include the 2024 Buck Smith FCA Breakfast with guest speaker Isaiah Sanders on Feb. 24 at Northwest Florida State College Arena from 7-9:15 a.m. Isaiah is the winner of the 2021 Wuerffel Trophy and a United States Air Force Academy and Stanford University graduate. Weekend activities also include a golf outing and fish fry with guest speaker Colonel (retired) Kurt Buller.

Through the efforts of the annual All-Sports banquet and summer golf tournament, and in addition to supporting local high school athletic programs, the association helps fund numerous worthwhile sports organizations and charitable causes. The primary beneficiaries are the Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast, Special Olympics Florida- Okaloosa, Eleanor J. Johnson Youth Center and Okaloosa Walton FCA.

For more information, visit allsportsassociation.org.



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Golf Series: Emerald Bay Golf Club is a Golfer's Jewel on the Emerald Coast



BY BARBARA PALMGREN

Diamonds, rubies, emeralds. Rare jewels with a price tag on them that warrants a special occasion for purchase. But this



paradise we live in is not called the diamond coast, is it?

When Dorothy asked for help to return home from the land of Oz, she was told to take the yellow brick road and head to the Emerald City to find the wizard. If she were in Destin, I can hear she and her companions singing,

“Diamonds, rubies and emeralds, oh my! We’re off to play our golf game at wonderful Emerald Bay!”

Yes, when golfers ask where to play an excellent course along our Emerald Coast, how can we not strongly suggest Emerald Bay Golf Club? It is indeed a jewel, located along Choctawhatchee Bay between Destin and the Beaches of South Walton. Surrounded by a beautiful residential community and close to beaches, shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities, golfers can enjoy their passion for the game during warm and sunny days throughout the year.

The large, well-stocked pro

shop is located near the Grill which offers a delicious menu and full bar. The outdoor covered porch with fireplace overlooks the 18th green. A lovely spot to enjoy a bite to eat while musing over golf scores and the birdies that got away.

A Par 72 18-hole course, the length is 7050 yards and designed for the expert and novice golfer. This championship design by Bob Cupp opened in the early 1990’s and earned honors from Golf Digest as one of the best new courses in the country. Before Regatta Bay or other courses along Highway 98, golf began with Emerald Bay

precipitate these subtle motifs and enjoy preferred tee times and other discounted bonuses.

Perhaps Dorothy, had she been a lady golfer, would have stayed in the Emerald City if the wise wizard had built the

Emerald Bay Golf Club next to the palace. Unfortunately, he spent his time dealing with the Wicked Witch of the East, so that idea never occurred to him. Our snowbirds, however, are grateful that someone with

foresight and the love of golf, developed Emerald Bay so they could return again and again to white sandy beaches and rounds of golf at the jewel that is Emerald Bay Golf Club.



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 Wellness

The Value of Bouncing Back



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

Have you ever found yourself wanting to rescue someone you love from hard things? Maybe you keep taking your child the homework they left at home, paying their speeding tickets or paying their rent into adulthood. Maybe you feel like being a good friend or family member means swooping in and preventing people from struggling. Do you ever find yourself avoiding facing

your own struggles and feeling someone should rescue you from difficulty if they really love you?

Struggle, disappointment and suffering are hard to walk through no matter your age and stage of life. It's common to feel life should be fair when reality uncomfortably reveals life is often not fair. You can do the "right" things and still aren't guaranteed the outcome you want. When things go sideways in life, it's easy to begin to view yourself or others as victims who need to be rescued. It can feel mean to not soften struggle when you know you have the power to do so.

However, often, struggle, failure and suffering are where life's deepest growth and lessons reside.

The resilience you and others develop when working through

and bouncing back from struggle is an essential life skill. When you move through hard things seeking the lessons, you become wiser, more confident and more competent at navigating life's frequent complications. When you let those you love move through hard things with support, but without rescuing them, you are supporting their growth and maturity. Supporting is showing empathy, compassion and validating the person's hardship without trying to fix the situation or alleviate the discomfort. It's being present and encouraging the person in the midst of pain without believing it is your job to make the pain stop. Rescuing is taking ownership of the person's pain and falsely believing it is your job to stop natural pain and consequences that are part of a growth process.

So, how do we help ourselves and those around us build resilience rather than engaging rescuing behavior?

7 Ways to Encourage and Support Bouncing Back

Notice and acknowledge when life gets difficult. Notice when you or others experience stress. Watch for stressed behavior, overwhelm, anxiety and depression. Notice behaviors such as isolating, mood changes, physical tension and irritability. Say to yourself or another, "You seem stressed. What might be causing stress? How can you take care of yourself right now?"

Validate the struggle. Say to yourself or another, "That situation is stressful. I can really see why you would be struggling and feeling over-

whelmed."

Notice victim/rescuer stories you are believing. Notice where you might be seeing yourself or another as helpless, needing rescue, lacking ability to take action, or victimized by some outside villain (a person, a circumstance, or a condition). Notice thoughts of wanting to be rescued or thoughts of feeling it is your job to rescue another from a natural consequence or struggle that is likely to produce personal growth.

Embrace empowerment. Ask yourself what power you or another has to take action in the midst of the difficult situation. Release trying to control people and situations you can't control. Identify and encourage steps of self-control.

Encourage internalizing lessons. Notice the lessons emerging from the struggle. Encourage yourself and another to see the lessons, to internalize them, and to incorporate them into future decision making.

Engage support through the process. Spend time with people, call, text, listen to give and receive encouragement when things are hard. Avoid advice giving, problem solving for others, or taking responsibility for others' pain. Be present and kind rather than trying to fix.

Celebrate learning. Notice and talk about when you or another have moved through difficulty, learned new things, and has developed resilience. Be proud of the work.

Be encouraging and kind as you and others press into building resilience knowing it becomes the reservoir of confidence, competence, problem solving and grit for life's inevitable challenges. Connect with us for coaching and counseling along your journey at Journeybravely.com.

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Soar in 2024! ACSM Names “Wearable Tech” as the Top Fitness Trend for 2024



BY LISA LEATH TURPIN

Here we are starting a new year and making new resolutions to encourage ourselves to strive to be the best version of ourselves. We’ve been through a lot the past four years, but I am ready more than ever to pump up my health and STRENGTH! It’s time to SOAR in 2024!

My recommendation to get started? Set short-term goals and make them specific. Write them out and put them in sight so you see them A LOT, like on the refrigerator, bathroom mirror or dash of your car. Perhaps, sign up for a Run/Walk as a motivator.

As you age, you might notice that it can be more challenging to keep your strength up. That’s the natural progression of our bodies; the only way to combat the decline is to do some type of strength training—use it or lose it! We have to use our muscles or

they will get weak. Join a fitness class, hire a qualified personal trainer or grab a partner and hit the gym—anything to develop a consistent schedule. There will be days you don’t want to work out. But, the less you give in and carve time for it, the more you mentally train yourself to overcome. When you do, you learn how good you feel after, both mentally (proud) and physically.

So, what does 2024 look like for the fitness industry? The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), which sets the standards for the industry as a whole, conducts a study each year where they survey 3000 + health and fitness pros from every continent worldwide. Now in its 18th year, the “Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends” has named wearable tech to be the number 1 trend

for 2024, the same as in 2020. So, if you use your smartwatch or fitness tracker to track your exercise, heart rate, step count, calorie consumption or sleep quality, you are already hitting the top fitness trend. Personally, I love this trend, because it allows me to further customize performance and tracking for day-to-day physical activity for my clients and track progress over time.

This year’s survey provided 45 potential trends to choose from, including a new 2024 potential trend that acknowledges the bold return to in-person fitness, such as boutique fitness studios and subscription-based memberships.

Some of the top 5 trends for 2023 included fitness programs for older adults, functional fitness training and strength training. Notably, recent top previous trends as a result of quarantine mandates, such as online live exercise classes, fell out of the top 10 trends list in 2023. In spots 6-10 are employing certified exercise professionals, mobile exercise apps, exercise for mental health, youth athletic development and personal training. My favorite, personal training, seems to always remain a staple

in the top 10 fitness trends and has since the survey’s beginning in 2007. The benefits include one-on-one training with fitness testing, goal setting and getting

you on a customized program for your ongoing lifestyle.

To view the full list with the descriptions, visit journals.lww.com/acsm-healthfitness.



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Wellness

Self-Care Corner: Find Cupid at Beverly Hills Day Spa!



BY KRISY ANDERSON, OWNER

I love Valentine's Day, because it is a special day dedicated to expressing love for yourself and for others. We all deserve and need love in our lives. So, don't neglect this holiday. Set time aside and make a point to spoil yourself (and/or a loved one) all month

long. You deserve it!

At Beverly Hills Day Spa, you can make this Valentine's month extra special by spending it with us!

Spice up your date night with ultimate relaxation, pampering and self-care. Or, bring in your significant other for a combined spa package before you head out for date night. You both deserve to relish in a relaxing moment together.

Hug Me Package: Lose yourself in a rejuvenating 75-minute massage along with an express facial, and make-up touch up. Special this month only: \$135

Kiss Me Package: Ooooh, la la. Inhale, exhale and let it all go with a Romantic Couples' Massage! It's time to relax—just

the two of you, complete with champagne and chocolates. 60-minute, champagne couple's massage! Special this month only: \$170

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Flowers are lovely, but treat your Valentine with the gift of

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Ready to schedule your appointment? If so, call me, Krisy, at Beverly Hills Day Spa at (850) 654-8544. Visit beverlyhillspadayspa.com or call (850) 654-8544 and Feel Like a Star!



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Our goal is for you to feel like a star during and after your visit!

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BY RICHARD CHERN, M.D.

Hormone therapy can be traced back over 2000 years when the Chinese isolated pituitary and sex hormones for medicinal purposes. The hormones had not been identified, but the benefits were already known. Of course, many discoveries have occurred since then and today we are not only treating symptoms but also using hormones to improve our overall health.

Health problems associated with hormonal imbalances can go on for years, often undetected by both patients and their physicians. Increased risk of cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and osteoporosis are only some of the problems associated with hormonal imbalances. And, like high cholesterol, you can't "feel" any of these to know you have a problem. Instead, you must get tested.

To make things more difficult, the symptoms of andropause, menopause, and hypothyroidism are often so slow to occur that we discard them as part of the aging process. Fortunately, at The Hormone Restoration Center, we know what most of these symptoms are and can screen for them to see if there is a potential hormonal imbalance.

There are a number of symptoms associated with hormone imbalances to help identify those at higher risk. Symptoms can include fatigue, depression, weight gain, decreased libido, joint pain, poor memory, mood swings, low stamina, and sexual dysfunction are just a few.

If you have ANY of the above symptoms, you should complete a symptom checklist and get tested. These symptoms are an indication that you may need treatment.

After identifying an imbalance, physicians and non-physicians may use pills, creams, supplements, tonics, and much more.

At The Hormone Restoration



Center we use what we consider to be the best of the best. We use bioidentical BioTE hormones which means the hormones are identical to what our body produces. That way the key fits the lock exactly as it should

The BioTE method uses hormone optimization created from hundreds of studies using hundreds of thousands of patients worldwide to successfully optimize the hormone levels of women and men once their body's production is no longer sufficient. Surprisingly, our bodies can stop producing sufficient hormones in our early thirties or before.

As shown in different studies, Hormone replacement therapy has been shown to reduce fatigue, improve sleep, improve libido in women and sexual performance in men, decrease muscle loss, reduce body fat, and reduce irritability, anxiety and depression. Also, the symptoms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are significantly reduced.

Long term, men and women will have a reduced incidence of Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Also, multiple studies show a long term reduction in breast cancer. Testosterone and estradiol also improve lipid profiles, reduce triglycerides, and increase HDL cholesterol which can have positive benefits on the cardiovascular system. Therapeutic testosterone levels can also protect the body from diabetes, prostate cancer, and all-cause mortality.

Hormone replacement therapy by pellet implantation has been used with success in the United States, Europe and Australia since 1938, and has been found to be superior to other methods of hormone delivery.

All the practitioners at The Hormone Restoration Center

are BioTE certified and have had extensive clinical and didactic training specific to the treatment of hormonal imbalances. This is to ensure the highest safety, efficacy, and results for our patients. More than 96% of patients are satisfied with treatment when using BioTE.

Dr Richard Chern, MD is a Certified BioTE provider in Miramar Beach at The Hormone Restoration Center. He has been seeing patients for over 25 years and treating patients using hormones for nearly as long. Dr Chern is currently accepting new patients and you can call for an appointment at 850-837-1271. For more info on BioTE and The Hormone Restoration Center please contact visit www.TheHormoneRestorationCenter.com

The Origins of Hormone Restoration

ECCAC Announces 2023/2024 Board of Directors

At a recent board meeting, the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) officially announced its 2023/2024 line-up of board members and officers: Renee Pellegrino, President; Khaliqa Wheatley, Vice President; and Alan Wood, Treasurer; immediate past President, Janet Parker; Audie Rowell, Blake Morar, Candance Vlahos, Cindy Cole, Dr. Dennis Lichorwic, Heather Parrish, Michael Thompson, Neslihan Suhi-Moore, Shannon Amos, Shan Eubanks, Stephanie Brannon, Tammy Pierce, Tom Saffel, Tracy McLean, and Velia Lala.

"It is our mission to build a better, healthier future by ending child abuse, one child at a time. Our board members will all work diligently to help achieve this," said Renee Pellegrino.

ECCAC provides services

in a child-friendly environment to help identify, treat and support children in abusive situations, as well as helping to prevent child abuse through education and prevention programs. With the Julie Sacco Porterfield Family Center in Okaloosa County and the Pierce Family Center in Walton County, they house representatives from the Florida Department of Children and Families, Child Protection Team, State Attorney's Office, local law enforcement, licensed mental health counselors, and ECCAC's staff and volunteers. In ECCAC's 24-year history, more than 15,000 children have received more than 170,000 services at no cost. Visit eccac.org or call 850-400-3488. If abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

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 Wellness


BY KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

Did you know that there is a consensus emerging that maintaining good oral health can be the underappreciated practice to a longer, healthier life?

Even though having healthy gum tissue and removing the plaque buildup on a daily basis is important, it's the microbiome that needs our attention. Our oral cavity is home to viruses, fungi and 700+ bacteria species. If we let our oral hygiene slip, this bacteria can travel throughout the body causing or exacerbating problems, from cardiovascular disease and cancer to Alzheimer's and arthritis. On the flip side, keeping this environment in check staves off decline.

Recent studies, DNA sequencing along with more attention being given to a person's oral health when they are dealing with other diseases has led to several connections:

- People with gum disease are as much as 20% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer compared to those with healthy gums. Another recent study revealed oral bacteria in the brain of those with Alzheimer's. In very basic terms our oral bacteria could be hitching a lift inside specific immune cells (white blood cells) and traveling to other parts of the body (brain) and released when the white blood cell breaks apart. These processes cause inflammation and can create a snowball effect as the body can't keep up with the invaders.

- 39 People with IBD (irritable bowel disease) had elective colon surgery and the affected biopsy samples were found to contain much higher levels of oral bacteria compared with nearby healthy colon tissue.

- One study tracked 10,000 healthy volunteers over 15 years and showed that participants with gum disease were more than twice as likely to go on to have a stroke as people without this condition. They have studied plaque that has been scraped from carotid arteries and the bacterial DNA revealed bacteria from gum disease. These bacteria are migrating to the arteries and building a home by forming a protective layer preventing an-

tibiotics and the body's natural defenses from attacking them. Once they are established, these bacteria cause atherosclerosis by provoking immune cells to release a chemical that turns LDL cholesterol into a special oxidized form that builds up on artery walls.

Flossing and brushing before bed and brushing in the morning should become a ritual. Don't be in a hurry. Take time to curve the floss around each side of the tooth, bringing the floss below the gum line and back up. Also, remember to brush your gums. It increases circulation and stimulates the tissue. Do not add pressure when brushing; be gentle. Begin using a tongue scraper after brushing. I am amazed what actually remains on the tongue between all those little fungiform papilla. GUM brushes can be used after every meal or snack which cleans debris between the teeth. You might also consider an oral probiotic (Contact me for details). And since fluoride is added to water and toothpaste as well as the dentist's office list of therapies ('for our benefit'), let's take a quick look.

Fluoride is a byproduct of the element fluorine. There are three types of fluoride produced (Fluorosilicate, Sodium Fluoride

and Hexafluorosilicic Fluoride). Of these, Fluorosilicic acid is the most regularly used additive for our water and it is not pharmaceutically graded. It's a byproduct of the phosphate fertilizer, aluminum, steel and cement industries. The warning labels on these products are marked with hazard signs (corrosive, toxic, health hazard, harmful) and must be handled using great caution. Fluoride is a cumulative toxin and increases with the amount and length of exposure. It also has an insatiable appetite for calcium which can deplete the natural calcium hydroxyapatite that contributes to bone density, thus making our bones more brittle.

As of December 2019, 72 studies have investigated the relationship between fluoride and human intelligence. Over 60 animal studies concluded exposure impairs learning and memory capacity of animals. 62 studies have found that elevated fluoride exposure is associated with reduced IQ and IQ examinations were of 23,773 children (62 studies) and 245 adults (2 studies).

In October 2022 The National Toxicology Program (NTP) published a review draft of fluoride neurotoxicity conclusion: "...Fluoride is presumed to be

a cognitive neurodevelopment hazard to humans. This conclusion is based on a consistent pattern of findings in human studies across several different populations showing that higher fluoride exposure is associated with decreased IQ or other cognitive impairment in children."

You can repair a cavity, but you can't repair a child's brain.

A few other known health effects are cardio toxicity, neurotoxicity, endocrine dysfunction and hepatotoxicity and nephrotoxicity. Anyone drinking this water is prone to toxic cumulative and highly reactive substance. The younger you are, the worse are its effects.

Consider these questions: Can you guarantee that no toothpaste is swallowed while brushing? What about fluoride treatments? Please take some time and learn more about this in-depth topic which I have only skimmed. It can help you make an informed decision with your next purchase and dental visit.

If you would like a list of the top sources of fluoride in daily life, email succeed.hdhl@gmail.com with Fluoride in the subject line.

Here's to Health!
succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

Valentine's Day at Spa Lilliana at Hotel Effie Sandestin

Valentine's Day Extravaganza at Spa Lilliana

Treat your beloved to a romantic evening during the Valentine's Day Extravaganza on Wed., Feb. 14 from 5-7:30 p.m. Couples can enjoy side-by-side

massages or individual services, then gather in the spa's coed relaxation lounge for sparkling wine, wellness drinks and light bites. Reservations required. Call 850.351.3020 or via hoteleffie.com. Prices vary.

Galentine's Day Package at Spa Lilliana

Grab the girls and customize your spa day at Spa Lilliana. The luxury spa welcomes your girls with 10 spacious and well-appointed treatment rooms, a coed relaxation lounge, private

locker rooms and relaxation areas, a hair and nail salon, and a retail boutique. From Feb. 12-18, the Galentine's Day special (\$295) includes your choice of treatments in three different categories. Customize by choosing from a 50-minute massage or

cryo-lifting facial; salt scrub or Miriam Quevedo Hair and Scalp Ritual; and manicure or pedicure to achieve your ideal spa day and emerge refreshed. Call 850.351.3020 or visit <https://www.hoteleffie.com/spa-lilliana> to book.



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Prime IV Ranked Among the Top Franchises in Entrepreneur Magazine's Franchise 500®

Prime IV Hydration and Wellness was recognized as one of the top 500 franchises in Entrepreneur Magazine's Highly Competitive Franchise 500®, the world's first and most comprehensive franchise ranking. For 45 years, the annual Entrepreneur Franchise 500® has been a highly sought-after honor in the franchise industry and recognized as an invaluable resource for potential franchisees. The 2024 Franchise 500® ranks Prime IV Hydration and Wellness as #1 for its outstanding performance in areas including unit growth, financial strength

and stability, and brand power. "Every brand on the Franchise 500 has its own unique story, but they all collectively make the same statement: Franchising is strong and resilient, is full of innovation and opportunity, and provides a powerful entrepreneurial path for many people," says Jason Feifer, editor in chief of Entrepreneur magazine. "Our 45th annual ranking is full of companies with fresh ideas, exciting business models, cultural sway, and the kind of business sophistication that will define the next 45 years and beyond."

In Entrepreneur's continuing effort to best understand and evaluate the ever-changing franchise marketplace, the company's ranking formula continues to evolve as well. The editorial team researches and assesses several factors, including costs and fees, size and growth, support, brand strength, and financial strength and stability. Each franchise is then given a cumulative score based on an analysis of more than 150 data points, and the 500 franchises with the highest cumulative scores become the Franchise 500® in ranked order.

Over its 45 years in existence, the Franchise 500® has become both a dominant competitive measure for franchisors and a primary research tool for potential franchisees. Prime IV's position on the ranking is a testament to its strength as a franchise opportunity.

Prime IV Hydration & Wellness, Inc., dba Prime IV - Destin opened at Crystal Beach Plaza, Destin, January 10, 2024. Andrews Wellness Corporation will be expanding locations across the Emerald Coast, Pensacola to Jacksonville.

To view Prime IV Hydration

and Wellness in the full ranking, visit <http://www.entrepreneur.com/franchise500> or pick up a copy of the January/February 2024 issue of Entrepreneur on newsstands now.

Ask Prime IV

By SCOT ANDREWS

IV Therapy isn't as well-known as it should be (yet), which is why we try and answer as many of the more common questions for our clients. One of the main questions I receive is, "Why do I need this if I take supplements at home?" This is a great question and the answer to this SHOCKED me.

The reason you still should do IV Therapy, even if you are taking supplements, is that the bioavailability (or % your body actually absorbs) for regular supplements is incredibly low.

Depending on the type, the absorption rate can be as low as 10-15%. Vitamins taken orally have to pass through your digestive tract, which does what it is supposed to do, and well, digests them.

This prevents the vitamins from reaching the area of your body it needs and also creates an increased burden on your digestive system as a whole.

So, you might think you are taking 500mg of something, but, in reality, your body is only getting 50-75mg of it. That's definitely frustrating! IV therapy on the other hand ensures the vitamins and minerals bypass your digestive system and go straight into your bloodstream. This means you absorb the full 100% and your body is actually receiving what it needs, in the places it needs them, to perform optimally.

So, whether you are, or are

not taking supplements, there is still a very good chance that your body is not receiving the quantity of vitamins and minerals it needs.

Regarding safety, here are some concerns that our clients have had before they experienced these treatments:

• Can I overdose on the vitamins/minerals in the IV?

No, the additives in the IV

are given in safe, optimal doses. Your body will absorb what is needed and the remainder will be safely eliminated as waste.

• Is it painful?

Typically, not. Unlike when you have your blood drawn and the needle stays in your arm throughout the procedure, getting an IV is different. With an IV, the needle is taken out right away. Instead, a flexible tube called a cannula is left in place,

making it more comfortable for you as you receive the drip.

• Is this supervised by medical personnel?

Yes. One of our professional, licensed and skilled IV specialists will administer and monitor you while receiving your infusion. At Prime IV, we take the safety, comfort and wellness of our clients seriously.

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 Business

It's February! Time for Valentine's Day, Mardi Gras, Super Bowl and All Things Real Estate!



BY GAIL PELTO, REALTOR

Valentine's Day, a time to express LOVE – So, love your people AND your home—and not just on February 14th. As a homeowner, you've made a significant investment. You need to take care of it and love on it with consistent maintenance and

improvements. Doing so consistently will help build up equity and take the pain out of doing a LOT of maintenance at one time when you decide to sell. Keep up with both interior and exterior maintenance such as landscaping, painting, your roof, pool, decks, sidewalks etc. Having a calendar of regular maintenance will save you money and time if you do a little bit throughout the year. Plan and save for interior projects and upgrades. Keep lovin' on your home and it will love you back! You and your family feel happy and comfortable living there. And, when you're

ready to sell, it will be move-in ready and attractive to the next buyer. It's painful to do a bunch of upgrades just to get it ready to sell (been there, done that) and not enjoy it yourself first! Happy Valentine's Day, Home!

Mardi Gras! Masks, Beads, Parades—Let the Good Times Roll! The last few years were REALLY hot times in real estate; things were rolling good, weren't they? Mortgage interest rates were low, selling prices were high, lots of peeps moving to Florida. Woo Hoo! Then the floats seemed to stop. Au contraire, mon frere! (on the contrary my, brother in French). Don't let the masks of idle chit chat fool you! Prices are still good! Buyers and Sellers are still buying and selling! And interest rates are

actually at the 40-year norm. So, keep those floats rolling! If you want or need to sell or buy, talk to a professional real estate agent (like me), so you can make good, informed decisions! By the way, Interest rates will drop and you can refinance. Laissez le bon temps rouler!

Football! Super Bowl! The BIG game is just around the corner with the 49ers vs. the Chiefs! Take care of your home—that's a touchdown! Do a little bit of maintenance on a continual basis; those are field goals that get your home score higher. Don't listen to the naysayers on the other side; they're wearing a different uniform and mask! Practice good homeowner skills and you'll win the real estate game! You'll strike gold if you

keep an eye on your investment and you'll lead your tribe in the right direction as the Chief! Real estate – It's your move, it's my game. Let me help you win!

Call me if you have questions and/or want to talk about real estate. I'm here and happy to help! Gail Pelto, gail.pelto@kw.com, 850-374-0454.

PS: February 20th is Love Your Pet Day!

Gail Pelto is a Rotary Club of Destin and Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation board member—and yes, a powerful, full-time real estate agent with Keller Williams. Call her direct at (850) 374-0454 or email Gail.Pelto@kw.com for real estate questions. Want to know what the value of your property is today? Let Gail guide you.



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Destin Chamber Awards Outstanding Members

Destin Chamber members recently celebrated the Chamber's most outstanding individuals and businesses during the Awards Party & Wine Pairing Dinner presented by Trustmark and hosted by Brotula's Seafood House & Steamer.

The 2023 Destin Chamber Chairman Jason Belcher of FNBT Bank began the awards presentation by announcing the Paul Woolman Ambassa-

dor of the Year Award winner Brenda Gray of Hilton Garden Inn - Destin/Miramar Beach. "As you know, the Ambassadors play a vital role in the success of our functions and events," said Jason. "This year's winner certainly earned the honor. She's always early. She's always organizing. She's always making sure the Ambassadors have energy and enthusiasm. Of course, she's full of energy and enthusiasm herself. Always smiling or laughing, and just plain having fun, she makes it easy for everyone," he explained, describing the outstanding job Gray per-

forms not only in her role as an Ambassador, but also as the Ambassador Chairman.

Jenni Brunson, Public Relations Specialist for Okaloosa Gas, presented the Ann Gibson Community Service Award to James (Jim) T. Wood, Jr., Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.).

Christian Carlee, Assistant Vice President & Commercial Relationship Manager with Trustmark, presented the Business Person of the Year Award to Bryan Osborn, Gulf Coast

Continued on page 46

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Fuel Your Life with Joy: Ignite the Power of Joy Filled Relationships

What is joy anyway?

Joy is a crucial ingredient that fuels our minds and allows us to live a fulfilling life. It's the happiness and contentment we feel when we're engaged with someone or something we love. Joy is what drives us to pursue our dreams, connect with others, and find inner peace.



contempt, while gratitude and thankfulness foster appreciation and grow our Joy!

What is it about fears that drives us so profoundly?

Fear is another powerful fuel our brains utilize. Its main purpose is to keep us safe by triggering a response that lasts for about 90 seconds to remove us from immediate danger. However, in modern society, fear is often used as a tool to motivate and instigate change. Unfortunately, this can lead to negative emotions such as shame, anger and contempt, ultimately demotivating us.

It's important to recognize that our brains are naturally wired to function with joy and fear. While fear serves its purpose in ensuring our safety, relying too heavily on it can hinder our ability to form meaningful connections and discover true happiness.

By understanding these dynamics, we can strive for a balanced approach that maximizes joy while acknowledging and appropriately addressing fear. Fear breeds anger and

How can we use this information practically?

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, let's take a moment to bring even more joy and happiness into our lives. It's important to show gratitude and appreciation for the people we have around us and to cherish the little moments that make life beautiful. Make it a habit to express your heartfelt thanks multiple times each day, not just for what others do, but also for who they are — their beliefs, their character and their unique qualities that make them special. Start this today!

And speaking of cherish-

ing moments, why not plan a memorable date night with your spouse this week? Take the time to arrange for a trusted babysitter, dress up in your finest attire and head out to a delightful restaurant where you can indulge in delicious food and drinks. Allow yourselves to savor every bite and every sip while basking in each other's company. These moments of togetherness and joy truly nourish the soul.

Now, as we approach this perfect time, let's not forget that it's also an opportunity to embark on new habits or take existing ones to the next level. By doing so, we can create a positive cycle of joy and happiness that not only benefits us, but also radiates to those around us. Remember, you have the power to choose what fuels your spirit. So, choose joy and live a fulfilling and purposeful life!

Make joy your primary source of inspiration and experience the amazing impact it can have on your life and the

lives of others. Embrace the fact that joy is always within reach. All you have to do is choose it, nurture it and share it with the world.

Hey, I've got a great idea! Over the next 30 days, choose one or two people you know and let them know three things every day: 1) something you appreciate about them, 2) something you're grateful for about them, and 3) "thank you" for something they do for you.

Try it out and see how it impacts your relationship! If you give it a shot, hit me up at bill@rocketfuelcoach.com and share your story. Can't wait to hear from you!

Let's spread more joy, one person at a time, and make the world a brighter and happier place for everyone.

Bill Mason, Rocket Fuel Coach, 850-855-3430, bill@rocketfuelcoach.com, www.rocketfuelcoach.com

Bill Mason

By BILL MASON,
ROCKET FUEL COACH

When I was a young officer, I once walked into a meeting five minutes late, and my boss completely lost it. He publicly berated me, filled with anger and frustration, unable to understand how I could be late. He felt disrespected and thought he had the right to scold me, resorting to yelling and anger as a way to motivate me and prevent future tardiness. Instead of learning from the experience, I felt ashamed and embarrassed, which just made me angrier and more resentful towards him.

One of the underlying issues was that my boss himself had a consistent problem with being on time. He was rarely punctual, yet he refused to take responsibility for his actions and instead blamed others for his own mistakes. He always carried this perpetual anger and would often explode in fits of rage. Unfortunately, instead of inspiring us to improve, his outbursts had the opposite effect.



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Musing

A Pastor's Ponderings: **The G.O.A.T.**

BY PASTOR DAVE HOLLAND *as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The*

greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." Luke 22:24-31

downsides. Sports Illustrated proclaimed Muhammad Ali "Sportsman of the Century" and Ali colorfully proclaimed himself "the greatest." We are certainly a competitive people who continually seek to be number one, the boss, or the G.O.A.T. (greatest of all time.) But Christ has another definition in mind for the greatest in the kingdom.

Many years ago, I served as a substitute teacher in a Nebraska High School when I observed several striking quotes in the weight room. These football

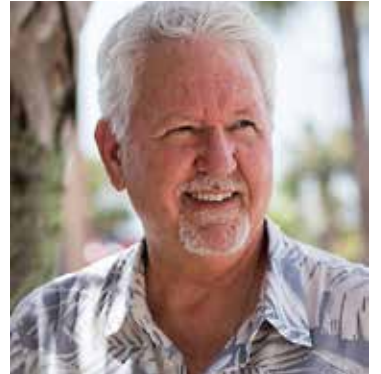
Competition and ambition can give rise to the sins of envy, jealousy, and quarrels. Our sin nature is the breeding ground for taking that which is good and transforming it into a monster.

I left the school's weight room that day and shifted to my next teaching assignment in Business Class. Once the students were engaged in their work, I observed the following quotation on that classroom wall:

Today, may there be peace within. May you trust you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith in yourself and others. May you use the gifts that you have received and pass on the love that has been given to you.

players often competed against bigger students from larger schools. Some of them sported workout shirts that boasted, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog."

Competition has upsides and



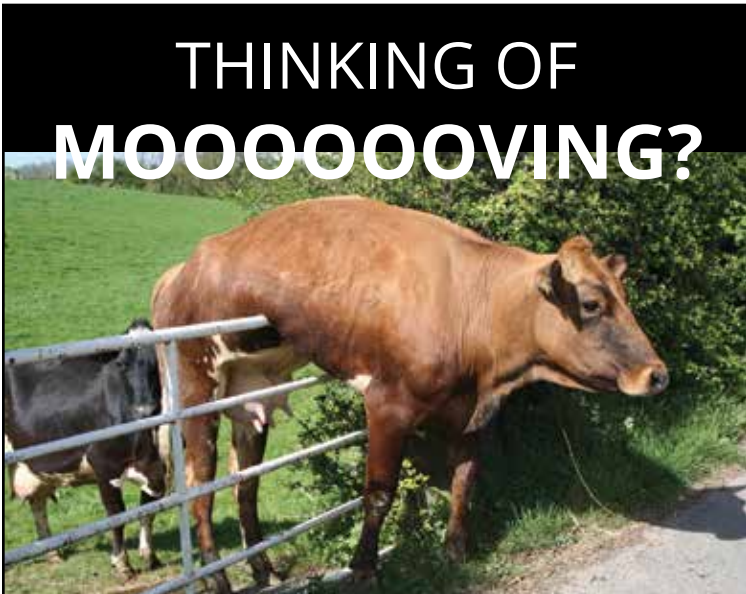
May you be content with yourself just the way you are. Let this knowledge settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise, and love. It is there for each and every one of us.

This prayer is like a hot shower on a cold day, both warming and renewing. When I emailed the teacher concerning the source of the quote written by Teresa of Avila, the teacher's answer was as good as the saying, "I found that quotation a few years back after I had a student who committed suicide. I read that to my students in the days after. It was one of my toughest times as a teacher. I found it fitting for how I felt toward my students after that horrible day. Since then, I read it to my students at the beginning of each term."

The juxtaposition of these quotations serves to remind us of the inherent conflicts of life. Jesus rebuked His disciples, who crassly argued among themselves about who was the greatest. What would the Lord say to us about our ambitions and desire for recognition?

St. Teresa's prayer and the teacher's care for her students show us the way to the path of true greatness—faith toward God and love toward people. Every week in the media, we see various groups serving the needs of our community, exhibiting the kind of service Jesus exemplified. In the end, God measures greatness by selfless service done in Christ's name. Your care for others, all brothers and sisters in the human family, demonstrates true faith, love, and greatness.

This article is an excerpt from Dave Holland's devotional, "Every Day Jesus." Start your new year in the Word of God and this devotional-Bible study 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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Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

The plane landed in Tuscaloosa at 8:37 p.m. Central Time. Coach Kalen DeBoer deboarded.

He was met with an entourage of photographers and reporters with iPhones. DeBoer's press conference was scheduled for 1 p.m.

It was a blustery, rainy day in the Yellowhammer State.

Nick Saban retired on Wednesday. DeBoer was announced as his replacement on Friday evening. The former head coach of the University of Washington is about to be applying for Alabama auto insurance.

Kalen is a young name. I went to school with guys named Kalen. I played baseball with Kalens, Justins, Corys, and Brandons.

There was a Kalen in my seventh-grade drama class. He had epilepsy. We weren't allowed to

use strobe lights in our performance of "Clats."

Kalen DeBoer isn't much older than me. And so this marks the first time someone from my generation will be coaching Alabama football.

And I don't know what to think about it. Or how to feel.

Nobody in my father's generation was named Kalen. A guy named Kalen grew up playing Atari, watching Nolan Ryan, listening to Michael Jackson. Or worse: The Osmonds.

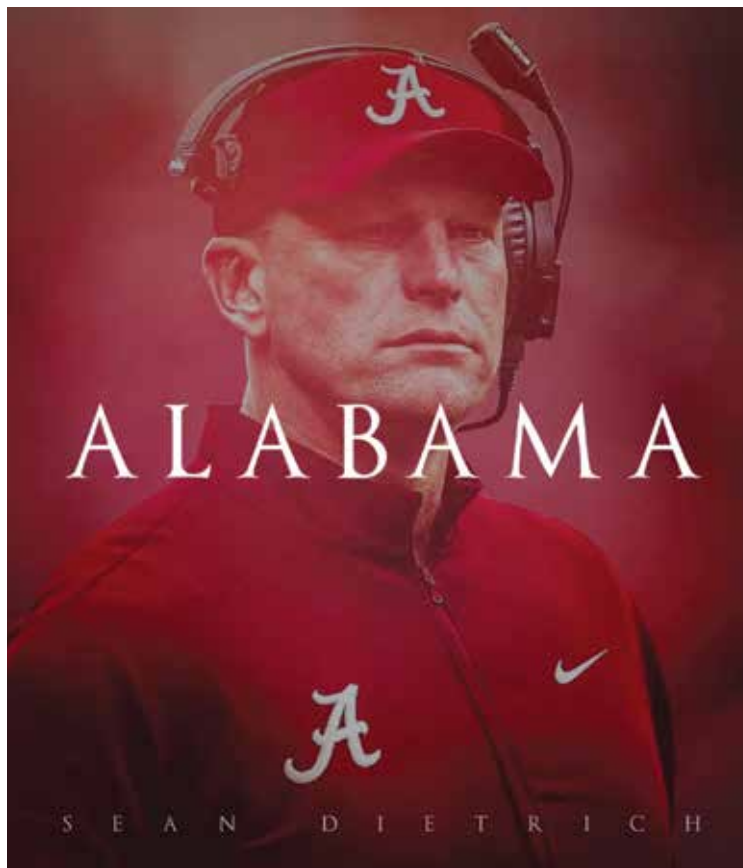
A guy named Kalen owned a Walkman, rode BMXs, saw the final episode of "M*A*S*H," and learned to "Just Say No" from Nancy Reagan.

All my life, Alabama's head coach has been either someone from my grandfather's generation, or my dad's generation.

Someone old enough to remember Iwo Jima. Or Hamburger Hill. Or the Tet Offensive. Someone with enough gray in his hair to recall Benny Goodman, Nat Cole, or at the very least James Brown.

A guy named Kalen remembers Styx, the Gulf War, 9/11, the OJ Simpson trial, and he probably watched the Smurfs.

Alabama is my childhood team. I was born during the third quarter of Bear Bryant's Liberty Bowl, in Memphis, Tennessee. I was born directly after



a critical touchdown. Peter Kim made the kick. The kick was good.

And I made my earthly presentation. Seven pounds eight ounces of red hair. The doctor was shocked when he saw my unusually large hallux.

A hallux is your big toe. Get your mind out of the gutter.

So I don't know how to feel about all this. What does it

mean? Alabama's head coach is from my generation. Can we be trusted?

Consequently, who is this idi-

ot in the mirror? The man with white in his beard? The guy with crappy health insurance. When did this man's hairline start retreating toward the nape of his neck.

When did this man's middle become soft? When did they start playing his favorite songs in elevators?

When did I start eating supper at 5 p.m.? When did I discover that the volume knobs also turn left? When did flowers start scaring me?

So anyway, don't get me wrong, I'm glad Alabama has a new, accomplished, head coach. I'm glad he's here. I'm glad he has lots of enthusiasm.

But I miss the old guys. I miss the trilby fedora hats, the pressed khaki pants, and the sport coats worn on the sidelines. I miss Howard Cosell, Don Meredith, and (dare I say it?) Frank Gifford. I guess I miss my dad's generation.

And I guess my old man was right when he said "The older you get, the earlier it gets late."

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 Arts & Music

Crimes of The Heart



BY ANNA FISHER, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ECTC

Back when I was a little baby acting student in grad school, I had the pleasure of playing the character of Meg in “Crimes of the Heart.” She’s the sister

who has returned home after an unsuccessful attempt to make it big in Hollywood. Her favorite pastimes are drinking, dating and telling half-truths, which makes her a really fun character to portray—think of that wacky cousin who is always making bad decisions, but never really learning from their mistakes. I remember being fascinated by these three sisters who make odd and unexplainable choices while trying to navigate such unusual circumstances.

Playwright Beth Henley masterfully writes each character

with such depth and dimension that one might suspect they are drawn from real life inspiration. Exploring the motivations of such a richly written character is the kind of role that actors live for, and the character of Meg was no exception. Henley creates the perfect storm of disappointed Meg, withdrawn and bitter Lenny, and Babe, who has seemingly had a mental break from reality. Although I don’t have sisters, it wasn’t too much of a stretch to understand the multi-layered relationships of three sisters in this broken family.

We all have that weird neighbor, crazy sister-in-law or eccentric aunt who continually surprises us with their zany antics.

This darkly comic, 1981 Pulitzer-prize-winning play has everything you want in a good story: dysfunctional family relationships, scandalous affairs and a shooting.

In 1986, it was made into an Oscar nominated film with a heavy hitting cast of actors including Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange, Tess Harper and Sissy Spacek. Harper and Spacek both garnered Oscar nomi-

nations for their exceptional performances in this southern, gothic story about the ties of sisterhood and family.

The humor, quirky characters and twisty plot all translate into one very fun night out with your crew. Just like “Steel Magnolias” last season, this show pairs well with a bubbly glass of champagne and your favorite people. We hope you’ll join us at Emerald Coast Theatre Company this winter for “Crimes of the Heart.” Because, the heart of ECTC is you—and that’s no crime!

The Love Language of Music

Music is a universal language that transcends borders and cultures. It has the power to evoke a myriad of emotions and connect people on a profound level. Beyond its rhythmic notes and melodic tunes, music serves as a unique love language, allowing individuals to express and communicate their deepest feelings.

The Emotional Symphony:

Music has an innate ability to convey emotions that words often fail to express. Each note, chord, and rhythm create a symphony of feelings that can range from joy and excitement to sadness and introspection.

The love language of music provides a platform for individuals to communicate their emotional states, connecting with others who share similar sentiments. Whether it’s the upbeat tempo of a celebratory song or the soothing melody of a ballad, music becomes a vessel for emotional expression. Musicians take their audience along on a magic carpet ride of emotions and feelings as they watch and listen to the musician perform.

Cultural Resonance:

Different cultures around the world have their unique musical traditions, reflecting the diversi-

ty of human experiences. The love language of music extends beyond individual expression to encompass collective cultural identity. From the rhythmic beats of African drums to the intricate melodies of Indian ragas, music becomes a cultural love language, preserving and transmitting the stories, traditions, and values of a community. It helps us to appreciate, embrace and learn about other cultures.

Personal Connection:

Music often serves as a soundtrack to significant moments in people’s lives. A particular song can evoke memories

of love, heart-break, joy, or sorrow. The love language of music allows individuals to forge a personal connection with certain songs or genres, creating a story that encapsulates their life experiences. It becomes a means of self-expression, enabling individuals to share their stories through the melodies that touch and inspire their hearts. Often certain songs (from any time period) bring back fond memories of loved ones and moments together.

Communication Without Words:

In the realm of interpersonal relationships, music becomes a powerful tool for communication without the need for verbal expression. Couples, friends, and family members often develop their own musical language, where certain songs or genres hold shared meanings and emotions. A love song can convey sentiments that words might struggle to articulate, fostering a deeper understanding and connection between individuals.

Healing Harmonies:

Beyond its role in emotional expression, music possesses therapeutic qualities that contribute to mental and emotional well-being. The love language of music extends to the realm of healing, offering solace, comfort, and a sense of catharsis. Wheth-

er through the soothing sounds of classical music or the energizing beats of upbeat tunes, music has the power to uplift spirits and provide a sanctuary for the soul. A fun experiment to try is noticing the atmosphere changes that occur between a silent room versus turning on music. It’s like a fresh coat of paint in a room. Try out different colors such as classical, baroque, contemporary, cello, guitar, violin, opera, rock, jazz, blues, folk, etc., and compare the variety of moods each genre creates in the room.

In the grand symphony of life, music emerges as a universal love language that speaks to the core of human existence. It serves as a conduit for emotional expression, cultural identity, personal connection, and non-verbal communication. As individuals navigate the complexities of their emotions and relationships, the love language of music stands as a timeless and harmonious companion, weaving a melodic thread that connects hearts across time and space.



Southern town rocked by scandal when Babe, the youngest, shoots her husband. Humor and pathos abound as the sisters unite with an intense young lawyer to save Babe from a murder charge and overcome their family’s painful past.



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Sinfonia Presents Crescendo!

Crescendo! is an exciting cultural extravaganza to benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its music education and community engagement initiatives. This energy-infused experience will celebrate the cultural and culinary arts by showcasing world-class vintners, expert spirit purveyors, amazing auction items, and an award-winning musical guest. Taking place Friday, March 1 & Sunday, March 3, 2024. This year's theme is, Great Gatsby, channel your favorite variation of 1920s decadence.



Vintner Dinners Friday, March 1

Crescendo! weekend will begin with a series of carefully curated vintner dinners hosted in elegant homes and venues throughout the Emerald Coast. Go to sinfoniagulfcoast.org for a list of the Vintner Dinner venues.

Crescendo! Main Event Sunday, March 3

This year's theme is, Great Gatsby, channel your favorite variation of 1920s decadence. Set

for Sunday, March 3 at 11:30 a.m. at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa in Miramar Beach, this energy-infused experience will celebrate the cultural and culinary arts by showcasing world-class vintners, expert spirit purveyors, amazing auction items, and an electrifying musi-

cal performance. Enjoy reserved table seating, hors d'oeuvres, full, seated lunch, and an all inclusive afternoon of incredible fun!

Tickets to Crescendo! 2024 are \$195 per person and include all food, wine, reserved table seating, performance and valet parking.

Purchase Tickets: <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?ticketing=sgc>

Proceeds from Crescendo! benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its music education and community engagement initiatives.

For more information or to purchase tickets, go to SinfoniaGulfCoast.org and call (850) 460-8800. Email questions to info@sinfoniagulfcoast.org.

Sinfonia Gulf Coast: Toast 'n Jam Concert Series Feb. 11

Join Sinfonia Gulf Coast for Toast 'n Jam, a concert series held at the Henderson Beach Resort in Destin on Sunday, February 11, 2024 at 10:30 a.m. This fun new series includes valet, elegant brunch fare with a Bloody Mary & Mimosa bar.

Tickets: <https://app.arts-people.com/index.php?ticketing=sgc>

-- \$95 per person (includes valet, live performance, brunch, all gratuities)

-- \$125 per person (front row seating, limited)

The groundbreaking, category-shattering trio Time for Three (Tf3) transcends traditional classification, forming a blend all its own with elements of classical, country western, gypsy and jazz idioms

Visit SinfoniaGulfCoast.org online to read about Season 2023-2024 and purchase tickets. Sign up for Sinfonia news.



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 Around Town

NWFSC Nursing Program one of Nation's Best Affordable Institutions

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) was named by Forbes Advisor as one of the nation's best affordable institutions in 2024 for RN to BSN Programs. Forbes Advisor evaluated 58 colleges, with NWFSC emerging as one of the top 10 schools providing an opportunity for students to earn the degree in as little as three semesters at a very affordable cost.

According to Forbes Advisor, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) is quickly becoming the industry standard for entry-level nursing practice, especially in hospitals. BSN graduates earn approximately \$92,000 annually. Additionally, a BSN degree can equip nurses for graduate school and job advancement.

The NWFSC Nursing RN to BSN degree program (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) is designed for licensed registered nurses. This program provides nurses with the knowledge and skills to become nurse managers, case managers, hospital-based educators and more. The program content addresses high-demand nursing specialties. Clinical instruction targets the specific needs of special populations, including community and family healthcare.

For more information, visit NWFSC Nursing RN to BSN or contact Dr. Tanya Beauregard, RN, CNE, Director of Nursing, at beauregt@nwfsc.edu and 850-729-6400.

Okaloosa County Receives A-Rating from the Florida Department of Education

2023 Baseline School Grades were released by the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) and the results are highly encouraging in the first year of a new statewide assessment. As a District, OCSD earned an A-rating from the Florida Department of Education once again. The District's percentage of points jumped from 63% last year to 68% this year. Okaloosa is one of three districts in Florida to earn an A each year since 2014.

Superintendent Chambers notified Principals, stating, "Recognizing that the school grades process has been adjusted for this year due to a new assessment and the lack of a learning gains component, I am thrilled that every single one of our schools either maintained their prior-year school grade or improved!"

Ten schools increased their grade from C to B or B to A.



incomplete grades were given if the percent of students tested was below 95%.

According to Superintendent Chambers, the District expects even

better results at the conclusion of the current school year. "The 2023 Baseline School Grades released today could not take into account learning gains made by students because 2023 was the first year of the new FAST assessment. Many of our schools do a tremendous job helping students achieve significant gains each year and ensuring a year's worth of growth in a year's time. This will only help school grades going forward." For more information, please visit <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/accountability-reporting/school-grades>.

Specifically, Laurel Hill, Edge Elementary and Florosa Elementary each earned an A this year after having a B in 2022-2023. Bob Sikes, Riverside, Wright, Shalimar, Elliott Point, Mary Esther and Kenwood, all elementary schools, improved from C to B. Four (4) district-operated schools, Eglin, Choctawhatchee, Crestview and Fort Walton Beach, along with Destin Charter High School, received Incomplete (I) grades. The District has reached out to FLDOE for clarification on the process to be issued a school grade and will provide additional information as soon as possible. In past years,

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EVENTS

continued from page 19

Tropical Reunion Wedding Vow Renewal at LuLu's Feb. 17

Looking for the perfect romantic Valentine's Day present for your spouse? Celebrate your love and commitment by officially renewing your wedding vows at LuLu's Tropical Reunion on Sat., Feb. 17, 1 to 3 p.m. at Lulu's at the foot of the Mid Bay Bridge. Couples should pre-register at the restaurant or LuLu's website, so LuLu's can have special Certificates of Reunion ready. There will be complimentary champagne toasts, wedding cake, flowers for the "brides" and photos for the couples. Prizes will be awarded to the couples who were married the longest, shortest and dressed the most festively. To register or for more information, visit www.LulusFunFoodMusic.com/destin or call (850) 710-5858.

Pursue the Roux at the 35th Annual Sandestin Gumbo Fest Feb. 24

Gumbo Anyone? This winter festival favorite is back for its 35th year at The Village of Baytowne Wharf on Feb. 24,

12-4 p.m. Gulf Coast restaurants will compete for the title of 'Best Gumbo on the Emerald Coast.' Vote for your favorite as the "People's Choice" winner as celebrity judges deliberate over who will take home the top prize. The afternoon will also feature live music and children's activities.

Calling all Shrimp & Grits Enthusiasts! Feb. 24

Don't miss out on the 5th Annual Shrimp & Grits Festival on February 24th, 12-4 p.m. at Brotula's Seafood House and Steamer benefiting the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast. Delight your taste buds with creative twists on this classic southern dish from local chefs, sip on refreshing drinks, groove to a live DJ and cast your vote for the best Shrimp and Grits on the Emerald Coast. To purchase tickets, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/5th-annual-shrimp-grits-festival-tickets-741754897867.

Wear Shades of Pink! Women United Brunch & Bubbly March 9

Join the ladies of Women United for Brunch and Bubbly presented by Florida Power &

Light. Sat., March 9, at 10:30 am located at The Venue at Beach Weekend 109 Brooks St. SE, Fort Walton Beach. Contributions support the work of United Way Emerald Coast and Women United to provide mental health resources, access, and education to local women and girls. Tickets available for purchase at united-way.org/womenunited.

Dust Off Your Boots and Get Ready to Rodeo! March 22-23

The 5th Annual Westonwood Ranch Pro Rodeo returns March 22-23 to the City of Freeport Sports Complex. The professionally sanctioned rodeo benefits Westonwood Ranch, an organization whose mission and programs serve teens and young adults with Autism and related developmental disorders.

Come watch some of the



nation's top cowgirls and cowboys compete. Contestants will compete in events including bareback riding, calf roping, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, breakaway roping, barrel racing, team roping and bull riding. Rodeo gates open at 6 p.m. with a 7:30 p.m. each night. Come early to enjoy live pre-rodeo entertainment at 6:30 by David Gautreau, food ven-

dors, children's inflatable play area and more! Tickets for the Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo are sold at the gate: \$20 adults; \$15 children 12 years and younger. Free admission for children ages 2 and under. No ticket presales. Want to become a business sponsor? Email admin@westonwood.org or visit westonwood.org.



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 Around Town


BY PATRICIA LEE, OWNER
DESTINITIES.COM

For this month's article, instead of sharing community thoughts or concerns from our Facebook Destinities Group (www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinities), I would like to share a personal Valentine's Day story. Picture it—February 14, 2005—an almost 47-year-old lady in the hospital having just

Ask Destinities: An Unusual Valentine's Day

gone through surgery for a right mastectomy due to breast cancer. That lady was me and the surgery was followed by a grim diagnosis: stage 3C breast cancer.

Fifteen lymph nodes were removed and 14 were positive. Not only that, but the cancer had broken through the cells and were now running through my bloodstream. I later asked my Oncologist if I would live to see my son graduate high school. He sadly looked down at the ground as he said, "Probably not." It's important to note that my son was in 3rd grade and my daughter was in 10th grade, at that time. They are now ages 29 and 35.

I did receive a miracle from God and I will remember that blessed night. There's not

enough room to include that story in this article, but if you would like the details, I am happy to share. Feel free to reach out to me (Destinitiesinfo@gmail.com). Also, you can read my story in the November 2021 Destin Life edition at MyDestinLife.com.

The main point to this story, for the moment, is for you to know the following: The reason my diagnosis was so grim is because I was originally misdiagnosed. My doctor sent me to a surgeon, because she thought they would want to do a biopsy. However, they did an X-ray only and the surgeon walked in the room saying, "Good news! It's not cancer." Words I wanted to believe so badly. So, I trusted her. I later learned that there was no way she could have

known for sure if it was cancer or not without doing a biopsy. I didn't know she couldn't tell just from looking at an X-ray. She hung a name on the knot and told me that they never bother with "those." I said, "What if it starts to grow and bothers me?" She said, "If that happens, we might possibly remove it. But, normally, we just leave these types of knots alone."

Well, it did grow, but I wasn't worried about it at the time since she said so emphatically that it wasn't cancer. However, I did eventually get it looked at and that is when the truth was discovered. But, it was too late.

My point is, please be proactive with taking care of yourself. Don't get excited just because a doctor is giving you news you want to hear. If something on or

in your body doesn't look or feel right and you are told it's nothing to worry about, go get a second opinion. I never dreamed that the surgeon would dare play with my life that way; but, she certainly did. Second opinions can save a lot of heartache, suffering and maybe even save your life. Yes, it's a little trouble, but your life is worth it. You matter! Just do it!

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/Destinities with more than 9,500 members (Est. Oct. 2018). Check out our monthly newsletters and sponsored local business directory at www.Destinities.com.

DESTIN CHAMBER

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Regional Leader for OWN, Inc. After moving to the area almost 10 years ago, Osborn built the company and its reputation to one of the best in the area. In addition, he serves in many community roles, including the Destin Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Destin Rotary Club, Habitat for Human-

ity and Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance.

On behalf of Trustmark and the Destin Rotary Club, Christian also presented Bryan with a certificate noting a financial donation in his honor to immunize 200 children against polio through the Rotary Foundation's PolioPlus campaign.

The final award presentation was determined by the Chairman of the Board and Presi-

dent and CEO of the Chamber, after input from chamber staff. The James D. Neilson, Sr., Chairman's Award for Volunteer Service Award went to Kim Wintner, Colonel, USAF (Ret.). "This year's winner has gone so far and above that it's impossible to describe his value to the Destin Chamber and the community at large. He serves on several boards across the community, including the

Mid-Bay Bridge Authority and Defense Support Initiative, just to name two. He represents the Destin Chamber at countless military-related events. He plays a crucial role for Destin Forward

by setting up our annual base tour for the class, and he's been the chairman of the Chamber's Military Affairs Council for 13 years," said Jason.



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March 8 & 10
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eccac.org/gala-golf

ECCAC Presents its Signature Gala & Golf Events March 8 and 10

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) is putting on its annual signature Gala & Golf events this year March 8 and 10. The Gala 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 Band and DJ Chris Henson; exciting live auction by famed auctioneer Dawn Marie Kotonis, also known as The Gavel Girl; as well as a featured guest speaker. The Gala proceeds 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 tournament. 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 850-400-3488 or email Lee@eccac.org.

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