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MKAF's Warrior Arts Brings Hope and Resilience to Veterans Throughout **Northwest Florida**

By WILL ESTELL

If you live among the coastal communities Northwest Florida, you have likely become aware of the Destin-based Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) and the outreach this wonderful organization does to promote the arts within the growing communities it serves. One such initiative by which the MKAF staff, board and members bring such support and healing is the charitable organization's Warrior Arts Program.

Warrior Arts partners with local, state and national veteran service organizations and military partners to offer creative opportunities that promote mindfulness and resilience for our nation's heroes and their visible and invisible injuries. It is widely recognized that artistic activities can prove to be a great tool for individuals undergoing both mental and physical rehabili-



tation, those with PTSD and a wide array of other conditions that often affect our veteran community. Everything from improved cognitive function and memory, to increased attention span and even eye/ hand coordination has been shown to improve through the performance of visual arts.

Many physicians, scientists and mental health professionals agree that the arts can provide opportunities to process, express and reframe negative past experiences and assist in staying in the present moment. MKAF's Warrior Arts Programs offer the opportunity for individuals in need to experience many aspects of these empowering processes, through simply making art, doing something new and





gaining artistic skills. While relaxing and therapeutic, it's also fun.

Mattie Kelly's Warrior Arts Program sets out to accomplish all the above through its curation of multiple specific programs, including everything from the Zentangle

> WARRIOR ARTS continued on page 2



Grace Rides:

A Story of Compassion, Community and **Equine Healing**

By Doug Stauffer

In the heart of Niceville, a remarkable story unfolded at Grace Rides, a sanctuary where humans share a journey of healing and growth with horses. Founded in 2008 by hometown heroes Sherry Hall and her husband, Steve, Grace Rides has transformed from a modest pilot program at the Oak Heaven Stables equestrian facility in Niceville into a beacon of hope for many, embodying a God-sized vision of love and service.

GRACE RIDES continued on page 12



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WARRIOR ARTS

continued from page 1

drawing method to painting to jewelry making to improv comedy workshops. Additionally, the Warrior Arts Program is actively partnered with veterans centers in the immediate and surrounding counties that MKAF serves, as well as working alongside the EOD Warrior Foundation, AFSOC Warrior C.A.R.E. Summit, AFSOC Preservation of the Force and Family, AFSOC Peer Supporters, AFSOC Commando Caregivers, Air Force Wounded Warriors and Special Operations Wounded Warriors, and other such organizations that are working toward the common goal of bettering the lives and conditions of our Northwest Florida veterans.

As a MKAF board member, I've had the pleasure of attending some of the outreach events the nonprofit orchestrates, as well as getting to hear about the real change and positive impact that the Warrior Arts Program helps bring to fruition. I asked MKAF's Director of Education and Community Engagement, Melanie Moore, to tell me in her own words what the Warrior Arts Program means to MKAF and to her as the staff member responsible for creating Warrior Arts and bringing it to life in our coastal communities. "It is our great honor to give back to our heroes by offering meaningful art experiences that promote resiliency and holistic healing. While it is easy to say 'thank you for your service,' we have tak-



en that a step further to invest in over 100 art programs per year for our area's active duty and veteran military personnel, with an all professional teaching staff, free of charge to MKAF's Warrior Arts participants. This segment of our Northwest Florida population has sacrificed so much to secure our freedom, so I feel the least we can do, individually and collectively, is to embrace our military community in the best way we know how, through creative opportunities curated especially for them."

I couldn't agree more, but what proves the benefits of Warrior Arts, more than anything, are the words from those who've seen its remarkable impact first hand. As you can see from this small sample of the testimonials MKAF's Warrior Arts Program receives, this is the real catalyst for continuing to offer this help, hope and change.

Testimonials:

In 2004, while piloting a helicopter for the Army, I suffered a devastating crash. After awaking from a coma four days later, I discovered that I had a Traumatic Brain Injury and exten-

sive nerve damage. The majority of my fine motor skills on my right side were limited. I struggled with simple tasks like writing my own name. So, as expected, flying a helicopter would be virtually impossible. Fearing I may not regain full use of my dominant hand, I began to teach myself how to write with my left hand. Learning how to hold a pencil was the first step. Eventually I realized if I could

teach my left hand how to master those skills, I could re-learn the same skills on my dominant hand. Initially I began learning how to make the letters of the alphabet. Eventually I was able to create letters and form words that I could actually read. From there, I began to draw creative patterns and straight lines, then connect those lines and create images. Soon I developed smoother and neater pencil strokes. Within a few months I had regained about 80% of my fine motor skills. By the end of the year I had regained full control of my right arm, hand and fingers. Years later I was introduced to Zentangle by a close friend. It was simply a stress-free, no-fault method of creating beautiful patterns. It became clear to me that I wanted to share this helpful healing art with everyone. I decided to become a Certified Zentangle Teacher, and the rest is history.

—CW3 Charles Burkett, Certified Zentangle Instructor

I write to you in great appreciation for the support you showed in the recent PTSD re-

treat Lattended in Destin, Fla. As a 23-year veteran, with 14 combat deployments, adapting back into the civilian world can be difficult and stressful for both the member and family. The art technique that Miss Melanie Moore introduced has helped me both focus and obtain the inner calmness I need. I brought the art set home your foundation provided and enjoy sharing the meditative process with my 10-year-old daughter. Again, I thank your foundation and especially Miss Melanie for the time and support you showed. We do what we do for great people like you.

-Rob, Special Operations

Your programs come at a great time...saving lives...and protecting the livelihood of thousands is just as important as squeezing triggers. If showing a veteran the technique of drawing on a small [paper] tile to relieve their stress and anxiety can prevent a veteran suicide, then that is the most important thing in their life!

—Charles, Special Operations

I want to say thank you for your time, in Destin while I was at the Elk Foundation PTSD retreat. I really appreciate you supporting our veteran community and introducing something a little different into our lives. I want you to know that I have continued with the Zentangles and truly enjoy the process. I have attached a photo of my latest drawing. I hope you like it and I plan to continue.

—Rico, Special Operations

This program continues to have a huge positive impact on our veterans and military members. Your passion, vision, artistic talent and resources are the reasons for this. Thanks for continuing to expand the program, adding Charles Burkett for more Zentangle groups and partnering with Estelle Grengs Art for painting classes. I'm a true believer that the creative process enhances our lives and helps one heal.

— Janet Paulus, Veteran Thera-

—Janet Paulus, Veteran Therapist and Air Force Veterans

To learn more about Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation, along with this and other outreach programs this organization makes possible, visit MKAF.org

Will Estell is a writer, media entrepreneur, and real estate professional with over 600 published features in an array of publications. As chief creative officer of Estell Hussey Media, LLC, and the Editor-In-Chief of Navarre Beach Magazine, during the past 26 years, Will has been instrumental in founding 12 new magazine titles from concept to fruition, as well as serving as editor for others.



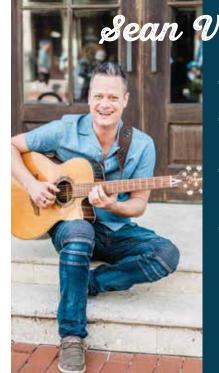


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JO DESTIN

Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

By Tamara Leigh Young, PhD, Public Information Director for the World's Luckiest Fishing Village

It's time for more "reel" talk from the Mayor and me. This time, the City of Destin's Mayor, Bobby Wagner, and I met to chat about city parks. Please email me at tyoung@cityofdestin.com if you'd like to submit a question or have a topic you'd like discussed in an upcoming edition

TY: The beaches are the most talked about natural beauty around here, but we have some parks that deserve attention, too. Clement E. Taylor Park is one I love to bike to, and it's great to see the renovations lately. The latest Destin Forward class, the leadership program through the Destin Chamber, raised funds and put in new educational sig-

"Reel Talk" from the City of Destin

Parks are for the People

nage, upgrades to the volleyball court, and the planting of Florida native plants. I know you were part of that program years ago, so what do you think of this latest contribution?

BW: First of all, congratulations to you and your class for graduating from Destin Forward this year! Your project has made a significant contribution to the park. I visited recently and was impressed by the new signs, the revamped volleyball court and the beautiful native plants. These efforts have truly enhanced the park for everyone to enjoy.

TY: Well, thank you! Adding in our class and your past one plus all the others, 253 people have now successfully completed the program. Our park focus seemed fitting to talk about with you, as you're a tree guy yourself. For your State of the City Address, you had a theme of a lot of "P's": People • Partnerships • Progress. We should have added Parks!

BW: Wow, that's 253 leaders



our community and a deeper understanding of the fabric of our city. And yes, parks could have been another "P." As we continue to grow our people, cultivate partnerships and celebrate our progress, I believe our parks will naturally benefit from this vision.

TY: From a city standpoint, the biggest buzz for Clement E. Taylor Park is that a few weeks ago we released the RFP for major renovations there. Bids aren't due until later in June, but can you talk about some of the expected renovations?

BW: Yes, it is officially happening. Our historic Clement Taylor Park is getting a nearly one-million-dollar makeover.

These funds have been in bureaucratic limbo for years, and now we've finally freed them! We're planning to start construction by the end of the year, and there will be a new playground for all ages and abilities, new bathroom facilities and upgraded pavilion areas. We're enhancing this park to match the natural beauty of its 2.5-acre green space, which boasts more than a dozen live oaks that are over 100 years old.

TY: The oaks are incredible and the view at the Park overlooking Crab Island is also stunning. I love seeing people on blankets, on bikes, fishing or whatever just enjoying the park's peacefulness.

BW: Destin has 19 traditional parks and dozens of neighborhood or pocket parks. My challenge to the readers is to jump on a bike and explore all these areas in Destin. As a kid, my friends and I would explore the area on our bikes, and it was so much fun discovering all these little hidden green spaces.



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Around Town



Today's Boutique Bids Farewell After 43+ Years in Business

Dettle Family Thanks Community by Hosting Largest Sale Ever

Today's Boutique, your favorite fashion hotspot for 43 years, announces its retirement with a heart full of thanks and love for the community. Owners Kim and Jim Dettle, along with their daughter Kristin Dettle Humphrey, say farewell with style, laughter and a lot of memories. "This bittersweet decision comes with a huge mix of emotions. As we embark on this new chapter of our lives, our primary focus will be to spend more time with our loved ones and move on to new adventures. We feel that now is the right time to prioritize and enjoy these spe-





cial moments," said the Dettle family.

Since 1981, Today's Boutique has been more than just a store—it's been a place where fashion meets friendship and community. From launching initiatives like Destin Commu-



nity Cares, fashion shows, Best in Destin events, monthly trunk shows and more, the Dettles have put their heart into the fabric of Destin's culture. Many of their customers have been shopping with Today's for their entire time in business and have become like family to them. The Dettles have always had a true passion for helping women look and feel their best.

To express their heartfelt appreciation and bid farewell in style, Today's Boutique is having its largest sale in 43 years through June 22 or until everything is sold. "It is hard to say goodbye to a business that has been part of our family for over four decades. We are filled with gratitude for the incredible support and loyalty that our friends, customers and the Des-

tin area as a whole have shown us throughout our many years in fashion," said the Dettles. Call 850-865-5565 or visit www. todaysboutique.com.

Destin Forward Celebrates Beautification of Clement Taylor Park

On May 20, the Destin Forward Class of 2024 celebrated the completion of its class project, the beautification of Destin's Clement Taylor Park, with a ribbon cutting. Improvements include educational signage, upgrades to the volleyball court and the planting of Florida native plants.

Destin Forward, the Destin Chamber's community education and leadership program, was created to help find and educate future city and business



leaders. In addition to the project, the class spent nine months touring and learning about Destin's waterways, tourism industry, arts & culture, non-profits, environment, city programs and services, economic development, and military.

The Destin Forward Class of 2024 celebrated its graduation in May. Graduates include April Atkinson, Community Bank; Kasey Bebus, CJL Homes; Katie Cagle, Renasant Bank; Danny Collins, United Community; Anthony Collito, Scenic Stays; Wendi Davis, Eglin Federal Credit Union; Steve Farris, First Baptist Church of Destin & Preschool; Matt Means, Destin High School; Ana Michalzik, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center; Brad Monk, Destin Water Users, Inc.; Michael Moody, Emerald Coast Business Intermediaries; Kevin Pope, Regions Bank; Amy Roe, Pen Air Credit Union; Ryan Scott, City of Destin; Jordan Taylor, Leonardo DRS; Tamara Young, City of Destin; and Sabina Pennington, Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program. Four class members, chosen by class vote, will join the Destin Forward Advisory Board for a 3-year term, where they will help steer the program for future classes. Those chosen include Kasey Bebus, Katie Cagle, Wendi Davis, and Tamara Young.

Destin Forward, a community education and leadership





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Youth Camp Pistol Training | 10am | Emerald Coast Shooting & Sport
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food

Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in

Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Bay-

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Youth Camp Pistol Training | 10am | Emer-

ald Coast Shooting & Sport
Emerald Coast Birth Trauma Support Group | 5pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB Havana Nights | 6pm | Harborwalk Village Karaoke | 6pm | A.J's on the Bayou June Fishing Series: Tarpon Fishing | 6pm |

Harbor Street Parade | 6:30pm | Harbor-

walk Village **Boomin' Tuesday** | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Youth Camp Pistol Training | 10am | Emernooting & Sport

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Women in Business | 5pm | The Palms

Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall

Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm |

Village of Baytowne Wharf

Trivia Night | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Stu-

Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on

Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa

Youth Camp Pistol Training | 10am | Emer-

ald Coast Shooting & Sport
Summer Artist Market | 4pm | Miramar Beach Creative Campus

Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club Game Night | 5pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Cafe

Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in

Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin

Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf All American Thursday | 6:30 | Harborwalk

Concerts in the Village Adam Ezra Group

| 7pm | MKAF Pavilion Spill The Tea: Open Poetry Night | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café Broadway on the Boulevard | 7:30pm |

Grand Boulevard Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Youth Camp Pistol Training | 10am | Emerald Coast Shooting & Sport Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB Whiskey Fest | 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts



Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac

Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bay-

Farmers Market | 8am | Ferry Road, Fort

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale

FORE! The Love of Animals Golf Tournament | 10am | The Links Sandestin Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Harborwalk Village

Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap

Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | 743 Harbor Blvd, Destin Free Summer Kick Off Party | 10am | The

Palms Bistro & Good Vibes B Scallywag Sunday Pirate Shows I 7pm &8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Youth Camp Rifle Training | 10am | Emerald Coast Shooting & Sport Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Royal Palm Grille Pirate Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food Hall

Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin

Dungeons & Dragons | 6pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Baytowne

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Young Professionals of Destin Coffee Social | 7:30am | Causeway Coffee Youth Camp Rifle Training | 10am | Emerald Coast Shooting & Sport

Emerald Coast Birth Trauma Support Group | 5pm | Enlightened Studios & S

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB Havana Nights | 6pm | Harborwalk Village Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou Harbor Street Parade | 6:30pm | Harbor-

Boomin' Tuesday | 7:15pm | Village of

Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island

Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne

Youth Camp Rifle Training | 10am | Emerald Coast Shooting & Sport

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay

Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm |

Village of Baytowne Wharf
Trivia Night | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa •••••• 13 •••••

Youth Camp Rifle Training | 10am | Emerald

Coast Shooting & Sport Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin

Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm

| Village of Baytowne Wharf | All American Thursday | 6:30 | Harborwalk

Spill The Tea: Open Poetry Night | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Care Broadway on the Boulevard | 7:30pm | ulevard

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Youth Camp Rifle Training | 10am | Emerald Coast Shooting & Sport Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB Pinot & Pioneers | 6pm | Emerald Coast

Whiskey Fest | 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac

Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bay-

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand

Boulevard

Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale

USCG Boater Safety Course | 9am | Emer-

Concealed Carry Weapons Class | 10am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport Summer Family Fun Hike | 10am | Alaqua Animal Refuge

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
On The Edge | 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap

Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | 743 Harbor Blvd, Destin Scallywag Sunday Pirate Shows | 7pm & 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Royal Palm Grille Pirate Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food Hall

Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin

Dungeons & Dragons | 6pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Baytowne Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Coffee & Conversations: Real Estate Agents | 2:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Emerald Coast Birth Trauma Support Group | 5pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB Havana Nights | 6pm | Harborwalk Village Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou Harbor Street Parade | 6:30pm | Harbor-

Boomin' Tuesday | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf **Movies On The Beach** | 8pm | Boardwalk on

Okaloosa Island Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne

Fudpucker's Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpuck-

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall

Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm |

Village of Baytowne Wharf

Trivia Night | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Stu-

dios & Sound Café
Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa

20 Business After Hours | 5:30pm | Beachworx Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin

Planetarium Nights | 6pm | Emerald Coast Science Center Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm

| Village of Baytowne Wharf All American Thursday | 6:30 | Harborwalk

Spill The Tea: Open Poetry Night | 7:30pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Cafe | Broadway on the Boulevard | 7:30pm |

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

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

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club Whiskey Fest | 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm |

Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bay-

Farmers Market | 8am | Ferry Road, Fort Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand

Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale All American Show | 11am | Emerald Coast

Indoor Shooting & Sport

Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Beat The ries. C. Harborwalk Village

Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap

Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | 743 Harbor Blvd, Destin Scallywag Sunday Pirate Shows | 7pm & 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille **Pirate Show** | 5pm | Al's Beach Club

Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food Hall

Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin

Dungeons & Dragons | 6pm | Enlightened ios & Sound Café

Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Baytowne

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Emerald Coast Birth Trauma Support Group | 5pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound

Music Match | 6pm | The Island Resort FWB Karaoke | 6pm | AJ"s on the Bayou Havana Nights | 6pm | Harborwalk Village Harbor Street Parade | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village

Trivia | 7pm | World of Ree Boomin' Tuesday | 7:15pm | Village of

Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on

Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne

Fudpucker's Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpucker's Destin

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall

Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Trivia Night | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café

Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa

Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in

Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin

Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf **All American Thursday** | 6:30 | Harborwalk

Spill The Tea: Open Poetry Night | 7:30pm I Enlightened Studios & Sound Cafe Broadway on the Boulevard | 7:30pm |

Spill The Tea: Open Poetry Night | 7:30pm I Enlightened Studios & Sound Cafe Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club Whiskey Fest | 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac

Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bay-Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand

Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale Atlanta Rhythm Section & Orleans | 7pml Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap

Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | 743 Harbor Blvd, Destin Artisan Market | 11am | Destin Commons Scallywag Sunday Pirate Shows | 7pm & 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar



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Fireworks and the 4th of July

An American Tradition!

JULY 3rd

Stars & Stripes Celebration at AJ's on the Bayou

Join AJ's on the Bayou July 3rd for the Stars & Stripes CEL-EBRATION! The whole family is invited to enjoy bounce houses, stilt walkers, face painting and live music—Jones & Co. at Noon, then Black Eyed Blonde from 6 - 10 p.m. Fireworks begin at 9 p.m! 200 Eglin Parkway N.E. in Fort Walton Beach.

Star-Spangled Food Truck Festival & Fireworks

Get your 4th of July on early at Destin Commons for the Star-Spangled Food Truck Festival & Fireworks July 3rd at 5 p.m. With more than 25 food trucks ranging from BBQ, gourmet pizzas, grill cheese, Thai and more, there will be something for everyone. Enjoy live music, dancing and fireworks at 9 p.m.

JULY 4th

City of Destin July 4th **Fireworks Celebration**

The Annual Independence Day Fireworks Show is set off from the West Jetties Beach at the Destin Harbor and Harborwalk Village and can be seen over the East Pass beginning at 9 p.m. on July 4th. If inclement weather, the fireworks show will take place on July 5th at 9 p.m.

Red, White & Baytowne

Beginning at 7 p.m. at The



Sandestin Golf and Beach Re-

sort, enjoy balloon sculpting, kids' crafts, face painting and

LIVE music on the Events Plaza

Stage from Below Alabama followed by the special 4th of July

Set sail for a one-hour, fire-

works cruise on the Southern Star at the Destin Harbor at 8:15

Fort Walton Beach Landing

The Fort Walton Beach 4th

of July Fireworks show will take

place on Thursday, July 4th 2024

at 8:45 p.m. In downtown Fort

Walton Beach. They are set off

from a barge over the Santa

Light Up the Bayou in Nicev-

The Sandestin Hilton July 4th

ille at Boggy Bayou fireworks be-

gin at approximately 8:45 p.m.

Boggy Bayou Fireworks

Sandestin Hilton

Fireworks display at 9:15 p.m.

Fireworks Cruise

July 4th Fireworks

Rosa Sound.

Village of Baytowne Wharf at fireworks are set off right on the

beach directly in front of the hofireworks show will take place on Thursday, July 4th at 9 p.m.

> Enjoy Fireworks this summer at The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island each Wednesday at 9 p.m., and over the Destin Harbor directly behind Harbor-Walk Village every Thursday night throughout the summer at 9 p.m.

The Seaside 4th of July Fireworks show will take place on Thursday, July 4th, at 8:30 p.m.

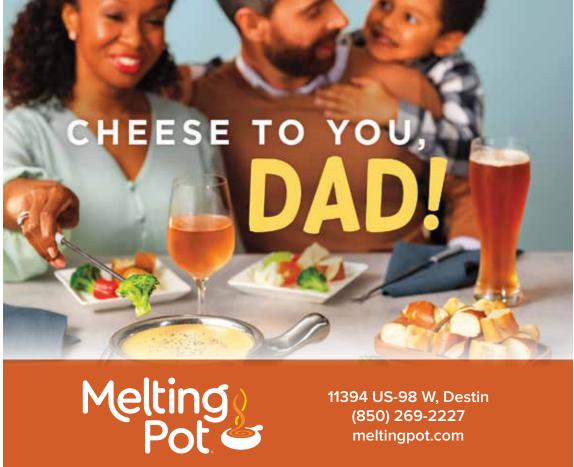
Alys Beach on 30a

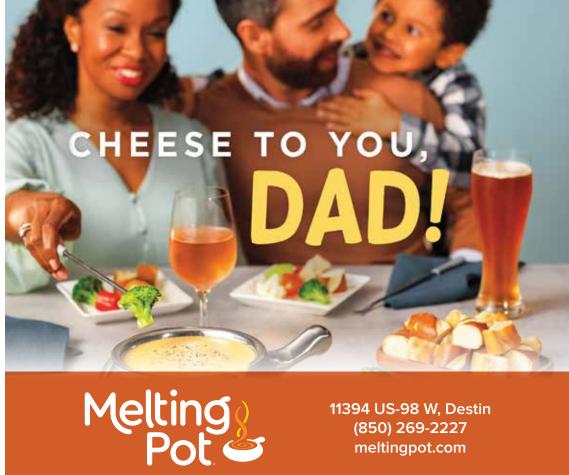
tel July 4th at 9 p.m.

Fireworks

Seaside (30a) July 4th

The Alys Beach 4th of July







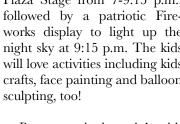


It's Officially Summer! Celebrate, Escape and Embrace the Best at Baytowne Wharf!

Red, White & Baytowne! Thursday, July 4th 7-9:15 p.m. | FREE

Independence Celebrate Day at the Village of Baytowne Wharf, July 4th, from 7-9:15 p.m. After a day of fun in the sun, come out for an evening that lights up the sky! Join Baytowne Village merchants for a spectacular 4th of July Red, White and Baytowne 2024 celebration with LIVE music from Below Alabama on the Events Plaza Stage from 7-9:15 p.m., followed by a patriotic Fireworks display to light up the night sky at 9:15 p.m. The kids will love activities including kids crafts, face painting and balloon

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



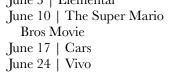
Scallywag Sunday Sundays NOW - August 4th 7-9 p.m. | FREE

Join Baytowne Wharf for magic, music and mayhem! Watch as the featured pirate Captain Davy takes you on an adventure with two magic shows on stage! Shows at 7 and 8 p.m.

Movie Monday

Mondays NOW - June 24th 8 p.m. | FREE

Grab a lawn chair or blanket and cozy up on the Events Plaza Lawn for a featured film. June 3 | Elemental



Boomin' Tuesday Tuesdays NOW - Aug. 6th 7:15-9:15 p.m. | FREE

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

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

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

Wednesday Night Concerts at The Village of Baytowne Wharf are BACK! Sit back and relax with an outdoor concert and enjoy LIVE entertainment.





The concert series features both local and regional talent from a variety of genres. Don't forget your lawn chairs and blankets.

Live Local Favorites Music Lineup:

June 5: Modern Eldorado June 12: Sand Ole Opry June 19: The High Aces June 26: Six Piece Suits

Fly Guy Thursday Thursdays NOW - Aug. 8th 6:30 & 8:30 p.m. | FREE

Enjoy shows from fly-board extraordinaire Ben Merrell over



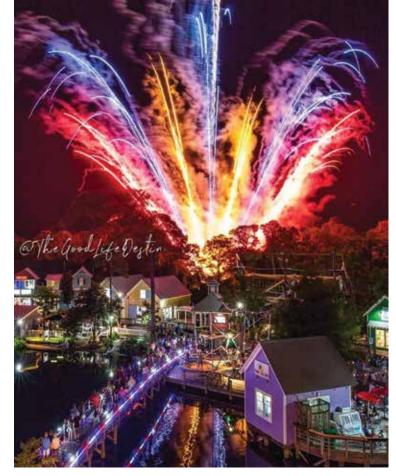
the lagoon! Watch as he soars to the sky and makes waves at Baytowne Wharf.

The Farmers Market at **Baytowne Wharf** Saturdays 8 a.m.-Noon

Come shop with local farmers, bakers, local fresh seafood and gourmet, beef, local honey, fresh pressed juices and much more all year long, Saturdays 8 a.m.-Noon.

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

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







Events Around Town

Celebrate Women's Veterans Day at Veterans Park

By Carolyn Newcomer Ketchel, Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2

You are invited to a celebration of Women's Veterans Day on June 12th at 8 a.m. We will gather at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center for a ceremony honoring our women who have served in the United States Military. Retired Col. Allison Black, USAF (Hurlburt) will be our keynote speaker this year. The ceremony will include a presentation of the Medal of Honor by the Choctawhatchee Bay DAR to be announced at the event. We will then gather at the base of the Margaret Corbin statue at Women Veterans Monuments at Veterans' Park for a wreath-laying ceremony.

The beautiful 20 ½-acre park features eight life size statutes of women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces from the Revolutionary War to cur-

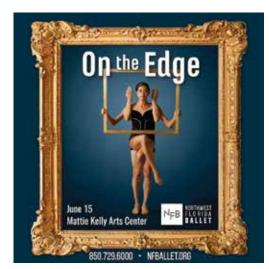


rent theatres. These statues have been purchased using the Tourism Development Tax known as the "Bed Tax." This is a one of kind park in the U.S. with the beauty of the land and the history of women who served our great nation. We expect and hope for an additional eight statues to complete the park.

This park is for patriots and conservationists and reflects people's values on our Emerald Coast. Learn of the heroic deeds of our women veterans as you enjoy a beautiful walk in nature.

NFB Will Have You "On the Edge" in June!

Join the Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) for On the Edge at 7:30 p.m. on Jun. 15 at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center. This unique final production of the season features NFB and international guest artists performing a mix of cutting-edge contemporary, neoclassical and classical pieces from guest choreographers and the NFB repertoire.



Box office prices for NFB's On the Edge are \$35 for adults and \$15 for children 12 and under. Visit NFBallet.org/On-

The-Edge to learn more or purchase your tickets.

On the Edge is brought to you by Season Signature Sponsors Life Media and NFB's Official Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Provider, NFBJS Foot & Ankle Surgeon Dr. Sonya Ahmed. NFB is sponsored in part by the State of Florida through

the Division of Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Legendary Hitmakers Atlanta Rhythm Section & Orleans Coming to Mattie Kelley Arts Center



The legendary hit makers Atlanta Rhythm Section and Orleans team up to bring their melodic magic to Mattie Kelly Arts Center June 29th in Niceville. The two iconic bands dominated the 70's & 80's charts—Atlanta Rhythm Section with top 10 hits "So Into You," "Imaginary Lover," "Doraville," "I'm Not Gonna Let It Bother Me Tonight," "Champagne Jam," Angel," "Do It Or Die" and "Spooky"—Orleans with the unforgettable radio hits "Still The One," "Dance With Me"

and "Love Takes Time."

Their classic songs still resonate with audiences of all ages thanks to continued airplay on Classic Rock radio, television, film and streaming services. With multiple gold and platinum albums to their credit, both artists continue to be in demand for live shows, as they have been for more than five decades. Purchase tickets (\$43, \$57, \$68 and \$79) at www.mattiekellytickets.com or call 850-706-5206. All tickets are reserved.





GRACE RIDES

continued from page 1

A Vision Born from Compassion

Grace Rides originated from a desire to intertwine the daily presence of horses with the mission to serve people of all abilities. Inspired by the foundational efforts of the local RACE program ("Riding for Adults and Children with Exceptionalities") and supported by entities like Storybrook Farms and Shangri-La Therapeutic Academy of Riding, Grace Rides took its first steps toward making a significant impact in the community.

Since 2008, Grace Rides has grown from a pilot program of four riders per week. Last year, devoted volunteers invested almost 6,000 hours into the program and provided nearly 900 rides for program participants. The exponential growth will only continue with community involvement.

The Spiritual Journey

At the core of Grace Rides is a profound spiritual philosophy guided by scriptures like

Matthew 25:40 (caring for the least in society) and Philippians 4:13 (Christ making all things possible). These scriptures are not just verses displayed on their website; they are truths that fuel the mission to serve through the healing power of equine-assisted activities. Sherry Hall, the executive director, asked God to "break my heart to what breaks

Programs That Transform Lives

Grace Rides offers a variety of programs designed to cater to individuals with special needs, including physical, cognitive and emotional challenges. These programs range from Therapeutic Riding, which teaches riding skills tailored to the needs of the participants, to Horses for Heroes, a dedicated initiative for veterans that focuses on ground handling and relational skills with horses.

The Stable Friends and Equine-Assisted Learning and Enrichment programs provide unmounted experiences promoting emotional, social and cognitive growth through horse interaction.

Abi Copeland is a true exam-



ple of success. She started as a participant in 2016 (left picture) and transitioned into a volunteer with a special needs child last summer (right picture). She

also helps clean out the stalls, and when asked about that, she said, "Someone has to do itthey don't clean themselves." Abi wants to continue pursuing

volunteer work, because she loves animals and finds so much joy in giving back.

The People Behind the Mission

The dedication of individuals like Sherry Hall, a PATH Certified Instructor, and Anne Jennete, a Therapeutic Riding Instructor and veteran, highlights the commitment and passion that drive Grace Rides. Their stories of personal growth and the joy of seeing others transform are testimonials of the power and success of this program.

Involvement and Support

Grace Rides thrives because of the community's support and sponsors' generosity. Opportunities to get involved include volunteering in various capacities around the farm, sponsoring a horse, or contributing to the operational needs through donations. Each role is crucial in sustaining and expanding the impact of Grace Rides. Would you believe that the program participants span ages 4 to 84 years old?

Continued on page 27



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Inspect What You Expect!



By Paul Domeneche

Hey there, ready to dive into the world of buying or selling a home? It's an exciting adventure. But, amidst all the excitement, there's a golden rule to remember: inspect what you expect. This simple mantra is the key to a smooth and successful real estate journey, emphasizing the importance of thorough inspections and relying on your trusted real estate agent every step of the way.

Let's talk about home inspectors—they're like the front line of the real estate world. From checking out the foundation to

climbing up on the roof, these inspectors leave no stone unturned. They uncover hidden issues and potential problems, giving you the inside scoop on the property's condition. It's your chance to really know what you're getting into before you make that big decision.

But here's the thing: the inspection is just the beginning. That's where your real estate agent swoops in to save the day. They're like your personal guide through the wild jungle of paperwork, negotiations and tough decisions.

Need help choosing a reputable inspector? They've got your back. Confused about what that inspection report really means? They'll break it down for you in plain English. Ready to negotiate repairs with the seller? They're there to fight for your best interests every step of the way.

So, why is it so important to "inspect what you expect"? Because knowledge is power, my friend. When you know exactly what you're getting into, you can make smart decisions with confidence. And when you have



So, why is it so important to "inspect what you expect"? Because knowledge is power, my friend.

a rock-solid real estate agent by your side, you can navigate the twists and turns of the real estate journey with ease. So, let's embark on this adventure together, armed with the knowledge and support we need to make our real estate dreams a reality. With thorough inspections and expert guidance, we'll be well on our way to finding the perfect place to call home.





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Is Your Insurance Ready for Hurricane Season?

June 1st marks the beginning of the 2024 hurricane season, which could be one of the most active on record. Colorado State University's tropical meteorology project team is forecasting 23 storms, 11 of which will become hurricanes and five of which will reach Category 3 status or stronger, in their first outlook for 2024 recently released. That's because of two main factors: El Niño is expected to become La Niña, which usually enhances storms; and the Atlantic Ocean water is record warm in most areas,

which also could enhance storms.

So, it is time to make sure you're ready for the next round of tropical depressions, storms and hurricanes that have potential to affect the Gulf Coast every year.

Do you have what you need when it comes to homeowner's and flood insurance and hurricanes? There are a few things that should be on your radar. If you have these coverages in place, you'll be better equipped to ride out whatever storm blows through.

First on the list is hurricane/ wind coverage. Most home policies (HO3, DP3, HO6, HO4) in Florida include either hurricane, named storm, or wind/ hail under a separate deductible. This is preferred since coordination and consistency of coverages is important. Some carriers don't write wind coverage close to the water. So, a stand-alone wind-only policy would be needed. If this is the case, extra care must be taken to avoid any coverage inconsistencies. In previous articles,



we've addressed the differences in hurricane, named storm and wind/hail coverage. But suffice it to say, when it comes to wind coverage, the best option is hurricane. Under this coverage scenario, the larger deductible in the policy, usually a percentage of the Dwelling Limit, applies to declared hurricane activity, while the smaller deductible in the policy would apply to other wind losses and all other perils in the policy. There are several deductible options available that can have a large impact on what would be your out-of-pocket responsibility if you file a claim.

Make sure you know you have sufficient Dwelling Limit (Coverage A) coverage to rebuild your home in the event of a loss. Local and national data indicates that nearly two out of three homes and structures are underinsured.

Another important coverage is Loss of Use that pays for you to live somewhere else while repairs are being done to your temporarily unlivable home. This goes for rental properties with Loss of Rents coverage as well. Remember, there needs to be direct physical damage to trigger this coverage. Some rent- al policies don't include Loss of Rents so you will want to read your policy or call your insurance agent so you know for sure.

Another often misunderstood coverage not offered with each carrier, but always recommended, is Law or Ordinance coverage. Most carriers, if they have it available, offer either 10%, 25% or 50% coverage. This percentage is tied to your Dwelling Limit. If you have extensive hurricane damage, like we saw with Hurricane Michael, there may be new building codes you must adhere to in order to rebuild. The additional Law or

Ordinance coverage is crucial to your protection, since your policy is designed to rebuild your home as it was before the damage, with similar materials and quality, and not with more costly materials that could now be required by more stringent construction codes that may have come into play.

Another vital policy to have, especially during hurricane season, is flood insurance. Flood and water damage from a wind event are not necessarily the same thing. This coverage is so vital that we will again devote our next month's article to this topic. Although there are a few carriers who will add flood coverage as an endorsement to a home policy, it is infrequent. For most insureds, your flood policy will be a separate policy written through the NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program), and, unless your lender requires the policy, or you're closing on a new purchase, there is a standard 30day waiting period through the NFIP before your flood policy will become effective. Private flood insurance is an alternative. Many of the private markets in in the country, and especially in Florida, offer broader coverages than the NFIP and these should be considered as an alternative to maximize your protection.

We hope this helps ease your concerns this hurricane season, in terms of coverage.

Abora is a full-service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, Freeport, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach, and has been voted Top in the Market for 10 years in a row. Abora can find solutions from a wide variety of the best insurance carriers in the market for Home, Auto and Life insurance on your terms. Call (850) 424.6979 or visit Getabora.com.









By Maurice Stouse, Financial Advisor and Branch Manager

America and Americans are the most generous on earth. Up until a few years ago, gifts to charities (churches, medical organizations, schools) could be deducted from income at tax filing time. The tax laws changed and many of the tax deductions went down or away with tax reform in 2017. Despite that, Americans continue to donate their hard-earned money and assets to their churches, schools, civic organizations, hospitals and other non-profits. What many folks might not realize is that years ago (over 30 years ago), giving became more convenient and efficient with the innovation or advent of donor advised funds (or DAFs for short). A charitable or nonprofit organization is also known as 501(c)3. Anyone donating to a cause should always confirm that the organization to which they want to give is registered as such. DAFs are also 501(c)3 organizations.

It is suggested that would be donors do a little research upon considering a gift or donation to a charitable organization. A DAF could help simplify that for them. On their own, granters to charity could turn to several sources available online. There are several known choices such give.org, charitywatch.org or charitynavigator.org. These sites can give you an assessment as well as commentary, if that is available. They even rate or score the organization. Many charitably inclined individuals could benefit from the additional knowledge that can be obtained. Often the DAF will assist the donor when they want to gift out of their fund and have the research available on an organization of choice available to them before they donate.

So, what are ways to give? The straightest is by cash, check, securities (such as stock) or some other asset. Real estate (land or

Insights for Investors:

Should You Consider a Donor Advised Fund for Your Charitable Giving?

homes or buildings) as well as art and perhaps even businesses. While most people write a check (to their church, for example) or have it auto drafted or even put on a credit card, there are other things/ways for them to consider, which is why we are covering donor advised funds.

Many charitable zations, and most investment firms, set these up for the ease of giving and the simplicity of administration over time, of their gifts. Donor advised funds are in and of themselves 501(c)3 organizations — public charities. So, once a contribution is made, that is the gift. What is flexible is when the money moves to a church, or school, hospital or other non-profit, from the donor advised fund. That could be done now or in years to come, allowing the gift to potentially grow because it is invested. While the money is in the DAF, it is often invested into mutual funds. The objective and hope are that it grows over time and that can lead to even greater gifts to future charities. The key is to realize that by making the donation now, the gift is made, in this tax year, regardless of when the funds move to a non-profit or charity.

What about the impact on taxes? It is important to reiterate that the tax law changes in 2017 meant that the standard deduction went up substantially, so that a charitable contribution would have to exceed that deduction limit and the tax filer would have to itemize. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that should someone qualify (gifting exceeds standard deduction of \$14,600 for single filers and \$29,200 for joint filers), they could potentially have a deduction from income: 60% of the value of total cash gifts for the year and 30% of the value of appreciated securities for the year. Some people who have stocks that have appreciated in value contribute that and are not be impacted with the taxable gains. A donor advised fund might also be a useful tool in estate planning as well should someone be looking for ways to lesson the impact of taxes on



their estates when they pass on.

To sum it all up, a donor advised fund allows the contributor to advise where grants or gifts go and can appoint a successor donor advisor or a charity of choice to receive any residual at their passing. Most DAFs also use technology to aid the giver; whereas someone could make grants directly from their smart phone while they are on the go.

To learn more, talk to your advisor or go to Raymondjamescharitable.org.

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

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Lifestyle



By Kim Schneider, Coastal Design by Kim

Kitchen islands are a unique element that has changed the way we use our kitchens. Today,

Kitchen Islands:

Sizing, Seating, Lighting and All the Extras!

we're using them as an extra meal prep station, eating area, additional storage, as a serving area and as the homework/workspace spot. With all the open floor plans, our kitchens have also become a gathering spot while entertaining. The kitchen island is now the hub of the home. It also can enhance the overall aesthetic for our

kitchen when it's laid out prop-

A kitchen island has so many functions that it can be used for, but due to space constraints we typically hone in on two or three uses that are most important for our needs. Will you primarily use it for: Storage? Prepping? Cooking? A casual dining space? Below are some ideas that may

help you build the perfect island that suits your lifestyle.

Depth, Dimension & Sizing

If you're anything like me a large island is very appealing, but for all practical purposes your island shouldn't be more than 10% of your kitchen's total square footage.

The standard depth for a kitchen island is typically 24-36 inches, but if your island will include appliances or a sink, a depth of 36-42 inches may be more appropriate.

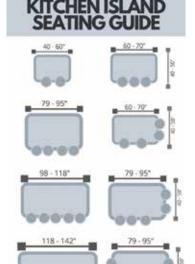
When determining the height of your island, it's best to match your kitchen countertops (36" is standard) for a better flow. In an effort to accommodate access to your appliances and movement throughout your kitchen, you will need proper clearance (minimum of 42 inches) between your island, walls and surrounding countertops.

Overhang

If you're planning to include seating in your island, a proper overhang to accommodate for legroom should be between 12-18 inches from the edge of the countertop to the outer edge of the seating area.

Seating

For ample spacing and movement of each seat, a minimum of 24 inches width per seat is



needed. Your stool or chair should be a depth of 18-24 inches and 28-32 inches from the seat cushion to the floor (for countertop height).

Lighting

Your fixtures should be centered above with approximately 30-36 inches between the bottom of the light fixture and the countertop. Plan for at least 12 inches between the fixture and the end of the island and 26-30 inches between each fixture. Keep in mind the primary role of the island fixtures is to provide task lighting above your workspace.

Continued on page 21



- Living Room & Bedroom Design
- Custom Window Treatments
- Lighting Designs
- Color and Wall Coverings
- Fixture & Finishes
- Patio Furniture & Cushion Replacement
- Furniture Selection
- Furniture Reupholstery
- Art & Accessory Selection



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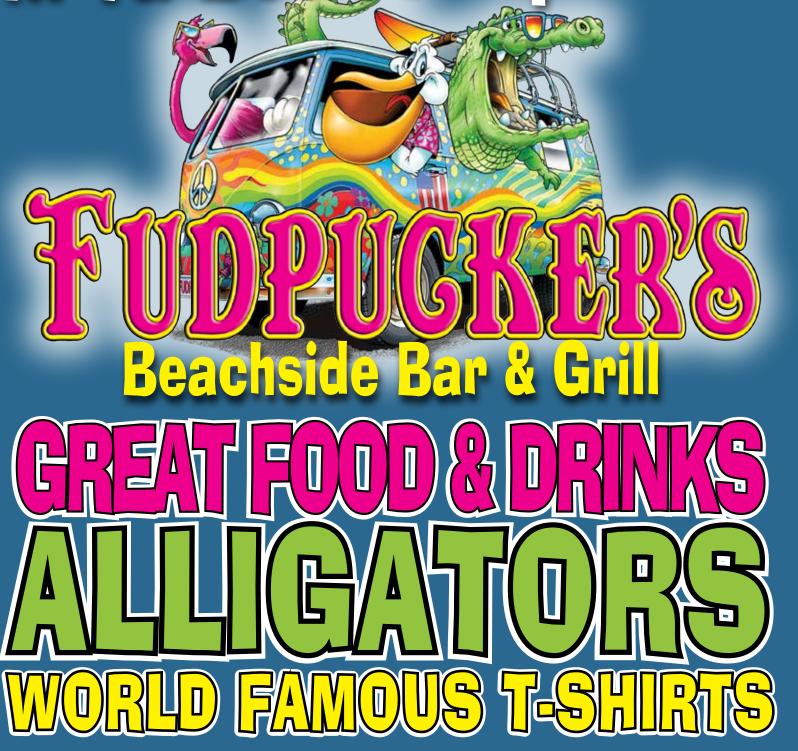
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Destin Diving, Entertainment, Specials

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

Summer is here! So, be sure to dance on down to a locals and visitors popular gathering place on the Destin Harbor. Since 1984, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. From its humble beginnings 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 daily, all month long. In June, Tribute Tuesdays with live-music tributes to your favorite artists! Check out the live music schedule at ajsdestin.com/destin-aj-s-seafood-and-oyster-bar-events-and-

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

Austons on 98

Locals love Austons! 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 37 big screen TVs all around, there's no bad seat in the house. So, come by and watch your sports 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 Boathouse on Facebook for updates.

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

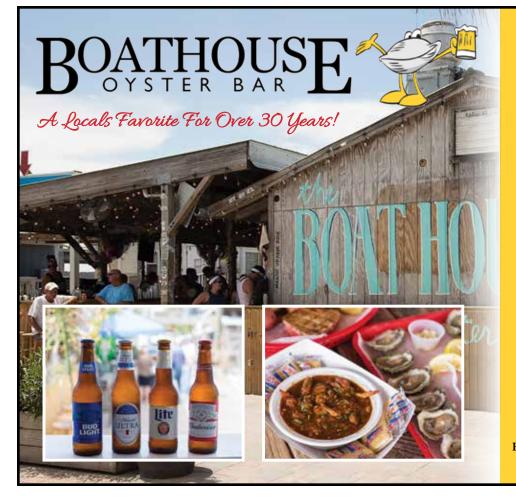
Café Destin

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

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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



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12pm: Rotating Spot 4pm: Shane Curle **8pm: Rotating Spot**

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

288 Harbor Blvd, Destin (850) 837-3645

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

Hand in Hand at Henderson Park Inn

Savory Dining, Breathtaking Views and a Peaceful Haven Await You

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to spend some time at Henderson Park Inn, a luxurious, adults-only, ages 25 and older, beachfront retreat renowned for its romantic ambiance, exceptional service and stunning, panoramic views of the Gulf?

Nestled adjacent to the pristine Henderson Beach State Park, it's as if the Inn itself was woven into the very fabric of Destin. This 37-room, upscale boutique resort offers an exclusive escape with a charming, old-world feel, perfect if you're seeking a peaceful and intimate vacation.

From the time you park your car, you're greeted with smiles and very personalized attention. The Inn's accommodations are elegantly appointed, featuring a blend of classic New England-style decor and modern amenities. Most rooms boast private balconies or terraces that offer breathtaking views of the emerald-green waters and sugar-white sandy beach-



es, and complete with wine and chocolate! Tiki torches and fire pits complete the ambiance around the back deck which beckons guests to sit in its rocking chairs and loveseat-style swings. Indulge in luxuries such as plush bedding, whirlpool tubs and complimentary wine and snacks, creating an idyllic setting for relaxation and romance.

Whether you're a guest or

Whether you're a guest or a local, dining at Henderson Park Inn is a delightful experience, highlighted by the renowned Beach Walk Cafe. This award-winning, on-site restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and dinner provides an exquisite



culinary journey with a focus on fresh, locally sourced seafood and gourmet cuisine. Enjoy an array of delectable dishes, from succulent Gulf shrimp and crab cakes to perfectly cooked steaks and innovative vegetarian options. The Beach Walk Cafe also offers a unique "Toes in the Sand" dining experience, where you can savor meals directly on the beach, under the stars, creating unforgettable memories. Beach Walk Café features an extensive brunch with live music on the first Sunday of each month, welcoming both locals and guests to enjoy panoramic views from the deck. Additionally, the restaurant hosts Wine Down Wednesday, offering guests a discount on bottles of wine with their dinner, making it a perfect midweek treat.

Cantina, the beachside grill, provides quick and casual dining, perfect for a relaxed meal by the water. For a laid-back get-together with friends, the Tiki Hut is unbeatable, offering a welcoming atmosphere and stunning views of the Gulf. Both spots promise delightful culinary experiences with the breathtaking Gulf as your backdrop.

The Inn's private, beachfront location allows for leisurely strolls, basking in the sun on provided loungers or a dip in the warm, inviting waters of the Gulf. For the more adventurous, options such as paddle boarding and kayaking are available, allowing you to explore the vibrant marine life and crystal-clear waters. Or enjoy our complimentary bikes to explore the surrounding area.

As a guest, you can enjoy a variety of amenities at the near-by Henderson Beach Resort including access to multiple pools, a state-of-the-art fitness center and the luxurious Henderson Spa, which offers a full range of rejuvenating services.

Henderson Park Inn combines elegant accommodations, exquisite dining and a pristine beachfront location to create a romantic and rejuvenating getaway. Whether lounging on the beach, indulging in gourmet meals, or exploring the natural beauty of Destin, you are sure to leave with cherished memories and a longing to return.

Visit Hendersonparkinn.com.



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DESTIN DINING

continued from page 22

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 vine-

gars, 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 emerladcoastoliveoil.com

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

"Ya Ain't Been Pucked Til Ya Been Fudpucked!" Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill in Destin has been locally owned and operated since its 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. Bring your family and come for the food! Come for the fun!

(850) 654-4200 20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy. Destin fudpucker.com

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights

Summer is here at Lady Ray's Culinary Delights! The recently expanded and popular 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 orders now for Summer-4th of July and Father's Day! Email Contact@ladyrays.biz.

833 Harbor Blvd. Unit 19, Destin (850) 269-0763 lady-rays-culinary-delights. myshopify.com

Melting Pot Destin

Tis the season to celebrate dads, teachers and grads! Celebrate your loved one and role model with the Ultimate Five-Course dining experience at Melting Pot Destin! This multi-sensory experience starts with a Green Goddess Bacon-Stuffed Tomato to awaken the palate. A fresh salad follows the first bite and sets the stage for the three most iconic courses. The third course is what Melting Pot is most known for - its chef-crafted cheese fondue served with fresh produce, bread and NEW! Double Dippers. The interactive, fourth course allows guests to cook premium entrées at the table using the fondue pots or a cast iron grill. Last, but certainly not least, is

the sparkling chocolate explosion fondue with a variety of delectable morsels for swirling and dunking. YUM! Take your celebration to the next level; you won't regret it!

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

Pecan Jacks

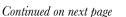


Destin locals' passion is a wildly popular ice cream and candy store. It's not your chain ice cream store—there's more than 40 flavors of homemade ice cream, with specialties such as Oreo ice cream, Bailey's salted caramel and banana pudding. The Pecan Jacks candy is as singular as its ice cream. It 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. Find Theo the Turtle here, too! Pecan Jacks Ice Cream is sure to add that extra touch of sweetness for all your spring celebrations! And don't forget those gift cards-the sweetest gifts for any occasion!

Hours Noon to 9 p.m. daily. (850) 427-3080 535 Harbor Blvd. (98 West) in Destin www.pecanjacks.com.

Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast? Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast from 8-11 a.m., seven days a







DESTIN DINING

continued from page 24

week. Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mimosas and bloody marys. Watch Tailfins' sushi chef create right in front of your eyes. Enjoy some of your favorite food and drinks, including sushi rolls and sake bombs, scrumptious early bird dinner specials Monday to Friday, 4-6 p.m. Happy hour from 4-6 p.m. Monday through Friday, featuring \$20 domestic bottle buckets, \$5 house wines and well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas. Live music on the docks. Tailfins features more than 70 big screen TVs including the new Video Wall upstairs so you can watch all your sports! 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) 842-3333 On the Harbor in Destin, 172 Harbor Blvd. tailfinsdestin.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





KITCHEN ISLAND

continued from page 16

Additional Island Features to Consider

There are many features that can be integrated into your island including appliances. Before you purchase your appliances, you should consult with your interior designer to ensure your layout maximizes functionality and aesthetics. Below are some popular options that can be included in your kitchen island.

- Appliance Garage
- Cabinets
- Dishwasher
- Fridge or Beverage Cooler
- Ice Maker
- Microwave
- Sink
- Stove & Hood Vent
- Trash & Recycle Bins

Sometimes the best island ideas can end up being a mistake if they aren't planned out properly. Some of the most common mistakes are:

- Obstructing the Workflow
- Forgetting About Plumbing
- Lack of proper electricity outlets in Island
- Inadequate Space for Appliances
- Inappropriate Island Size for Kitchen
- Poor Lighting
- Too Many Seats Crammed into the Space

Your island should blend seamlessly into your kitchen and shouldn't overwhelm the space. Hiring a professional interior designer will help ensure you get years of use and enjoyment out of your kitchen island.

Ready for a new island? Got questions? Contact Coastal Design by Kim to schedule your appointment today at (850) 904-6622.

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. Visit us at www.coastaldesignbykim.com.



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More than 275 Artificial Reefs Recently Deployed off Destin-Fort Walton Beach

Marine life in the Gulf of Mexico now has hundreds of additional underwater habitats thanks to a \$1.26 million artificial reef project funded by the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Fund.

The project included 133 different reef sites and the deployment of 279 total reef structures ranging from 6-25 feet. The project was managed by the Coastal Resources team of Destin-Fort Walton Beach in Okaloosa County's Tourism Development Department. The reefs include some of the deepest modules ever deployed by Destin-Fort Walton Beach with depths ranging from 65-292 feet.

"This is an impressive effort to enhance the habitats for marine life in the Gulf of Mexico waters," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Paul Mixon. "This is a great example of how we continue to work to be good stewards of the environment that we depend on for our fishing and tourism industries."

This project also included 3D-printed modules that were deployed in late February and are the first of its kind in the Gulf of Mexico. Overall, the project involved six total deployment days spanning from February to early May and involved contractors Walter Marine and 1Print who performed the construction and deployment work.

The project was 100% grant-funded from the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Fund which is administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.



"I am extremely proud of the work that was done to complete

this extensive project," said Destin-Fort Walton Beach Coastal Resources Manager Alex Fogg. "Our area of the Gulf of Mexico is lacking in natural reef structures for marine life to thrive which is something we are working to change. Not only do artificial reefs create essential habitat for native species here in the Gulf, but they also provide ideal locations for fishermen and divers to visit."

Coordinates for these and other reefs off of Destin-Fort Walton Beach can be found at https://www.destinfwb.com/explore/eco-tourism/artificial-reefs/maps.

2024 Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic June 19-23 | Sandestin®

The 22nd Annual Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic (ECBC), one of the top biggame fishing contests in the world, gets underway June 19 - June 23 at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort.

Teams will be competing for more than two million dollars in cash and awards, with blue marlin as the top prize. To qualify for the weigh-in, blue marlin must be at least 110 inches long, measured from the tip of the fish's lower jaw to the fork of the tail. The average winning blue marlin

The 22nd Annual Emertypically weighs 652 pounds or Coast Blue Marlin Classic heavier.

In addition to the blue marlin weight category, smaller blues, white marlin, sailfish and spearfish that are successfully caught and released earn points in the competitive release division, verified by video footage. Yellowfin and bigeye tuna, wahoo and dolphin are scored one point per pound at the scales.

The ECBC attracts multi-million-dollar sport-fishing yachts from across the Southeastern U.S. and Gulf Coast region. Fishing begins after Thursday's noon start from the Destin Pass and concludes Saturday afternoon. Eligible fish are weighed Friday and Saturday evenings at the Baytowne Marina. Viewing is free and open to the public. Additionally, the ECBC is a qualifying event in the Florida Panhandle Billfish Series, In-TheBite's Captain of the Year award and the Gulf Coast Triple Crown Championship.

For registration, dockage, rules and schedule of events, visit fishecbc.com.









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Residential and Commercial







M Off the Hook

World's Largest Lionfish Tournament Records Record-breaking Largest Lionfish

Divers in the Emerald Coast Open lionfish tournament were able to successfully remove 7,411 invasive lionfish despite rough weather in the Gulf of Mexico during the May 17-19 weekend event. Including the pre-tournament, 11,844 lionfish were removed for the entire event. Lionfish have few predators due to their venomous spines and cause negative impacts to the native ecosystem.

"These divers put in a lot of effort to help our ecosystem against this invasive species," said Okaloosa County Vice Chairman Nathan Boyles. "I congratulate the winners and extend an invitation to all the participants to return next year to Destin-Fort Walton Beach for this worthy endeavor."

The event boasted 147 participants from around the country and at least three international participants who competed for \$125,000 worth of cash and gear. Winners in this year's contest include the following teams:

1st Place Most Lionfish: VJL Seafood (1,776 lionfish)

1st Place Largest Lionfish: Deep Water Mafia El Gato Negro (18.70 inches **new record**)

1st Place Smallest Lion**fish:** Lookin' Back (1.89inches)

1st Place Pre-tourna-





ment and weigh-ins on Sunday, the tournament included the Lionfish Festival and Restaurant Week. The Lionfish Festival gathered various conservation-oriented vendors along the HarborWalk surrounding the weigh-in area who provided giveaways and lionfish education to families who visited the

Restaurant Week celebrated the delicious lionfish featured in cuisine by chefs at local restaurants. This year's winner, La Paz, celebrated their second win



years," said Destin-Fort Walton Beach Coastal Resource Manager Alex Fogg. "I want to thank all of the sponsors, divers and volunteers who made this annual event possible. They stuck it out in rough weather and still brought home a lot of lionfish."

Save the date: The 2025 Emerald Coast Open will take place May 16-18, 2025. Learn more about the tournament at emeraldcostopen.com.

103-Day Gulf Red Snapper Recreational Season for 2024!

Governor Ron DeSantis recently announced the record 103-day 2024 Gulf Red Snapper recreational season, the longest season since the state was delegated management of Gulf red snapper. This season will include both a summer and fall season which includes major holiday weekends such as Father's Day, July 4th and the Thanksgiving holiday.

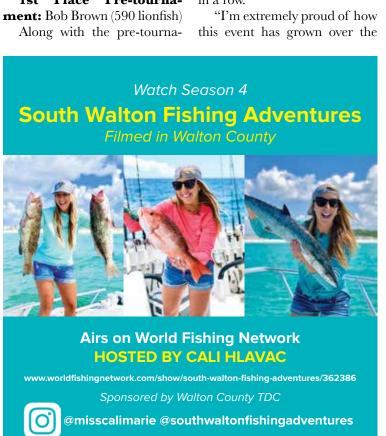
Those fishing from private recreational vessels or charter vessels will be able to par-

ticipate in the 2024 Gulf red snapper season. The 61-day summer season began June 1 and will continue through July 31. The 42-day fall season is the longest fall season since the beginning of state.

Florida is able to offer this long season due to data driven management of the Red Snapper fishery on the Gulf Coast, which is not allowed by the Federal Government on the East Coast of the state. Consequently, the federal government's expected Atlantic Red Snapper Season will last 0-2 days.

If you plan to fish for red snapper in state or federal waters from a private recreational vessel, even if you are exempt from fishing license requirements, you must sign up as a State Reef Fish Angler (annual renewal required) at GoOutdoorsFlorida com

Find more on recreational snapper regulations at MyF-WC.com/Marine.







Destin Does It Differently: Year-Round Partnerships Make for Year-Round Boating Safety

By Tamara L. Young, Ph.D., Public Information Director FOR THE WORLD'S LUCKIEST FISHING VILLAGE

All 365 days out of the year, but particularly in the summer, people descend in droves from all parts of the world to Destin. Most often, they are driven by the desire to experience the emerald green waters. Many come specifically for Crab Island and, on any day of the year, you can find both visitors and locals enjoying the unique area. It's located in national seashore waters over state-held submerged waters, and while it's "just" a sandbar, it's also an oasis to many and a hotbed for boaters to gather.

Crab Island and the surrounding waters around the County offer people a chance to relax, unwind and be carefree. But carefree comes at a preventative and strategic manpower cost. For those behind the scenes, it's a 365day effort to keep people safe, and it takes numerous entities working in partnership to do so.

Groups including the City of Destin, Okaloosa County Watersport Operators Coalition, Okaloosa County Coastal Resource, United States Coast Guard (USCG), Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OSCO), Destin Fire Control District, Eglin AFB Marine Unit, National Parks Service, Destin Charter Boat Association, Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance and more – several more work together.

Trainings & Wristbands

Kyle Corbitt with the Beach/ Marine/Dive Team Special Operations of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, said, "One of the biggest things is the partnership with Watersport Operators Coalition. They have spearheaded the wristband system and the need for more boating education."

Anyone renting vessels with the intent to drive must undergo state-mandated training, is required to watch the Okaloosa



County boating and waterway safety video, receives personal watercraft or pontoon equipment training, and receives emergency contact information.

To ensure approved drivers are easily identified, they sport color-coded livery wristbands showing they've passed all the necessary tests and training. These wristbands easily indicate driving and license status aboard the vessel: green wristbands indicate an approved driver; pink wristbands indicate a driver with a Boater's license; orange wristbands indicate an approved driver with a parent on board; and red wristbands indicate the individual is not approved and cannot drive the vessel.

All law enforcement on the water are keenly aware and recognize the color-coded

Another piece to the safety puzzle is how livery owners are doing their part in helping control boat driver alcohol consumption. "They have spotters out there", said Corbitt, "and they have in their contracts, hey here's your wristband, and if you're an approved skipper and you're caught drinking out at Crab Island, it's a problem for us. It's a huge liability factor, and they don't want their insurance to increase. Safety is the biggest factor, but they have a financial interest, too."

The partnerships appear to be working. Corbit said even though vessel stops increased last year, BUIs were down.

In 2021, there were 83 BUIs. In 2022, there were 88 BUIs. Last year, there were 18-20.

And it's not just a decrease in alcohol-related citations. "We've seen an overall decrease in violations on the water with no-wake zones, lanyards on jet skis and proper life jacket usage," said Corbitt.

Technological Innovations

GPS technology has offered one of the greatest steps forward toward safer waterways. A livery operator now has the ability to know instantaneously and specifically where all customers are at all times.

If weather patterns change or start to look ominous, livery operators have access to see which customers are in the path of danger or at greater distances away from coming back to the dock. A phone call or text to the customer ensures they have information

Continued on next page



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Seacoast Collegiate High School Expands Athletics

Seacoast Collegiate High School, The Seaside School, Inc.'s high school, has announced the expansion of its athletic program with the addition of boys and girls weightlifting and boys and girls swim teams. These exciting new opportunities will provide students with avenues to excel in both individual and team-based sports, fostering camaraderie, discipline and physical fitness.

The boys and girls weightlifting teams will offer students the chance to develop strength, technique, and mental resilience under the guidance of Coach Evan Chelini. Meanwhile, the boys and girls swim teams, led by Coach Jack O'Connor, will provide an outlet for students to showcase their aquatic skills and compete at a high level.

Furthermore, Seacoast Collegiate High School is proud to extend an invitation to all public high school students in Walton County to join the newly formed boys and girls swim teams. This

inclusive initiative aims to promote community engagement and collaboration among local schools while providing students with access to high-quality athletic programs.

Randy Moore, Athletic Di-For more information and registration details, please contact Randy Moore, at moorer@seasideschools.net. Applications for Seacoast Collegiate High School for the 2024-2025 school year are still being accepted online for incoming 11th and 12 graders. Incoming 9th and 10th graders may still apply to be placed on the waitlist for enrollment.

BOATING SAFETY

continued from previous page

relayed to them quickly.

Geofencing is another option for livery operators and boat drivers to maintain safety. If a customer goes out of bounds, such as going into the Gulf of Mexico, the livery operator will get a notification on their phone about it. The capability also exists to install a physical alarm on a vessel so that the boat driver is immediately warned.

Similarly, alarms can be set for maximum speed alerts. If a customer is speeding in a zone, the operator will get a notification and an alarm on the vessel will go off.

"I've had law enforcement tell me stories of hearing the alarm in the distance and then going to pull over the customer to make sure everyone stays safe," said John Stephens, owner of Luther's Pontoon, Waverunners, & Kayaks Rentals. "It's neat to see on the app that about 75% of the customers slow down after the first alarm."

While only a few livery owners are taking advantage of the GPS safety alarms, it's only a matter of time before others jump on board.

"It helps with location, speed, and we can use it to send a jet ski spotter out there to stop some one or help them realize they're in an area that could pose extra dangers," said Stephens.

The waterway can appear serene but have currents and shifting patterns some don't realize.

"If you drive a car in the U.S." explained Corbitt, "then you go

over to England and you're not driving on the right side of the road anymore, you have to learn new rules. Much like that, boating around Destin isn't the same as boating on Lake Michigan. You have to learn the rules of the road where you're at."

Long-time locals are not immune. The County changes wake zones, so it's recommended to pay attention to the City social media and other platforms.

Locals are often looked at to set the example. "Others are watching what you do, so we want locals setting the stage for safety," said Corbitt. "Visitors will follow what they see charter captains and parasailing folks doing and where they are going."

Aqua Alert

While looking serene, "The currents around Crab Island

aren't something to mess with," said Corbitt.

He's been part of the beach marine unit for about seven years, and he noted the high success rate when it comes to search and rescues.

"We all communicate so well, whether it's the FWC Coast Guard, livery vessels or spotters watching on a bad outgoing tide day. Everyone is out there and has safety in mind."

Conceived by an idea from Judy Schink after her husband disappeared while kayaking in the Gulf of Mexico, the Aqua Alert system is a public alert notification system for missing endangered boaters or paddle craft operators. Partners in the area hope the system eventually becomes a statewide initiative and then makes it to the nation-

al level. Currently, locals or visitors need to have the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office mobile app to receive notifications.

"Not all locals or tourists coming to town for a few days will have the app," said Corbitt. "We'd like it to be like an Amber Alert. If you have a missing 3-year-old in Miami, you're going to get a description of the car and other details. You never know who might be around to see something and report in from the water."

From education to advocacy to technology, Destin prides itself on its partnerships and being a model for boating safety. The 365-day water work week never stops.









By Stephenie Craig

"We are limiting screen time because future research is going to show negative impacts of screens and social media on developing brains." Insert eye roll from 3 boys who sometimes wish I wasn't a therapist. Kids born in 2007, the iphone release year, are now 17 and old enough for us to begin understanding the impact of smartphones and social media on the brain moving through puberty. In the book

Change is Me, Change is We

The Anxious Generation, Jonathan Haidt explores research emerging since 2016 showing a drastic (up to 150%) increase in anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts/behavior related specifically to smartphone and social media access before and during puberty.

Most people are seeking dopamine through smartphones and most are struggling to manage phone use well. However, there is a unique detrimental effect of smartphones and social media on those below 16. Parents encourage kids to set boundaries for themselves but developing brains are not capable of setting boundaries with devices and platforms designed for addiction.

Culture has shifted toward giving kids smartphones earlier as tools to communicate, track location, and to feel safe. The resulting cultural norm isolates kids from significant social interaction when families delay introducing smartphones. No parent wants their child to be excluded, socially isolated, or bullied for being the "only one." Parents find themselves in a nowin situation of choosing between earlier phone access or their child being left out.

Often when change is needed, the "change is me." You have the power to make a change for yourself without external input. For example, you can decide your child needs phone boundaries and you can use Screen Time or other software to create time and app boundaries. You have the power to decide the age your children will get smartphones. On some level, managing smartphone exposure for kids is a "change is me" situation for each family.

Other times when change is needed, the "change is we." You make decisions for individual change and still find yourself within systems challenging the change you're working to make. For example, you decide not to grant smartphone access until age 14 resulting in social isolation for your child. You can make the decision despite uncomfortable results. However, it could be more effective to take a "change is we" approach," banding together with other parents to postpone smartphone access helping reduce social isolation as a group.

Embracing personal empowerment in decision making is important and, in many cases, exactly what you need to make meaningful change. The combination of individual change and collective change is sometimes necessary to create large-scale cultural movement around issues like how phones and social media are impacting the mental health of kids. So, you see the challenge, but how do you start to engage change on a "me" and "we" level?

5 "Me" and "We" Ways to Address Challenges of **Smartphones and Social Media for Kids:**

- 1. Educate. Read The Anxious Generation by Johnathan Haidt. Listen to recent podcasts featuring the book. Invite other parents to read the book and discuss. Talk with kids about the research and upcoming boundary changes you will be making.
- 2. Evaluate. Evaluate current values and boundaries around phones/social media



in light of research-based recommendations to delay smartphones until 14 and social media until 16. Notice daily screen hours. Observe and investigate without shame. Shame is not necessary for change.

- **3. Implement.** Put values-based boundaries into place using whatever supports needed including Screen Time, boundary software, timers.
- 4. Collaborate. Collaborate with other parents to reduce social isolation for kids. Make parent pacts and follow through together.
- **5. Empathize.** Change is hard. Let your kids know you see it is hard for them to have new boundaries and listen to their complaints with empathy while still holding your boundaries. Empathize with other parents as you all navigate parenting through hard decisions.

Individual and collective change can be challenging but very possible when you own your part and connect with others. Previously, parents didn't know giving kids smartphone access could be damaging to mental health. New information provides new opportunities to set kids up for better emotional health foundations for life. As you navigate challenges of implementing change along your journey, connect with us at Journeybravely.com for counseling and coaching.

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GRACE RIDES

continued from page 12

The Future Vision

With steadfast community support and the dedication of volunteers and donors, Grace Rides is poised for significant expansion. The construction of a 9,000 sq/ft barn in Defuniak Springs serves as a vivid testament to what collective faith and support can accomplish. Sherry Hall proudly declares, "This is the barn that God built."

Looking ahead, Grace Rides has outlined a 10-year strategic plan to broaden its scope of services. "Currently, we operate without a required fee structure, relying entirely on donations and volunteer support," explains Sherry. The future roadmap includes introducing full-service overnight stays to complement existing day camps, enhancing the breadth of therapeutic engagement available to participants.

Moreover, Sherry shares an ambitious vision to construct a large event center featuring a gymnasium and a fully catered kitchen. This facility would host community events such as weddings and family reunions and offer employment opportunities to program participants and volunteers. "We envision a space that serves our mission and becomes a hub for community gatherings and celebrations," she adds.

Grace Rides is seeking substantial funding opportunities to realize these goals, including an Impact 100 grant. The organization is also calling for donors to provide matching funds, a critical step towards leveraging larger grants and ensuring the financial sustainability of these expansive projects.

By engaging with Grace Rides, community members, and supporters can play a pivotal role in transforming these aspirations into reality, paving the way for a future where the organization can touch even more lives through its equine-assisted programs.

A Call to Action

Grace Rides invites everyone to join their journey by volunteering, sponsoring, or simply sharing their story. The experience at Grace Rides isn't just about riding; it's about building confidence, fostering relationships, and creating a community where everyone is valued and empowered.

Conclusion

Grace Rides is more than an equestrian program; it is a spiritual journey that intertwines faith, compassion, and the therapeutic power of horses to create profound changes in the lives of participants and volunteers alike. It stands as a testament to what can be achieved when a community comes together to support "the least of these," embodying the very essence of grace and service.

As Grace Rides continues to write its story, it calls on us to be a part of something bigger than ourselves, to contribute to

a legacy of love, healing, and empowerment that will resonate for generations to come. Check them out at www.gracerides.net.

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Wellness



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By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, HealthyDay HealthyLife

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Vegetables. We all know we're supposed to be eating more of them. A salad a day or veggies as the main with meat and starch as sides is a new goal

for many. The thing we don't think about is how to prepare them to get the greatest amount of nutrients in us.

The amount of nutrients in a vegetable is dependent on the dirt it was grown in and when it was harvested. The other factor is the percent of pesticides, etc., that it was exposed to. Our body's ability to absorb nutrients also depends on how much we chew before swallowing and the health of our digestive system.

Veggies are broken down and absorbed in different ways. The nutrient quality and quantity differ due to the chemical composition changes that happen when exposed to heat.

Let's break it down...

Minerals such as potassium, calcium and iron are more readily available and absorbed due to the fiber breakdown

when the veggie is heated.

Fat soluble nutrients are pushed into our fat and stored for use when needed. A, D, E, and K are some of these and they are less likely to be destroyed by cooking.

Water soluble nutrients such as the B's and C and antioxidants are absorbed through the cell walls and diffused in the bloodstream. They are more susceptible to heat damage; the higher the heat the more rapidly they degrade.

Raw provides optimal levels

of folate (B9) and water-soluble nutrients such as C. These help to protect against oxidative stress (cause of inflammation) and can guard against neuro-degenerative diseases, chronic inflammatory disease and some forms of depression. A French expression says 'It's not about how fast you eat but on how well you eat'.

There are several cooking methods (No matter what method you use al-dente or slightly wilted is recommended.):

When cooking on the stove, which usually involves water use a lower heat setting, you'll notice that the water turns the color of the veggie being cooked. This is where those nutrients that left the veggies are so DON'T throw out the water. You can use it in shakes, add to gravies, soups, stocks, baking, etc.

Air frying protects the veggies from the heat source which can result in retaining a higher percentage of nutrients.

Between 50-90% of nutrients can be retained when steamed. **Steaming** can also improve the impact on water soluble vitamins as it limits direct contact with water and heat source.

When **sautéing** your veggies use low heat and olive oil along with your favorite veggies.

Pressure cooking is one the best choices as the steam can't escape and veggies can retain 90-95% of their nutrients.

Lastly is **roasting**. Stir the veggies with a touch of olive oil and your favorite spices. Place them on a grate over the pan (The more surface area that touches the heat source the more nutrient loss occurs.) on a low setting. Remember to keep them al-dente.

Veggies that are better when cooked are spinach, asparagus, tomatoes, mushrooms, potatoes, carrots, celery and green beans.

Lastly, eat veggies that are in season and choose a variety. (Change it up.) Examples could be using shredded cabbage and broccoli slaw in your salads instead of lettuce, zucchini in place of cucumbers (My hubby hates cucumbers, so this is a great sub for us and I get to enjoy both.) Be creative and enjoy all this summer offers.

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









Active Father, Active Child



By Lisa Leath Turpin, Health & Wellness Coach

Fathers are increasingly involved in various aspects of their children's lives, including exercise and physical activities. According to a Pew Research Center report, fathers with children under 18 spend, on average, 1.02 hours per day providing care and helping their children, which includes activities like playing and providing physical care. This suggests that a portion of this time might include engaging in physical activities or exercise together.

A survey by the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital found that about 37% of parents set goals to exercise with their children. Within this group, more mothers (41%) than fathers (30%) reported setting such goals. However, this indicates a significant



minority of fathers are actively striving to incorporate physical activities into their parenting routines, aiming to improve both their own and their children's health. These statistics reflect a broader trend of fathers becoming more engaged in their children's daily lives and wellness, highlighting the importance placed on shared physical activities as a means of fostering health and bonding.

There are benefits to exercising with your children. Fathers exercising with their children can provide numerous benefits encompassing physical, emotional and social aspects of health and development. Here are some key advantages:

Physical Health:

Improved Fitness: Regular physical activity helps improve cardiovascular health, strength, flexibility and overall fitness for both fathers and children. Engaging in exercise to-

gether can instill lifelong healthy habits

Reduce Obesity Risk: Active play and exercise can help manage weight and reduce the risk of childhood obesity, which is linked to various health issues later in life.

Emotional & Mental Health:

Enhanced Bonding: Exercising together provides quality time that strengthens the emotional bond between fathers and their children. This bonding can lead to better communication and understanding within the family.

Stress Reduction: Physical activity is a well-known stress reliever. Participating in exercise together can help reduce stress levels for both fathers and children, promoting better mental health.

Boosted Self-Esteem: Children often look up to their fathers as role models. Engaging in physical activities can boost children's confidence and self-esteem as they see their fathers valuing and participating in healthy behaviors.

Social Benefits:

Improved Social Skills: Group activities or team sports can help children develop social

skills such as teamwork, leadership and cooperation. Fathers can model positive social interactions during these activities.

Stronger Community Ties: Participation in community sports or fitness programs can foster a sense of community and belonging, benefiting both fathers and their children.

Developmental Benefits:

Motor Skill Development: Physical activities help children develop fine and gross motor skills, which are crucial for their overall physical development. Fathers can guide and support their children in mastering these skills through shared exercise routines.

Cognitive Development: Exercise has been linked to improved cognitive function and academic performance. Engaging in physical activities can en-

hance children's concentration, memory and learning abilities.

Destin provides many opportunities to exercise with your children. Hiking at Point Washington, beach volleyball/ paddleball, surfing/paddle boarding, City of Destin sports teams, pickleball/tennis, golfing, neighborhood walks-the list is endless! A father exercising with his children offers a multifaceted range of benefits, promoting better health, stronger relationships and enhanced developmental outcomes. This shared activity supports not only physical well-being, but also emotional, social and cognitive growth. Happy Father's Day to all the "active" Dads out there who make an exceptional difference in the lives of their children! Because, after all, your child is what makes you a DAD in the first place!





By Krisy Anderson

In today's world, it's a myth that a spa is just for the ladies. In more recent years, approximately 47 percent of spa-goers were men. Males have finally realized that grooming and taking care of their appearance is a means of style. Trimmed facial hair, clean cut nails and hair, you name it, men are all for it.

More and more, men are flocking to the spa for male-specific options, such as scrubs and waxing. Waxes for the chest, back or face are one of the top choices

Men – You Deserve Self Care, Too

for a men's spa trip. It lasts longer than shaving and gives your body a cleaner, more defined look. It also allows more time to do other things, like work or go to the gym or meet with friends. Unique and ultra-defined facial hair is another favorite trend for men right now. Waxing gives them the option of fine-combing the shape of their facial hair with razor-sharp precision.

Massages are not just for the ladies; your dad, husband or brother deserves an unwind, too. A massage has incredible benefits for a guy's physique and soothes sore muscles more than just stretching after a workout.

The now-dubbed "manly-cure" is another spa treatment that's gaining ground with the guys. Clean, cut and shaped nails on both hands and toes are both professional-looking and help maintain cuticle health.

Scrubs for men help show off clean and healthy skin. Men, in particular, are drawn to this spa treatment in which dead skin cells are exfoliated. Not only is it a pleasant feeling to have clean, smooth skin, but it's also great for confidence and physical mentality.

For Father's Day, pamper your dad, brother, husband or son at Beverly Hills Day Spa where we specialize in men's services.

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Motorized Screens in Florida: A Comprehensive Guide



By Chris Balzer

Motorized screens have become increasingly popular in Florida, offering a convenient and effective way to protect homes and businesses from the sun, insects and other pests. In this guide, we will explore the benefits of motorized screens, the different types available and

ENERGY TIPS

by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

the factors to consider when choosing and installing them in Florida.

Motorized screens provide numerous benefits for Florida residents.

Sun protection: Motorized screens block out harmful UV rays, reducing the risk of skin cancer and protecting furniture and flooring from fading.

Insect protection: Mo-

torized screens keep out insects, such as mosquitoes, yellow flies and no-see-ums, making outdoor spaces more enjoyable and comfortable.

Privacy: Motorized screens provide privacy from neighbors and passersby, allowing you to relax and enjoy your outdoor space without feeling exposed.

Energy efficiency: Motorized screens can help reduce energy costs by blocking out the sun's heat and allowing for better airflow.

Convenience: Motorized screens can be operated with a remote control or smartphone app, making them easy to use and adjust.

Types of Motorized Screens

There are several different types of motorized screens available, including the following:

Retractable screens: Retractable screens are a type of motorized screen that can be rolled up and down as needed. They are a good option for patios, porches, outdoor eating, and other areas where you want to be able to open and close the screens as needed

Solar screens: Solar screens are made of a special mesh fabric that blocks out UV rays while still allowing for visibility.

Factors to Consider When Choosing Motorized Screens

When choosing motorized screens for your home or business, there are several factors to consider:

Size: The size of the screens will depend on the size of the openings you need to cover.

Type: The type of screen you choose will depend on your specific needs and preferences.

Material: The material of the screen will affect its durability and performance.

Motor: The motor is a vital component of the screen, so it is important to choose a high-quality motor that is powerful enough to operate the screen smoothly and reliably.

Installation: It is important to have motorized screens installed by a qualified professional to ensure proper operation.

Motorized screens offer many benefits for Florida residents, including sun protection, insect protection, privacy, energy efficiency and convenience. By considering the factors discussed in this guide, you can choose and install the right motorized screens for your home or business. If you would like to learn more about motorized screens and if they are good solutions, call Chris at 850-588-2870.

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions, a Smile Provider Company. ECES provides smiles to its customers after installing high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save this summer and become energy efficient, 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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munities. "We were the pioneers

who stepped into that space ear-

ly," says Lightsey. "A lot of peo-

ple have gotten into the business

since then—not because of us.

but because of the demand for

Along with relationships,

these types of vehicles."

By Christopher Manson

ECCO Motors owner Scott Lightsey spent decades in automotive service, rentals, parts and "you name it." He moved to Destin from Tallahassee 20 years ago, thinking he was "in the early stages of retirement, but I realized you have to put away a lot more money!'

At age 50, Lightsey fired up his golf cart business, which was not in particularly high demand at the time. "I started off very small," he says. "A 600-squarefoot building in Fort Walton Beach." In 2005, Lightsey moved his operation to Mountain Drive in Destin and quickly established his customer base.

ECCO Motors opened its Miramar Beach location (on 147 Professional Drive) in order to be closer to its clientele. "I just kept doing the right thing, taking care of customers," says Lightsey. Along with selling golf carts and Low Speed Vehicles (LSVs), the ECCO team began custom building cars "and that took on a life of its own."

Lightsey continued to build on a foundation of quality and being service oriented. "The industry has been in a constant state of flux. We started with the three major brands, and now we have a proliferation of new, better-equipped models."

Last year, another extension opened at the Mountain Drive location. "We're always innovating and looking for new ways to serve our customers," says Lightsey. The Mountain Drive location has begun a vehicle storage program based on the boat storage concept. "We take care of the cars while the owners are out of town."

Today, we're at the Destin location—on Emerald Coast Parkway, across from Regatta Bay-where Lightsey tells me

850-279-6054

the common thread for all three locations is serving his customers better than anyone else.

"Destin has been good to us - the whole area," he says. "The key behind all of this is hiring good people that care and see the value in our customer rela-

"We've had some difficulty hiring good people, this being an expensive place to live. We recruit people from Crestview, Navarre - people willing to come here on a daily basis.'

Future plans for ECCO Motors include setting up what Lightsey calls "satellite operations"-smaller stores in areas that are really growing, such as Freeport and Navarre. "It's a 'hub and spoke' concept," he says. "The main business would remain here, but the smaller stores can take care of customers that don't want to come to Destin.

Back in the Tallahassee days, a good friend of Lightsey's was involved with solar energy. "He had someone custom build him an electric car back in the '90s, and I participated in some of the electric car events being put on at the time-multi-day road rallies, visits to schools to bring electric car awareness. This was before Tesla and all the major manufacturers."

He was bitten by the electric car concept. "Me and some guys invested in a car that would do about 110 miles per hour, which was unheard of (at the time). It was real impressive that we could build an electric car." Lightsey investigated the market and discovered that golf carts were the closest things to electric cars.

"There were a few golf cart shops in the area when I started that mostly catered to the golf clientele," he says. "Not to the



ECCO Motors feels it's important to be involved in the community. For example, in recent years, ECCO Motors has partnered with this publication for

the Destin Christmas Parade. "Part of being socially involved is supporting the community. Giving back is as important as receiving," says Lightsey.

As for the basic appeal of electric vehicles, Lightsey boils it down. "They're like 'land boats.' You have all the freedom—wind in your face, you're not confined in a car. There's not a lot of road rage! You feel the temperature, you smell and hear everything. It's a very economical way to get around.

"The majority of our buyers have two elements to addresstheir pets and their kids. Those two groups really enjoy the experience.'

ECCO Motors is located in Destin and Miramar Beach. Call 850.837.2600 to learn more, or visit eccomotors.com.

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Transform Arguments into Constructive Conversations



By BILL MASON, PCC, CPL C, EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP COACH, ROCKET FUEL COACH

Have you ever found yourself locked in an argument, with each word escalating the tension, only to realize that no amount of debate would sway the other's opinion? Yeah, we've all been there. It's like a dance nobody enjoys but somehow everyone knows the steps.

But here's a thought that struck me recently—if arguing is the lowest form of persuasion, why do we keep doing it?

Picture this: During a casual chat, a friend challenged my views so fiercely that it felt like I was in a debate club I never signed up for. This whirlwind conversation left me pondering not just the futility of arguments but also the art of persuasion itself. The truth hit me—real persuasion doesn't come from proving someone wrong but from understanding where they're coming from.

This revelation was like finding a new octave on a piano. Suddenly, the world seemed richer with possibilities for meaningful exchanges rather than win-lose scenarios. It made me realize that winning people over to your perspective isn't about dominating the conversation but about enriching it with empathy and curiosity.

Easier said than done, right? Well, two things have been game-changers for me:

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tions teaches us to stay connected, even in the heat of the moment, rather than shutting down or lashing out.

Are you excited to learn more? We're about to launch a course on leveraging your strengths and navigating complex emotional landscapes. It's your first step toward turning tense arguments into opportunities for growth and connection.

Stay tuned for more information on this transformative

course. In the meantime, I challenge you (friendly challenge, I promise!) to replace debates with genuine questions this week. Who knows? You might just enjoy the symphony of constructive conversations that ensue.

Here's to discovery, dialogue, and maybe, just maybe, a bit less

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Keep on Growing... Blue Bay Lifestyle Co.

By Christopher Manson

"We are committed to providing excellent customer service and ensuring that every customer leaves our store satisfied. We also believe in giving back to our community and supporting local organizations that make a difference."

~ From "Our Commitment," bluebaylifestyle.com

"...a breath of fresh air to the Fort Walton Beach community."

~ Staci M., Review on Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. Facebook Page

Blue Bay Lifestyle Co., located at 27 Racetrack Road NE in Fort Walton Beach, is a men and women's clothing and footwear (sneakers, sandals, hiking boots, loafers) store that has partnered with a number of leading brands, including Keen, Hoka, The North Face, Aetrex and OluKai.

The shop offers vegan and environmentally-friendly shoes, as well as in-store shoe fittings. Blue Bay's aim is to provide high-quality shoes and apparel that "not only look great, but also feel comfortable."



Owners Donna and Jeff Harris also own neighboring store Run With It and the adjacent indoor pickleball court. Their sons, recent college graduates, are in the business, too.

Blue Bay opened last Christmas Eve, to the delight of the area's last-minute shoppers. "It took a lot longer to get the store ready than we'd anticipated, but we made it happen," says Donna.

The big challenge in starting a new business, she says, is getting the word out. "We're lucky. We knew

what we were doing, because we've had Run With It for 15 years." Run With It was located in Downtown Fort Walton Beach for its first 13 years, but the Harrises longed to own their own building.

When their lease was up, they found the current location on Racetrack Road, a four-unit building that houses Run With It, Blue Bay Lifestyle Co., the pickleball court, and another tenant. "When one of the units was vacated, we decided to open an everyday casual apparel and shoe shop.

"We don't have that many shops in Fort Walton Beach," says Donna. "We're definitely here to stay, and we've always loved the retail business and providing for our community."

Donna and Jeff's first inclination was to lean more towards outdoors, but they've evolved toward boutique and unique brands.

They relocated from Birmingham, Ala., 15 years ago, where they were in the restaurant business for a little over two decades – "a café and catering company," she says.

"We were ready to do something different. Late in life, we started running with our friends and loved the concept. So, we opened a running store. Jeff's parents lived in Gulf Breeze, which was a big reason for moving here. And we love the beach!"

The couple supports the Northwest Florida Track Club, and Donna serves as race director for several yearly events. "One of our biggest endeavors was building the track at Fort Walton Beach High School. It took about 10 years, but we did it."

She adds: "The reason we picked Fort Walton was because they had enough room for a self-sustaining track, whereas the other schools did not have that ability." They are also members of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce and contribute to many local running groups.

The Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. has a small staff, including Donna, that rotates between the new shop, Run With It, and the indoor pickleball court. Donna takes pride in her business' personalized touch. "Customer service seems like a thing of the past, but not to us," she says.

Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, call 850.374.8236 or visit bluebaylifestyle.com.



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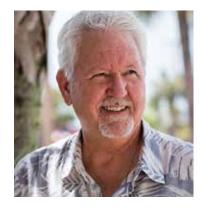
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Musing



By PASTOR DAVE HOLLAND

"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." John 7:38, NIV

Etched in the ancient walls of the Grand Canyon lies the history of Earth. Pictured in the waves of stone, eons of land upheavals and volcanoes, floods and draughts tell their tale. The flow of the Colorado River cuts through 9,000 feet of rock and gives rise to these towering canyon walls. A wonder to behold.

Freezing, thawing and storms left their scars on the canyon surface just as they do on the walls of our hearts. Trials and troubles burrowed into our psyche, leaving us wounded and scarred. Unknown forces pushed and shoved us in ways

A Pastor's Ponderings: I'm a Canyon

we didn't understand. Yet, deep in the canyon of our soul runs a river of life. Water that we access by faith in the Lord Jesus.

Much like the Colorado River, the events of our lives cut through our feelings and emotions down to the core of our being. Below the trials and heartaches, our faith reveals the river of life God has placed within us.

Popular Christian songwriter Ellie Holcomb shares in her song "Canyon:"

I'm a canyon, I'm a canyon
The shape of Your love is a
mystery

The shape of Your love is falling rain

There in my deepest ache You're whispering, That the cracks of my bro-

ken heart will let You in
There's a river running

through my deepest sorrow There's a river running through my deepest pain

There's a river running through every dream that never came true

Made me a canyon But there's a river running



through (I'm a canyon, I'm a canyon)

There's a river running through (I'm a canyon, I'm a canyon)

Could it be that God is the unseen author writing on the tablets of our hearts? He writes with trials and storms, volcanoes and heartaches. His message points back to the river of faith in the Lord Jesus. Drink from those waters, dear friend.

Dave Holland pastored churches for thirty-eight years before retiring in Destin, Florida. He recently released his new devotional-Bible study based on the Gospel of Luke titled "Prodigal Jesus, Journey Back to the Father" You can get a copy of this book from his website, DaveHolland.org, or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach at churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidvHolland54@gmail.com.















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By Sean Dietrich

The boy holds his fish as high as he can. His father hugs him and kisses his hair. They make a fine picture together.

I'm watching a father and son fish in a state park. They stand shoulder-to-shoulder.

After a few minutes, the boy's rod starts to bend.

He screams, "I GOT ONE DAD!" His voice carries on the water all the way to Birmingham.

And I am a nine-year-old again.

In fact, if I were to shut my eyes right now, I would see my father, shirtless, standing on a sandy teshore, smiling. A beer can by his feet.

"Quit messing with your reel so much," he'd say. "You'll scare fish away if you don't relax."

On one particular day, my father caught three bass and a shellcracker. Mister Unrelaxed had not been so fortunate—I'd caught one Penzoil can and a medium-sized turtle.

But my luck changed. My rod nearly jerked out of my hands. I tugged and cranked.

And it happened. I caught a bass bigger than most residential water heaters. Daddy whooped

Sean of the South



and hollered.

He let me take a sip of his lukewarm beer. He discussed how to clean a fish.

He handed me a Buck knife to cut off the head. He made me swear to keep both hands on the handle.

The next thing I remember is a puddle of my own blood. I nearly fainted.

Daddy wasted no time. He tossed my flopping fish into the truck bed. He pressed a wadded T-shirt against my cut hand. We sped to the Emergency room.

I glanced through the back window and saw my fish flopping in the pickup bed.

"Your mama's gonna kill me," said Daddy.

The doctor was an old man. He looked at my hand and said, "What kinda fish you catch, old timer?"

Old timer.

I told him. He smiled, then removed a needle as big as a turkey baster. He jammed it into my palm and said, "I hope it was worth it."

I screamed. Daddy held me against himself and kissed my hair while the doc stitched me. And for as long my mind stays sharp, I'll never forget the way Daddy smelled.

It's funny, the things you remember about dead people.

For instance, I remember the way Daddy ate his eggs. I remember his long-legged walk—like a heron. I remember how he used to sit in a chair after work, crying for no apparent reason.

And the night before he took his own life, I remember a blank look on his face.

"Remember that time we went fishing and you cut your hand?" he said.

Do I ever.

The kid and his father want their photo taken. The man asks if I'll do the honors.

He hands me his phone. I tell them both to say, "cheese." They do.

The boy holds his fish as high as he can. His father hugs him and kisses his hair. They make a fine picture together.

I'm not sad about the way my life turned out. God help me, I'm not. I don't wish for different circumstances. I don't want anything more than what I have.

But if God were taking re-

I wouldn't mind fishing with

Daddy again.

Or a kiss on the hair. Sean Dietrich is a writer, humorist, novelist, and biscuit connoisseur, known for his commentary and stories on life in the American South.



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A New Season Begins with Jersey Boys

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) has unveiled the Season 12 lineup of Professional Shows and Theatre for Young Audiences. Kicking off the season in spectacular fashion is the electrifying production of Jersey Boys, Sept. 20 to Oct. 13, 2024. This iconic show promises to captivate audiences with its timeless music and compelling storytelling.

2024 Shows:

Jersey Boys, Sept. 20 – Oct.

Jersey Boys takes you behind the music of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons to discover the secret of a 40-year friendship as the foursome work their way from the streets of New Jersey to the heights of stardom. Enjoy chart-topping hits like "Sherry," "Big Girls Don't Cry," and "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." This Tony Award-winning truelife musical phenomenon takes you from the streets of New Jersey to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a musical that's just too good to be true.

Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery, Oct. 24 – Nov. 3

The play's afoot in Ken Ludwig's murderously funny twist on Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles. The male Baskerville heirs are being dispatched one by one. To find their ingenious killer, Holmes and Watson must brave the

desolate moors before a family curse dooms the next heir. Our intrepid investigators try to escape a dizzying web of clues, silly accents, and disguises, as five actors deftly portray more than forty characters. Can our heroes discover the truth in time? Join the fun and see how far from elementary the truth can be.

*Field Trip Thursday, Oct 24, 10am

All Is Calm: the Christmas Truce of 1914, Dec. 6 - 22

The Western Front: Christmas 1914. Out of the violence of World War I, a silence, then a song. A German soldier steps into No Man's Land singing "Stille Nacht." Thus begins an extraordinary night of ca-

maraderie, music, and peace. All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914 tells the true story of the first Christmas Eve of World War I, when soldiers across the Western Front laid

down their weapons to celebrate Christmas together. Based on the first-hand accounts of soldiers who lived it, this beautifully staged play with music brings these stories to life with traditional carols and patriotic songs, sung a cappella by a cast of 12, celebrating the unique way that the holiday season can bring us all together.



PHOTO BY NIKKI HEADRICK

Stay tuned for 2025 offerings which include Every Brilliant Thing Jan. 9-17, Little Shop Of Horrors Jan. 24-Feb. 9, Always A Bridesmaid Feb. 20-March 2, Go, Dog. Go! March 11-March 16, The Tortoise and the Hare: Fast Friends, Slow Foes March 27-29 and Legally Blonde The Musical May 2-18.

Nathanael Fisher, Producing Artistic Director and co-founder of ECTC says, "This year we go from Frankie Valli to Elle Woods in a matter of months. Bringing high quality entertainment of many genres to the area is what we love to do! We believe the community will be very pleased with this year's lineup! There really is something for every audience and we hope to see YOU at the theatre."

For information about ECTC, including details about upcoming shows and other programs, opportunity for VIP membership, ECTC educational programs and local school field trip opportunities, visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org or call (850) 684-0323. You can also make a tax-deductible donation, volunteer and engage with ECTC on Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) and YouTube.

See you at the theatre!







Jason Hedden

e m e rald coast theatre company Come for an uproarious night of laughs! ECTC presents some of the Southeast's most hilarious comedians. Hosted by resident funny guy Jason Hedden.

June 28 & July 19

More Info and Tickets: www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org

Around Town

AROUND TOWN

continued from page 4

program, was created to help find and educate future city and business leaders. After a retreat in August, the class spent the next eight months touring and learning about Destin's waterways, tourism industry, arts & culture, non-profits, environment, city programs and services, economic development, and military. With the graduation of this class, the total number of program alumni is now 253.

Applications are now available for the Destin Forward Class of 2025. For more information about the program, please call (850) 837-6241 or email mail@DestinChamber.com.

Red Day Capital Campaign Off to a Great Start!

At the heart of Keller Williams' culture is its shared commitment to community service. Since May of 2009 the entire company of Keller Williams – from the U.S., Canada and abroad – sets aside the second



Thursday in May to Renew, Energize and Donate within the communities they serve—culminating in RED DAY.

Recently, Phil Madden and Pat Clay joined a large group of Keller Williams Emerald Coast agents, all decked out in RED t-shirts to kick off its capital campaign at the Boys & Girls Club of Fort Walton Beach. "The kids had playground equipment alright, but it was unsafe to use for the past two and a half years. Imagine that," said Pat. "We chose to remedy that on May 9th."

"Some of us dismantled the

old broken playground equipment and loaded it into a dumpster making room for the new equipment for which we will be raising money. Others got engaged in various other tasks around the facility to help prepare for their summer programs coming up," she said. "We painted interior walls, installed floating shelves, cleaned and disinfected the Lego room, cleaned buses, power-washed the front entrance and more. We Renewed, Energized and Donated our time. Pausing to pose for pictures, the group was provided a cookout sponsored by Centennial Bank and Inspection Protection. A delicious lunch was provided for our agents, staff, and the B&GC Staff as well. Red Day is all about giving back to our community."

"It's a great start to the Capital Campaign," said Pat. But, to replace the old playground equipment with new, exciting and safe equipment, we need to raise \$200,000. You can help by visiting the link to learn how. The kids will love you."

https://secure.givelively.org/donate/boys-and-girls-clubs-of-the-emerald-coast-inc/fwb-youth-club-playground

Henderson Beach Named One of the Best in the World!

Destin's own Henderson Beach was recently named as one of the World's 50 Best Beaches 2024, ranking #44!

The World's 50 Best Beaches, sponsored by Banana Boat, recently released its annual list of the best beaches in the world. The list is a collaboration with over 1,000 of the world's leading travel influencers and professionals. Unlike any other list, The World's 50 Best Beaches is based on the votes of their

Beach Ambassadors as well as over 1,000 of the world's most experienced and respected travel influencers and journalists. The beaches were ranked according to eight important criteria: unique characteristics, wildlife, untouched, soundtrack of nature, easy to enter the water, often calm water, not too crowded and frequency of idyllic conditions. View the full list of The World's 50 Best Beaches 2024 at: https://worlds50beaches.com/top-50-worlds-best-beaches.

Destin Summer Camps and Senior Programs!

Destin Kids Camps and Senior Programs abound this Summer! There are a variety of Kids Camps such as Archery, Babysitting Safety, Cheerleading, Cooking and Serving, Football, Dance, Soccer and more. There's also table tennis and senior programs including a Walking Club. Find the full list and register for camps and programs online at www. cityofdestin.com/reconline. For more information, call the Destin Community Center at (850) 654-5184.



Concerts in the Village mattie kelly arts foundation

June 6 | Adam Ezra Group

Fusing folk intimacy and rock energy with soul power and pop charm, the band first emerged from Boston in the early 2000s and quickly garnered widespread acclaim for their bold, insightful songwriting and interactive, euphoric performances.







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Around Town



Ask Destinites:

Sand Flea Remedies for Your Pets

By Patricia Lee, Owner Destinites.com

In our Facebook local Destinites group (www.Facebook. com/groups/Destinites) past month, members were largely concerned with their pets getting sand fleas—not an easy matter to tackle. The little stinkers are very difficult to eliminate and can cause serious health issues for your pet. This season seems to be particularly bad. So, below are some responses from members offering remedies that worked for their pets. I hope this helps any of you having the same issues with your own fur babies.

One member asked, "Is anyone else struggling to get rid of fleas off of their fur babies? I don't like using dangerous chemicals especially around our Persians. Does anyone have an all-natural remedy that works?"

Replies:

- 1. I wash my fur babies in blue Dawn, rinse in warm water, then suds them up usually two more times and let it stay on them about 10 minutes, then rinse several times in warm water. The fleas are dead when I do
- 2. Hook up a sprayer to your hose and fill it with Blue Dawn and spray your yard. It kills fleas there, too.
- 3. Look up Diatomaceous earth (food-grade). I've heard that it helps get rid of fleas.
- 4. Remember when using DE that if you are using it around your pup that they do not breathe it in. Also, just be aware if you put it on them, it can dry them out as well.

I use DE when I vacuum. It cuts up bugs when exposed to it. So, I make sure to vacuum up some of the DE, so that when I suck up the fleas they are being exposed to it flying around inside. Don't know if this actually works, but it makes sense to me.'

- 5. I haven't seen any effective natural remedies but there are wonderful and safe cat only products out there that I trust. My personal favorite for cats and kittens is revolution. It's so gentle and it's topical. It's older and tried and true
- 6. You have to treat the yard and break the cycle; eggs will hatch and they are back in the yard. By the way, sand fleas are

at the beach near water's edge you have fleas (blood suckers).

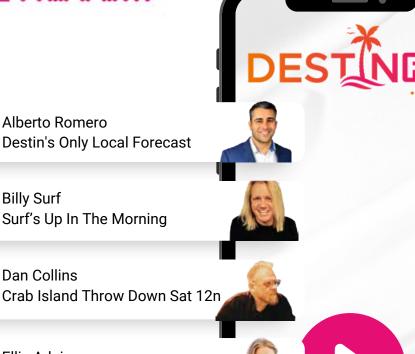
- 7. The vet told me to use OVER & OUT in my sandy vard. It def helps.
- 8. Not natural, but Nexgard did rid my pup of the horrendous fleas that were resistant to
- 9. What's Up Dog in Santa Rosa Beach sells some natural remedies. They are not sand fleas, they're just fleas. I bought some frontline for my animals. I don't like chemicals either, but fleas can wreak havoc on a pet's health, causing anemia and worms. My cat and dog had no ill effects from the Frontline and, I think, it is the quickest way to relieve them of the itchy night-
- 10. Cedar essential oils. Safe for cats and dogs. I also make a house spray mixture with cedarwood oil and lemongrass oil. Safe to spray on couches, curtains etc., but don't put lemongrass on the cats.
- 11. Bug MD natural remedy and a natural flea collar. I'll know for sure they are working in a week! My lil' tea cup chi is def less scratchy.
- 12. I use Flea Assassin. I used it on my previous big dog and now my little one. Way cheaper than Frontline, etc. and very noticeable results. Buy the oncea-month treatment to kill the cycle, and buy the once a day pills to kill the live visible ones on your pet—can take every 24 hours until gone. They also have a cat friendly line. www.fleaassasin.com

If you are a Destin resident or in the close surrounding area, I invite you to join our private locals' group at www. Facebook.com/groups/Destinites with 10,000+ members (Est. Oct. 2018). Check out our monthly newsletter and sponsored local business directory at www.Destinites.com.





Live and Local! Download the FREE app!



Destin's Only Local Forecast Billy Surf Surf's Up In The Morning

Alberto Romero

Ellie Adair Weekends

Dan Collins

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



Local Coupons

AUSTONS ON 98

1/2 PRICE APP

WITH PURCHASE OF AN ENTREE

1 per table

Offer expires 6/30/24 125 Poinciana Blvd., Miramar Beach 850-842-3200

CRYO850 PERFORMANCE & RECOVERY

UP TO 60% OFFWELLNESS CIRCUIT PASSES

Offer expires 6/30/24 4495 Furling Lane, Suite 10, Destin City Market Bayside | 850-279-4145

CRY0850 PERFORMANCE & RECOVERY

TREATMENT \$145 (\$175 VALUE)

Offer expires 6/30/24
4495 Furling Lane, Suite 10, Destin
City Market Bayside | 850-279-4145

CAFÉ DESTIN

10% OFF PURCHASE WITH COUPON

Offer expires 6/30/24 985 Highway 98, Destin, 850-424 6777, CafeDestin.com Kwench: 981 US Hwy. 98, 850-842-2802

BEVERLY HILLS DAY SPA

SPECIAL: 6 ULTIMATE SKIN REFINER SESSIONS FOR \$594

REGULAR RATE: \$125 PER SESSION

Offer expires 6/30/24 114 Palmetto Drive, Suite 6, Destin 850-654-8544 | BeverlyHillsDaySpa.com

TAILFINS ISLAND ADVENTURE

"Always Workin"
48 passenger Pontoon Boat and
"Talk of the Town" Tiki Boat
w/ bathroom onboard,
6-15 passengers, Cruise First Class



BOOK NOW

Offer expires 6/30/24 172 Harbor Boulevard, Destin 850-650-1200

BLUE BAY LIFESTYLE CO.

20% OFF PURCHASE

ENTIRE PURCHASE WITH COUPON

Offer expires 6/30/24
27 Racetrack Road NE, Fort Walton Beach bluebaylifestyle.com • 850-374-8236

OTTO'S CAR WASH

WASH CLUB MEMBERSHIP

THE ULTIMATE WASH PACKAGE \$54.98/MONTH THE SUPREME WASH PACKAGE \$43.98/MONTH THE EXPRESS WASH PACKAGE \$29.98/MONTH

Offer expires 6/30/24 34709 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin 850-974-9994

BEVERLY HILLS DAY SPA

SPECIAL: BUY 5,
GET 1 FREE FACIALS

Offer expires 6/30/24 114 Palmetto Drive, Suite 6, Destin 850-654-8544 | BeverlyHillsDaySpa.com

AFFORDABLE PRESSURE WASHING

\$25 OFF SERVICES

CALL TODAY TO SCHEDULE YOUR FREE ESTIMATE!

Offer expires 6/30/24 Phone: 850-688-9886

SPECIALTY ROOFERS

\$250 OFF

RESIDENTIAL ROOF CONTRACTS

MENTION PROMO CODE NEWYEAR250

Offer expires 6/30/24 850-974-7663 Specialtyroofers.com

OVERHEAD DOOR

\$100 OFF A NEW WI-FI DOOR
OPERATOR AND FREE DECORATIVE
DOOR HARDWARE

WITH EACH DOOR PURCHASE. (NO OTHER DISCOUNTS APPLY.) FINANCING AS LOW AS \$79/MO. W.A.C.

Offer expires 6/30/24 850-269-3246 destinoverheaddoor.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC

\$25 OFF SLIDING DOOR TRACK REPAIR WITH ROLLER REPLACEMENT

FREE ESTIMATES

Offer expires 6/30/24 BeachsideSlide.com 850-98-SLIDE (850-987-5433)

EMERALD COAST ENERGY SOLUTIONS

SPECIAL! NO INTEREST IF PAID IN FULL IN 12 MONTHS*

"Subject to credit approval. Minimum purchase required. Interest is billed during the promotio al period, but all interest is waived if the purchase amount is paid in full before the expiration of the promotional period.

> Offer expires 6/30/24 850-588-2870 www.TrustECES.com

TAILFINS

FREE SMOKED TUNA DIP

with any lunch or dinner entreé

Offer expires 6/30/24 172 Harbor Boulevard, Destin 850-650-1200



VOTE FOR MARY ANNE

INIDES

REPUBLICAN

Political advertisement paid for and approved by Mary Anne Windes, Republican, for Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 5.