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Saving Lives at Both Ends of the Leash

By Heather Bennett Eye

The Emerald Coast is home to numerous military bases and we are proud of the service members who call our community home. We deeply appreciate these brave men and women who have chosen a path of service and sacrifice. As we express our gratitude for their dedication, let's not forget the challenges many veterans face.

Statistics reveal that 11-20% of veterans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom suffer from PTSD, and around 12% of Gulf War veterans are affected by the same condition. Mental health issues extend beyond PTSD with nearly 30% of veterans reporting symptoms of depression and anxiety. Tragically, these challenges contribute to a high rate of suicide among veterans with 22 veterans taking their own lives each day.

Healing Paws for Warriors, Inc. is a veteran-founded, veteran-led 501(c)(3) in Fort Walton Beach that works to bring awareness to veteran suicide and reduce these statistics by



rescuing and training service dogs to pair with combat veterans faced with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) and MST (Military Sexual Trauma) along Northwest Florida from Panama City to Pensacola. Through reducing the number of dogs in shelters and empowering veterans, Healing Paws for Warriors is working to "help save lives at both ends of the leash."

Trainer Lisa Russell finds dogs from local shelters that

have the potential to make great service dogs. The dogs undergo 12 weeks of training. This training includes learning to pick up items like credit cards and keys, and the ability to stabilize someone who needs to stand. Once the dogs are trained, veterans are paired with a dog and the two of them, as a team, undergo 8-10 weeks of training at their own pace. "It takes some time," said volunteer and Interim Executive Director Dennis Krebs. "They

have to get used to each other, they have to know each other, and how they act and react." Sometimes initial pairings don't work, and they'll find the veteran another dog. "The big key for us is we're trying to set veterans up for success."

Studies have shown that veterans with service dogs reported a 22% higher reduction in PTSD symptoms compared to those without,

SAVING LIVES
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The Miracle at Seacrest Beach

America Responds

BY RICK KARLE

It was June 8th, and the 15-year-old looked up at her parents following surgery.

A day earlier she had been rushed to Ascension Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola.

It was the day after the shark attack.

"I made it," the teenager whispered.

America saved a life on June 7th, 2024.

In fact, America saved the lives

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David Schmidt for Okaloosa County School Board

A Passion for Students, Education and Local Workforce

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

Two characteristics of an invested candidate for the Okaloosa County School Board include someone who has gone through the system he wants to lead, and

another is that the candidate has children who will be affected by the decisions he will make. David Schmidt, candidate for District 2, fits both criteria. He and his wife, Shannon, are not only

esteemed graduates of Okaloosa County, but David has the future vision that his five children, Neyland, Bennett, Malachi, Ramsey and Sawyer will also have the opportunity to thrive

in their education.

“My five children will be among 35,000 students in the Okaloosa County School District,” says David. “If elected, I’ll be the only candidate to serve my term while still having children enrolled in the district. I think it’s important to have a boots-on-the-ground mentality in this area of service because not only will I get to apply my professional expertise as an educator, but I’ll also come with my experiences gained from being a parent. This should give voting parents the confidence that I will be acting in their best interest, as well as their children’s.”

There are two areas that David is especially passionate about when it comes to a plan that will positively impact the education of our children. The first one has to do with financial management and accountability. With so many new buildings needed, and so many needing repair, David supports the millions of tax dollars that will create more space and make it safer for our kids to go to school. However, what is needed is a master plan to be approved by the school board and there currently isn’t one, short-term or long-term. Why is that important?

“Master plans help to identify important ‘needs’ in the district and help eliminate simple ‘wants.’ This ensures your tax dollars are being spent wisely with the highest level of Return on Investment (ROI) in mind,” David says.

If elected, David’s goal is to have plans in place, not only for current projects but also to provide a template to ensure that future projects will keep up with the predicted growth for the district, especially in the north end of the county.

The second area that David is impassioned by is the vision of ALL Okaloosa students graduating with a marketable skill set. “We want our Okaloosa graduates to have the option of living and staying in our community, but we have to equip them with the necessary skills,” he says. “Approximately half of our students will enter college after graduation, where roughly half those will actually finish



college. That means one out of four of our high school students will get a college diploma. The research and data also show that only 4% of students will graduate from Okaloosa Schools and enroll into a Technical College. There is a significant number of Okaloosa County students who are going straight into the workforce, many without the necessary skill sets needed to be able to stay and live in our community. We need to make sure they’re ready.”

If elected, David will begin work immediately on a plan to audit all current programs to ensure the tax dollars are being spent on courses that give students the best chance to be marketable to local employers. David’s goal is to increase the long-term professional benefits to the students without having to request new sources of funding. For example, “Eliminating courses with low overall value and diverting the dollars from these courses over to courses with a higher marketability standard is a way to increase student marketability without requesting new sources of funding.”

In 2013, David and Shannon established a non-profit organization called “Financial Storehouse.” Through Financial Storehouse they’re able to mentor individuals, groups and students on financial literacy. As a result, these transformative experiences are not only an investment in the individual, but they are looking at the positive long-term impact on our community. David is looking forward to serving the Okaloosa County School Board in the same way: For each student to know their purpose and as a result, for their families to thrive and move forward together.


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Paid by David Schmidt, for Okaloosa School Board District 2.

MIRACLE

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of three good folks who simply sought a fun day at the beach.

Lulu Gribbin, McRay Faust and Elisabeth Foley (who lost her hand in a separate attack four miles away) are alive today because of our neighbors who stepped up.

Hardworking, kind people who deserve a shout out—the same people who took part in “The Miracle At Seacrest Beach.”

“I haven’t stopped thinking about it,” Matt Lidle told me days ago.

Matt made good on his promise to chat with me after I called him.

“I wanted to speak to Lulu and her parents first,” Matt said.

The Memphis resident who was on a beach vacation with his wife, Rachel, and his son, Harrison, can’t get the scene out of his mind.

Sterling Duncan works at Seacrest Beach, Fla. Sterling is a Jackson, Tenn., native who on June 7th was at his job working the beach chairs at La Dolce Vita Beach Rentals. “The incident is weighing heavy on me,



PHOTO COURTESY ANN BLAIR GRIBBIN
Dr. Ryan Forbess and Lulu Gribbin

but I am so appreciative of how many people stepped up,” said Sterling.

I could sense that it’s going to take a while for Sterling to erase the memory of helping get Lulu out of the ocean.

“We had just arrived at Seacrest Beach,” Cole Booker of Brandon, Miss., told me. “My wife and I were just getting settled on our vacation, and I heard the screams. I ran to the ocean.”

Stephen and Kathy Beene share time between Seacrest Beach and Baton Rouge, La.

June 7th was going to be another relaxing day at the beach. It would be anything but.

Cathy Dougherty is an ER nurse from Louisville, Ky.

Cathy and her husband, Joe Sparks, were on vacation, their beach chairs held together by a ratchet strap Joe had purchased before their trip south. Remember the ratchet strap.

“My family members were enjoying the water,” Dr. Ryan Forbess told me from Orange Beach Family Medicine.

Dr. Forbess and his good friend—Dr. Moh Ali—and their

families, vacation together every year in the Seacrest Beach area.

Right place, right time.

The doctors were enjoying boogie boarding with their kids on June 7th; little did the doctors know how much they would be relied on.

“It had to be a God thing putting all those people at the place they were needed,” Shari Woody, an employee at Orange Beach Family Medicine told me.

There were laughs and giggles from the young teenagers as they frolicked in the surf. It was last Friday afternoon, and the mother-daughter beach trip was in full swing. The good friends from the Mountain Brook, Ala., area were near the sand bar, diving for sand dollars.

That’s when the shark attacked.

“I heard people yell, ‘Shark!’,” Matt Lidle told me.

“I turned and ran into the water toward the girl’s screams and I saw a sea of blood,” Matt told me. Stephen Beene had just pulled the girl away from the shark.

“I was the man who pulled Lulu from the shark,” Beene texted me. “Hand me the girl,” Lidle said to Beene, as they both

tended to Lulu. “We need to get her to shore!”

Matt cradled Lulu Gribbin and ran through the water as fast as his lungs would allow. “She was conscious—she was looking up at me,” said Matt. “I was very concerned, because she had stopped bleeding,” he whispered.

Cole Booker had reached Matt and Lulu just as Matt was tiring. “Help me carry her,” Matt yelled to Cole. “Matt was getting tired. I wanted to grab the girl by the legs,” Cole told me, his voice softening. “I grabbed her by the waist instead,” Cole said.

Lulu’s mother Ann Blair and other moms were hundreds of yards away, strolling on the beach. They ran to the girls that were brought to the beach by Matt, Sterling, Cole and others. (McCray Faust suffered a deep gash on a lower extremity.)

“I saw the wounds on Lulu’s leg and started to scream,” Ann Blair Gribbin wrote on Caring Bridge about seeing her daughter. “The wound on Lulu’s leg, or all that was left of her leg, was something out of a mov-

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MIRACLE

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ie. I finally made it back to her and held her hand and she saw me, and I told her I was there. Her eyes were open,” Ann Blair wrote.

America went to work saving Lulu, and America had some help from above, as several of the beachgoers just happened to work in the medical field. “It was amazing,” Dr. Forbess told me. “So many of the people who gathered around Lulu knew medicine.”

Dr. Forbess and Dr. Ali huddled over Lulu.

An EMT who was visiting the beach made tourniquets.

An ER nurse from Louisville was on vacation and assisted Drs. Forbess and Ali.

An anesthesiologist told the doctors that she was available to help.

Cathy Dougherty put her ER nurse experience to good use. Cathy held up Lulu’s head, placing two fingers on Lulu’s carotid artery and her other hand on Lulu’s chest. She was ready to perform CPR if Lulu stopped breathing.

Cathy’s husband, Joe, is a former lifeguard. Joe threw his ratchet strap to the doctors as he watched his wife hold Lulu’s head. It was the same ratchet strap that was purchased on a whim. It was the strap that

would be used as a tourniquet on Lulu’s leg.

The beach patrol was soon on the scene. Experts from the South Walton Fire District and the Walton County Sheriff’s Office arrived within minutes—still, it was touch and go.

“She was going in and out of consciousness,” Dr. Forbess said. “Luckily, Dr. Ali is an expert in radiology. He knew exactly where to apply pressure to the femoral artery. It was all about ABC: Artery, Blood, Circulation,” he told me.

Lulu was rushed to Ascension Sacred Heart Pensacola, where talented doctors and nurses took over lifesaving procedures.

Lulu Gribbin lost her left hand. She later had her right leg amputated between the knee and the hip.

But a community came together and helped save a life, and Lulu’s mother, Ann Blair, is grateful, writing on Caring Bridge:

“I am eternally grateful for the 3 surgeons and all the nursing staff and doctors here who saved Lulu. I am grateful for the doctors and nurses on the beach that day. I am grateful for the EMT’s on the beach and the crew in the air. I am grateful for the individuals who pulled her out of the water.”

Stephen Beene, the first person to reach Lulu as the shark attacked is thankful that Lulu



PHOTO COURTESY CARINGBRIDGE

Lulu Gribbin



PHOTO COURTESY ANN BLAIR GRIBBIN

Lulu Gribbin and twin sister Ellie

is doing well. “My family’s thoughts and prayers continue to be with Lulu and her family. She is a special girl and one tough cookie,” he texted.

Matt Lidle is back in Memphis, and still can’t seem to get Lulu off his mind. “I have spoken with Lulu and the family and they seem to be doing as good as can be,” he told me.

Matt is another person who is amazed at how America pitched in. “I’m just a sales guy,” said the man who helped carry Lulu out of the water. “To stand back and watch the experts save a life after we brought her to shore was amazing.”

Sterling Duncan is back to work at Seacrest Beach sorting out beach chairs. He says he appreciates everyone who came to the aid of Lulu. “God has some amazing things planned for that girl,” he said.

Louisville’s Cathy Dougherty and her husband, Joe, have finished up their beach vacation. Both are feeling blessed that they were able to help in some way. They sure are glad that Joe bought that ratchet strap.

Dr. Forbess remains busy seeing patients at Orange Beach Family Medicine. “I think the lesson here is to have faith in humanity,” he told me. “When we come together, great things

can happen.”

And Cole Booker and his wife Jasmine? They are back home in Mississippi, glorifying God for putting the right people in the right place. “I’m a big Jesus guy,” Cole told me. “It was all Jesus,” he added.

Lulu has had numerous surgeries, and she is now being fitted for prosthetics at an un-

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June 7: The Facts

South Walton Fire District (SWFD) and Walton County Sheriff’s Office (WCSO) responded to two shark related incidents, just four miles apart, Friday afternoon, June 7. Two people were critically injured and one other person suffered minor injuries.

The first incident originated around 1:20 p.m. when multiple 911 callers reported an approximately 45-year-old woman was bitten by a shark as she was swimming past the first sandbar near WaterSound Beach. Bystanders began rendering care to the woman before SWFD lifeguards and WCSO deputies arrived on-scene.

Once they arrived on-scene, they found the woman sustained critical injuries on her hip and lower left arm. They initiated treatment, then SWFD firefighters continued care and transported the patient to Walton Air Rescue. The patient was airlifted to the trauma facility at HCA Florida Fort Walton-Destin Hospital to receive further treatment for her injuries, which, later resulted in the amputation of the lower portion of her arm.

About an hour and a half later, a second incident took

place near Seacrest Beach at approximately 2:55 p.m., four miles east of the first incident. It involved two female patients who were approximately 15 years old. According to bystanders, the individuals were in waist deep water with a group of friends when the incident occurred.

When lifeguards and deputies arrived on-scene, they found one of the females had significant injuries to the upper leg and one hand. The other female had minor injuries on one foot. The patient with significant injuries was treated on-scene, then transported by SWFD firefighters to Okaloosa MedFlight. She was then airlifted to the trauma facility at Ascension Sacred Heart of Pensacola for further treatment. SWFD also transported the second patient to the hospital.

Following the incidents, beach flags were changed to double red to indicate the water was closed for swimming that day out of an abundance of caution.

These are the first reported shark attacks in Walton County within the last five years. The last fatal attack was in 2005.



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Community

MIRACLE

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disclosed hospital. Her mother Ann Blair tells me when the time is right, the story of her amazing, strong, fierce and beautiful daughter will be told.

Until Lulu's story is written, Ann Blair writes on Caring Bridge:

"Lulu is worried about not fitting in and people making fun of her. I need prayers for everyone to be understanding and to show her grace. I also need prayers for Lulu to know that her hand and her leg do not define who she is."

June 7th, 2024, brought an unimaginable, frightening scene. But, thanks to a wonderful community, America came together and saved a life.

While Lulu Gribbin faces a long road ahead, she's forging on. She is amazing and strong and fierce and beautiful, and she's smiling more often these days.

Because Lulu has made it.

Thanks to "The Miracle at Seacrest Beach."

Birmingham's Rick Karle is a 43-year TV news veteran and a 25-time



PHOTO COURTESY SHARI WOODY
Dr. Ryan Forbess



PHOTO COURTESY SHARI WOODY
Dr. Moh Ali



PHOTO COURTESY JANE BEENE
Stephen Beene

Emmy winner. His "good news" stories can be found on Facebook at Rick Karle Good News. You can email Rick your story ideas at RickKarleGoodNews@gmail.com

From the Publisher

As have many of you, Destin Life has been following the accounts of the recent, rare shark attacks that happened in our area June 7. We are all saddened to hear of these tragic events regarding all three victims. However, we are grateful for the heroes (ordinary people accomplishing extraordinary feats) in the water and on the beach that day, as well as the Walton Co. Sheriff's Office, South Walton Fire District, local doctors, nurses, flight crews,

hospital staff and many others. We want to recognize you and thank you! We know God was there; and was working through these brave men and women to save lives. Thank you also, Rick Karle, for telling this story so eloquently and allowing us to print it.

Lulu is progressing miraculously each day; you can follow her progress through her mom, Ann Blair Gribbin, on Caring-Bridge.org. Search Lulu Gribbin.

To help support Lulu, you can contribute to the Caring For Lulu fund at Oakworth Capital Bank through Zelle, Caringforlulu@gmail.com. Or mail a check made out to Richard Littrell and Stephen Faust FBO Lulu Gribbin: Oakworth Capital Bank. Attn: Richard Littrell FBO Lulu Gribbin, 850 Shades Creek Pkwy., Suite 200, Birmingham, AL 35209. Cards can be sent to Lulu Strong, P.O. Box 660257, Birmingham, AL 35266-0257.

You can support Elizabeth Foley through GiveSendGo.com, "Supporting Elizabeth Foley & The Foley Family."

~ Lori Leath Smith



PHOTO COURTESY COLE BOOKER
Cole Booker



PHOTO COURTESY STERLING DUNCAN
Sterling Duncan



PHOTO COURTESY MATT LIDLE
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PHOTO COURTESY AMY DOUGHERTY HIRBY
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Re-Elect Eric Aden for Okaloosa County Sheriff

Transparency • Accountability • Tough on Crime!

BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

When someone deliberately puts themselves at risk for the sake of others, that career goes beyond a job—it's a calling. Sheriff Eric Aden not only answered that call to law enforcement 29 years ago, but his experience reflects his dedication to reducing crime in Okaloosa County. In 2019, Sheriff Aden attended the prestigious FBI National Academy and ran unopposed in the 2020 election where he has served honorably since January 1, 2021. Through this calling, he has stepped into a role that makes him responsible for the safety and well-being of nearly 220,000 residents in addition to 7.8 million annual visitors (2023), and he does so while overseeing nearly 500 employees. His experience in private-sector finance also allows him to manage a budget of over \$60,000,000 while being fiscally conservative to safeguard tax dollars, manage resources and acquire new technology. On August 20, 2024, Sheriff Aden is

asking for our vote to make him Sheriff again.

Eric Aden was born on Eglin Air Force Base in 1971. Mainly residing in Shalimar, he has been a lifelong resident of Okaloosa County, fostering respect not only for the military community, but also for the citizens who grow up in our area.

His father started as a young Air Force pilot and later became an aerospace engineer. His mother spent 25 years as a teacher. Eric grew up playing football, basketball and baseball during his school years, graduated from Choctaw High School and attended Florida State University where he studied Criminology. While at FSU, he interned with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) in 1993 and upon graduation in 1994, returned home to complete the

law enforcement academy in Niceville. His career began in January 1995. Eric is now married with four daughters, one son and one granddaughter.

In the years leading up to serving as Sheriff, Aden has regularly been recognized as a leader in law enforcement. In 2008 he was recruited for a leadership position with the Walton County Sheriff's Office where he was quickly promoted to Lieutenant over Judicial Services, Civil Process, Warrants, Court Security

as well as Watch Commanders, part-time/Reserve Deputies, Airport Security Units and Pose Liaisons. Sheriff Aden's experience truly encompasses all facets of law enforcement.

During his recent first term as Sheriff, Aden's leadership was proven through programs such as Real-Time Crime Center and License Plate Readers. These initiatives, along with intensive, deputy training and other measures, reduced violent crime by an astonishing 26% and overall

reported crimes by 8%.

The new Real-Time Crime Center monitors License Plate Readers as well as video surveillance of schools and many local businesses. This has allowed information to be disseminated to patrols and investigations when minutes are critical in the success of open cases. It has led, also, to the arrest of suspects in critical areas such as homicide, robbery, shooting, carjacking and kidnapping.

Sheriff Eric Aden has a proven track record of being committed to full transparency, accountability and a force for good in our community. With our vote, he will continue the work he was created for.

Sheriff Aden's numerous endorsements include Rick Scott U.S. Senator FL, Matt Gaetz U.S. Congressman FL District 1, Patt Maney FL State Representative District 4, Marcus Chambers Superintendent Okaloosa School District and many, many more. For a full list and additional information, visit VoteAden.com.



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and 30A neighborhoods, and parks and recreation departments are adding pickleball to their sports programming.

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Are you ready to tap into the best-kept secrets of successful home sellers? You can sell any home in any market when you know these secrets. Luxury REALTOR® Brian K. LoCicero's new book reveals the most effective tactics to get the most money out of your home in the shortest amount of time. These strategies have helped sell thousands of homes, and now, you have them all at your fingertips.

The strategies in Brian's book have been thoroughly tested and proven effective time and time again. Sellers won't want to miss out on this opportunity to learn tips and plans employed by the wealthiest home sellers. "In this book, I've provided an effective guide for you to have the most successful real estate transaction possible," shares Brian.

"We hired Brian to help us navigate 30A's tough real estate



market. He has serious negotiating skills and expertise. Because of his efforts and strategies that he details in his book, we quickly sold our Destin home and bought a 30A beach front home, below asking price," said client, A. Albright.

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

SUMMER FLASH SALE! CRYO850 Performance and Recovery Center

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Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

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

Summer is a great time for an Aquamarine with a double halo of baguette cut diamonds

...yes, big and beautiful! Whether you're shopping for a special gift, a new summer color or an engagement ring for that "special" day, Beyond Measure is here for you. Owner Ashleigh Woolly carries one-of-a-kind pieces for summer in coastal colors and tons of gemstones available in varying gemstone colors and shades. Want to stick to diamonds? Check out "Bubble Bands," stunning individually or for collecting and stacking! Intrigued? Specializing in diamond, gemstone and precious metal jewelry pieces, the Beyond Measure Jewelers' showroom is full of diamond and gemstone bracelets, special-occasion rings, necklaces and earrings. Ashleigh is passionate about exquisite and custom-designed jewelry and selling it—especially engagement rings, wedding bands and working with couples, because "It is truly special to help people celebrate one of the biggest moments of their lives." Trust your custom project to Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry, where a one-on-one exquisite jewelry experience is waiting!

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Cali's To Do In Destin! JULY 2024

***** All Month *****
Summer Slam Fishing Tournament | 11am-7pm Daily | Boathouse Oyster Bar
Summer Lawn Games | 5pm-8:30pm Daily | Grand Boulevard
***** 3 *****
Wellness Wednesday | 8:30am | Harborwalk Village
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Women in Business | 5pm | The Palms Bistro
Star Spangled Food Truck Festival | 5:30pm | Destin Commons
Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall Destin
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
***** 4 *****
BBQ on the Lawn | 4pm-7pm | The Henderson Resort
Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Game Night | 5pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
4th of July Celebration | 6pm | Harborwalk Village
July 4th Dinner Cruise | 6pm | Solaris Yacht – Sunquest Cruises
Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
All American Thursday | 6:30 | Harborwalk Village
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
***** 5 *****
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Local's on the Harbor | 5pm | Boathouse Oyster Bar
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
***** 6 *****
Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 8am | Ferry Road, FWB
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 7 *****
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot Destin
Sallywag Sunday Pirate Shows | 7pm & 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
***** 8 *****
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Pirate Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons



Commons
Dungeons & Dragons | 6pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 9 *****
Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB
Havana Nights | 6pm | Harborwalk Village
Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou
Harbor Street Parade | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village
Boomin' Tuesday | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Tribute Tuesday | 9pm | AJ's Seafood & Oyster House
Fudpucker's Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpucker's Destin
***** 10 *****
Wellness Wednesday | 8:30am | Harborwalk Village
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall Destin
Women in Business Networking Social | 6pm | 11662 Emerald Coast Parkway
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
***** 11 *****
Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
All American Thursday | 6:30 | Harborwalk Village
The Great American SOULbook | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
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
***** 12 *****
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac

***** 13 *****
Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale
Blue Angels Show | 9am | Pensacola Beach
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 14 *****
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin
Sallywag Sunday Pirate Shows | 7pm & 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
***** 15 *****
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Pirate Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Dungeons & Dragons | 6pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 16 *****
Great American Cook Out | 11:30am | Destin Chamber of Commerce
Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB
Havana Nights | 6pm | Harborwalk Village
Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou
Harbor Street Parade | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village
Boomin' Tuesday | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Tribute Tuesday | 9pm | AJ's Seafood & Oyster House
Fudpucker's Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpucker's Destin
***** 17 *****
Wellness Wednesday | 8:30am | Harborwalk Village
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall Destin
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
***** 18 *****
Business After Hours | 5:30pm | Beachworx
Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
All American Thursday | 6:30 | Harborwalk Village
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
***** 19 *****
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB
Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Tom Papa Good Stuff Tour | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
***** 20 *****
Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 8am | Ferry Road, FWB
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale
USCG Boater Safety Course | 9am | Emerald Coast Marine
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 21 *****
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin
Stepbrothers Theme Brunch | 10am-2pm | Boathouse Oyster Bar
Sallywag Sunday Pirate Shows | 7pm & 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
***** 22 *****
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Pirate Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Cocktail Competition | 5pm | Bltterroot
Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Dungeons & Dragons | 6pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 23 *****
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
Harry Potter Trivia | 7pm | World of Beer
Boomin' Tuesday | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Fudpucker's Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Tribute Tuesday | 9pm | AJ's Seafood & Oyster House
***** 24 *****
Wellness Wednesday | 8:30am | Harborwalk Village
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall Destin
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
***** 25 *****
Ladies Night | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Trivia | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Fly Guy Ben Merrell Show | 6:30 & 8:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
All American Thursday | 6:30 | Harborwalk Village

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
***** 26 *****
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort FWB
Luau Beach Party | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
***** 27 *****
Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Run Club | 9am | Ivy & Ale
Wizarding World Brunch | 11am | World of Beer
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
Beat The Heat Concert Series | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 28 *****
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin
Artisan Market | 11am | Destin Commons
Sallywag Sunday Pirate Shows | 7pm & 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
***** 29 *****
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Pirate Show | 5pm | Al's Beach Club
Cocktail Competition | 5pm | Bltterroot
Run Destin Night | 5:45pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Music Bingo | 6pm | City Food Hall in Destin Commons
Dungeons & Dragons | 6pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village
Movie Monday | 8pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village
***** 30 *****
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 Beer
Boomin' Tuesday | 7:15pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Movies On The Beach | 8pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island
Fireworks | 9pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Fudpucker's Teen Night | 10pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Tribute Tuesday | 9pm | AJ's Seafood & Oyster House
***** 31 *****
Wellness Wednesday | 8:30am | Harborwalk Village
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Top Golf Social Club | 6pm | City Food Hall Destin
Karaoke | 6:20pm | Fudpucker's Destin
Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Open Mic Night | 7pm | Enlightened Studios & Sound Café
Fireworks | 9pm | Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island



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

Save the Date!
Perfect Hues:
Baytowne Wharf Art Fest
Saturday, Aug. 31 - Sunday,
Sept. 1 | 4-9 p.m. nightly |
FREE

This Labor Day Weekend join us for Perfect Hues: Baytowne Wharf Art Fest. Each evening from 4-9 p.m., stroll The Village streets as you browse a variety of artwork from local and regional artists. Enjoy LIVE music throughout the festival and a spectacular fireworks show over the lagoon on Sunday at 9 p.m.

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

Music Line up:

Saturday
4-6:15 p.m. | Mike Whitty
6:30-9 p.m. | Timmy Hood
Sunday
4-6:15 p.m. | Emily Bass
6:30-9 p.m. | Jared Herzog
Vendor Registration ends Aug. 16.

Red, White & Baytowne!

Thursday, July 4th
6-9:15 p.m. | FREE
Celebrate Independence Day with LIVE music from Be-



low 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. Kids crafts, face painting and balloon sculpting, too!

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 – July 29th
8 p.m. | FREE
Grab a lawn chair or blanket



and cozy up on the Events Plaza Lawn for a featured film.
July 1 | Secretariat
July 8 | Holes
July 15 | Mummies
July 22 | Dumbo
July 29 | The Little Mermaid

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 – July 31st
7-9 p.m. | FREE
Events Plaza Stage
Wednesday Night Concerts at The Village of Baytowne



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

Live Local Favorites
Music Lineup:
July 3: Horseshoe Kitty
July 10: Dion Jones & The Neon Tears
July 17: The HooDoos
July 24: Ben Loftin & The Family
July 31: Duchess

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.

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.



 Community



Mayor Bobby Wagner and
PIO Tamara Young, PhD

BY TAMARA LEIGH YOUNG,
PHD, PUBLIC INFORMATION
DIRECTOR FOR THE WORLD’S
LUCKIEST FISHING VILLAGE

TY: Last month in Destin Life we talked about updates to a City park. So, keeping in the green space theme, the Florida Sun Trail seems like a fitting topic. For those that might not know, the Sun Trail is a state-wide project of paved corridors for pedestrians and bicycle use. How will this impact Destin?

BW: I believe this trail will forever change the way locals move around in Destin. Imagine being able to safely and enjoyably bike or walk to any park or business from your front door, no matter where you live! The “Gulf Coast” portion of this trail network runs through

“Reel Talk” from the City of Destin

A Proposed Pedestrian Paradise: **Linear Trail**

Destin, from the Marler Bridge to Miramar Beach via Scenic 98. This allows us to access funding to design and build this 12-foot-wide multimodal pathway through Destin to complete the gap.

TY: For our area, one of the latest pieces to our multi-modal plan is the proposed Linear Trail. It’ll be a 1-mile path from 98 Palms Boulevard – the east end – to Airport Road.

BW: The Linear Trail is a game-changer for the center of town and completes one of the longest gaps in our future Sun Trail. This trail will provide a scenic, safe and direct route for pedestrians and cyclists, linking Main Street to Morgan Sports Center and everything in between, making it easier for everyone to enjoy the outdoors away from vehicles.

TY: I often walk for reward, usually to a latte at East Pass Coffee or The Palms Bistro! But seriously, this city is gorgeous, and it just makes sense to have



Preliminary Designs and Concept Renderings

more places for people to be outdoors walking and biking. What else as Mayor do you have in store for the area?

BW: We’ve got big plans! All three Sun Trail Projects we applied for were voted on and received the top three priorities from the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization. In addition to the Linear Trail, we also have the Harbor Board Walk expansion under the Marler Bridge and the Cross Town Connector pathway that will run parallel to the soon-to-be new road. Pair these Sun Trail projects with the upcoming City of Destin mobility plan, and we will soon be a pedestrian paradise!



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The Little Things Make You Cool



BY PAUL DOMENECH
Success and failure often stem from small improvements or breakdowns rather than one catastrophic event. Compound-

ing consistency can make or break things.
During summer, our team at the Domenech Group receives numerous calls about HVAC issues. In winter, HVAC units don't work as hard, but come summer, they operate three to four times harder. This increased load can lead to problems if not addressed. It's crucial to manage the little things to ensure a comfortable, cool summer instead of hot, humid nights caused by neglect.

Spring & Summer HVAC Maintenance

Your HVAC system has specific responsibilities in the warmer months. To ensure your



system can handle the heat, follow these maintenance tips:

- **Clean Coils and Condensers:** Dirt and debris on these components can reduce efficiency.
- **Replace Filters:** Regularly changing filters ensures good air quality and system efficiency.
- **Check the Outside Unit:** Clear any debris and ensure the cabinet door is closed.
- **Inspect for Leaks:** Check the cabinet for any signs of leaks.

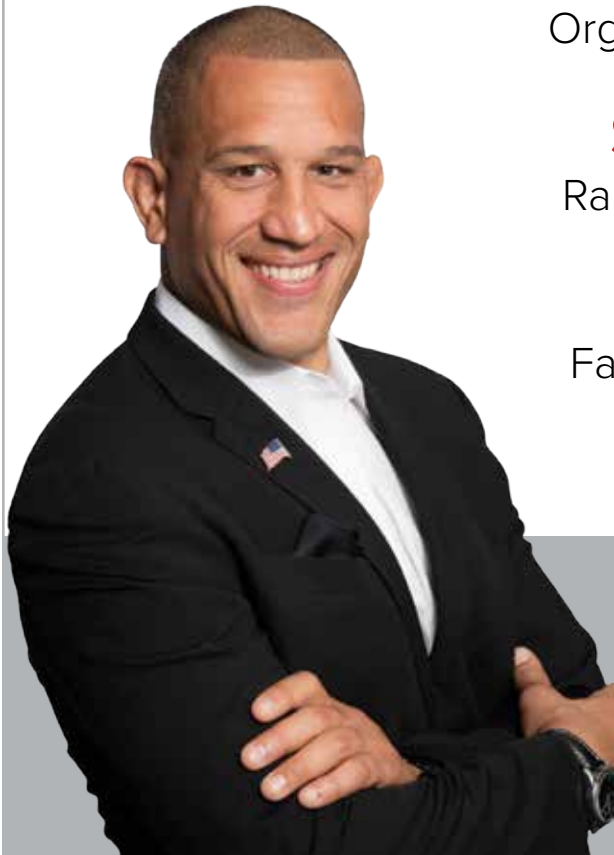
- **Clear Drain Lines:** Ensure proper airflow by removing any clogs.
- **Check Refrigerant and Electrical Systems:** Verify refrigerant levels and inspect thermostats and electrical connections.
- **Inspect Ducts and Blowers:** Look for dust and mold, and check the condition of blowers and blades.

Taking care of these small but essential tasks can significantly improve the efficiency and longevity of your HVAC system, ensuring comfort throughout the year.

Paying attention to the little things are cool.

At the Domenech Group, we live and work in gratitude and duty to the communities we serve.

To create the most impact, we partner with heavily-vetted organizations whose missions align with ours and whose focus is Northwest Florida.



27
Organizations Served

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Raised and donated

219
Families Supported



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Property Insurance Questions and Answers



By JULIE A MARTIN, LICENSED AGENT AT ABORA INSURANCE GROUP LLC

Dear readers, storm season is again upon us, and with the first breath of stormy winds comes confusion when it comes to our insurance options. Why are the rates so high? Why are my premiums higher than my neighbor's when we have the same size house? Why am I being non-renewed for not providing flood insurance when I am not in a flood zone?

All good questions, and we have some answers. First to the question of flood insurance. Citizens and Peoples Trust both enacted rules in accordance with the State of Florida that require flood insurance for properties in flood zones, whether or not your property has a mortgage requiring you to carry it. In addition, Citizens is in the midst of a four-year plan to get all of their policyholders to carry flood insurance on their homes regardless of flood zone.

Currently, owners of homes with dwelling coverage



600K are required to carry flood insurance on their properties regardless of flood zone in order to maintain a property policy with Citizens Property Corp., the state backed insurer.

Next year, owners of homes with 500K and up will be required to carry flood insurance regardless of zone. By 2027, all homes insured with Citizens will be required to carry flood insurance in order to maintain property insurance with Citizens.

your neighbor has Hip Roof and opening protection credit, and you do not, there will be a marked difference in the way his home is rated versus the way your home is rated.

Also, comparison of properties needs to consider are the type of property insurance form both homes are covered under. Maybe your neighbor rents his home out to a long-term tenant, and so his policy would be DP3, which does not require a high level of personal property contents; whereas, your owner occupied HO3 policy requires at least 25% of the dwelling in contents coverage, as is standard under Florida home insurance package policies.

For the readers who are curious to know why two houses on the same block, with the same square footage, and quality of interior and exterior features would be insured for different amounts, and even have drastically different premiums, there are over 300 different rating factors that determine the pricing structure of a home.

Wind mitigation features are key here. Let's suppose that although both homes were built in 2004, and both have been re roofed with permits, if your neighbor has a Hip shaped roof, which is a roof that slopes on all four sides like a pyramid, and you both have Roof Deck Attachment C, and Clips, and you both have A1 Opening protection, that Hip Roof shape credit could generate an additional 15% premium discount to his home insurance premium. If

There are eight new carriers in Florida that have recently become authorized to transact new business for property insurance in the state of Florida, within the last few months, which include Orion 180 Select Insurance, Orange Insurance Exchange, Mainsail Insurance and Tailrow Insurance, to name a few. It will take time for the Florida property insurance industry to spread the risk around more evenly in the next year or so for the rates to come down. But, eight new carriers means that there will soon be some relief, even if it might take a year or more for us to see it.

Stay tuned, dear readers. More good news might be just around the corner, but let's be prepared for an active storm season.

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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 as 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

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 organizations, 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 lessen 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@raymondjames.com.

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NWFSC Selects Dr. Cristie Kedroski to Serve as Interim President

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) has selected Dr. Cristie Kedroski as Interim President effective July 6, 2024. Dr. Kedroski's selection by the Board of Trustees was unanimous, reflecting the confidence and trust placed in her ability to lead with integrity, vision and a deep understanding of the college's mission.

Dr. Kedroski brings with her more than 20 years of community, economic and higher education experience. Her background demonstrates significant achievements in academic administration, student services, grant management and community outreach. Dr. Kedroski has been instrumental in developing innovative academic programs and spearheading initiatives that enhanced student retention and graduation rates as well as overseeing enrollment management strategies that have led the college to seven consecutive semesters of increased enrollment.

"I am honored to be select-



ners to continue our mission of providing exceptional educational opportunities and fostering a supportive and innovative learning environment for all students."

As Interim President, Dr. Kedroski will focus on maintaining the high quality of educational and student support services the college provides to all of its students and stewarding the college's strategic initiatives.

ed as the Interim President of Northwest Florida State College," stated Dr. Cristie Kedroski. "I look forward to working closely with our dedicated faculty, staff, and community part-

ners to continue our mission of providing exceptional educational opportunities and fostering a supportive and innovative learning environment for all students."

perience and dedication to this institution make her the ideal candidate to guide the college during this transitional period. The Board had thorough deliberations, ensuring we chose an interim president who embodies the college's values."

"My congratulations to Dr. Cristie Kedroski on her selection as Interim President of Northwest Florida State College," remarked Dr. Devin Stephenson, current President of Northwest Florida State College and President-elect of Florida Polytechnic University. "Her unwavering commitment to the mission and vision of NWFSC combined with her leadership skills, makes her a great choice for this interim role. I look forward to observing the continued innovation and advancement of the institution under Dr. Kedroski's leadership."

The Board of Trustees extends its heartfelt gratitude to

Dr. Devin Stephenson and looks forward to selecting a permanent president to continue the remarkable growth and achievements he has laid the groundwork for throughout his years of service to the college.

For more information about Northwest Florida State College, visit www.nwfsc.edu or contact the Office of Strategic Communications at stratcomm@nwfsc.edu.

NWFSC Bestows President Emeritus Title on Dr. Devin Stephenson

The Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) Board of Trustees has conferred the prestigious title of President Emeritus on Dr. Devin Stephenson, recognizing his exemplary service and leadership over the past 7.5 years as president. This honor was presented during the

Continued on page 18



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Destin High School Welcomes Dr. Diane Kelley to the Shark Family

A lifelong educator and familiar face to many locals, Dr. Diane Kelley, has become the new principal of Destin High School (DHS)! DHS announced the appointment that was effective July 1 and she'll officially take the reins on August 2, 2024.

“After careful consideration of each principal candidate’s credentials and the needs of the Destin High community, Dr. Kelley was chosen to serve as principal. It was important to find an educator, who embodies our core values and shared goals, to lead Destin High into the next chapter,” said Donald “Willy” Williams, Executive Director of Destin High School. “Her dedication, vision and commitment to educational excellence align perfectly with our vision, mission and goals. We are confident that under her leadership, DHS will continue to thrive and excel.”

"I am honored to join the Destin High School community and to serve as its principal," said Dr. Kelley. "I am committed to working together with our talented educators, dedicated staff and supportive families to create an environment where every student can succeed. Together, we will build on the school's strong foundation and achieve new levels of academic excellence."

“Welcoming a principal of Dr. Kelley’s caliber and experience to our school is an honor. Her exceptional leadership in Okaloosa County Schools, 36 years as an educator and six years as a member of the Okaloosa County School Board, has shown her dedication to local education and her willingness to serve the community and inspire student’s success. I have watched Dr. Kelley provide leadership in both roles. Her ability to build relationships with students, families, staff and the Destin community is admirable,” said Heidi R. LoCicero, president, Destin High School’s



Governing Board of Directors. "Destin High School is excited to embark on this new chapter under Dr. Kelley's leadership and looks forward to the positive impact she will have on our school community and the continued growth and success of our students."

Stated in a press release: With her many years of exemplary service in educational leadership, Dr. Kelley is poised to elevate Destin High School to new heights of academic achievement and success. Dr. Kelley brings a wealth of experience and a proven track record of success in fostering academic excellence and nurturing a supportive learning environment. Her previous tenure as principal at multiple schools has equipped her with the expertise and vision necessary to propel Destin High School to higher levels of academic excellence. Her leadership will ensure our students receive the highest quality education and are well-prepared for their future endeavors.

Our area's newest public charter school, DHS is dedicated to providing a high-quality education that prepares students for college, career and life. With a focus on academic excellence, character development and community engagement, DHS strives to create a nurturing and inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive. For enrollment information or to apply, visit [destinhighschool.org \(https://destinhighschool.org/admissions/\)](https://destinhighschool.org/admissions/)



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Education

NWFSC

continued from page 16

Board of Trustees meeting on June 18, 2024.

Board Chair Lori Kelley praised Dr. Stephenson’s significant contributions, stating on behalf of the Board of Trustees, “Dr. Devin Stephenson has provided transformative leadership for college educational initiatives and enhanced the

reputation of the college as an educational institution and as an active participant in both the Okaloosa and Walton County communities, enthusiastically supporting the work of faculty, staff and the college’s community partners. We are forever grateful for his service.”

In accepting the honor, Dr. Stephenson expressed his gratitude and reflected on his tenure, “Over the past 7.5 years, we



have embarked on a remarkable journey together, filled with achievements, challenges and transformative growth. Together, we have built something exceptional. Northwest Florida State College will always hold a special place in my heart, and I will forever cherish the memories we have created together. Go Raiders!”

Dr. Stephenson’s leadership at Northwest Florida State College has been marked by a steadfast commitment to academic

excellence, community engagement and student success. Under his guidance, the Collegiate High School is on a path to enroll over 500 students. The college has secured more than \$73 million in grant awards, and Raider Athletics has won three additional national championships. Dr. Stephenson also oversaw the opening of the Aviation Center of Excellence and the completion of the Raider Village student housing initiative. Additionally, the NWFSC Foun-

dation’s net assets increased by 40%, reaching over \$65 million. These achievements are a testament to his visionary leadership and dedication to the college’s mission.

Dr. Stephenson has been selected as the next president of Florida Polytechnic University in Lakeland, Fla., and begins July 7, 2024. His tenure as president of NWFSC will come to an end at the close of business on July 5, 2024.

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Comfort & Entertainment: There is a chance you’ll be in an unfamiliar situation for your pet, so keep some comfort items on hand, too, like calming treats, enrich-



ment toys, and extra blankets or towels.

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you to relax and leave the cares of the world behind. Your senses are now alive and you realize the world can stop for a while!

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Lifestyle



By KIM SCHNEIDER,
COASTAL DESIGN BY KIM
...have a case of the blahs? We spend a lot of time in our laundry room and while moving clothes from the washer to

Does Your Laundry Room...

the dryer isn't exactly glamorous, our laundry room should possess a little glam. Out with the utilitarian look and in with a space that's organized and inspiring. Here's a few tips for making your laundry room as fresh as those sparkly clean whites you just washed:

Disguise Your Machines – If you don't have a designated "room" for laundry, you can convert a small closet into a laundry room. Swap your stan-

dard door with a barn door for extra space and add floating shelves for your laundry supplies.

Establish a Seamless Transition – It's important to maintain a cohesive style if your laundry room is open to the rest of the house. Different flooring creates a separation and your cabinetry and walls will flow better if they're in the same shade.

Create Contrast – If your

home is neutral, consider moody cabinetry in your laundry room, especially if you have a door to separate your space. Think dark green or black cabinets with bright white machines nestled under a light neutral counter-top. Patterned floor tiles will instantly add a wow factor.

Elevate Your Machines – Avoid excess strain on your body when transferring laundry by raising your machine with risers. Some machines have risers that can be purchased separately. A contractor can build risers to accommodate your machines and tie in with your cabinetry.

Add a Countertop – If you do most of your folding in the laundry room, install a countertop over your front-loading machines.

Add a Hanging Rod – Add a tension rod to hold clean laundry before you hang them in closets. It also comes in handy when you use your garment steamer.

Decorate with Wallpaper – You might've been hesitant to use that bold wallpaper you fell in love with in your living room, but here's your chance to use it. Put it in your laundry room. You can also consider hanging it on your ceiling and painting the walls a complimentary color. Let your wallpaper take center stage!

Add Shelves – Your laundry room will have a more airy feeling with floating shelves. They're the perfect spot for baskets that house some of your laundry supplies. You can also add artwork and a plant to create interest.

Install a Wall-Mounted Drying Rack – To save space in a small laundry room, consider hanging a wall-mounted drying rack for your sweaters and delicates to dry.

Hang a Chandelier – Yes, you read that right! Lighting is key in a functional space like a laundry room. You can show off your style with a fun chandelier. Just make sure there's enough lighting to spot those stains.

Color Matters – If your laundry room is small or windowless, energize it with color. Go Bold! Paint the cabinets and walls to compliment one another and the floor.

Artwork – Hang artwork that helps to brighten your space. This is a great oppor-



tunity to show off your kids or grandkids artwork.

We all know the most important part of a laundry room is the washing machine and dryer. How we utilize the rest of the space in our laundry room may vary from house-to-house. But, making it functional and visually pleasing will help make our laundry chores more enjoyable.

If you would like to create an organized, functional laundry room that has a wow factor, call Coastal Design by Kim at (850) 904-6622 to schedule an appointment.

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Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill, located in the heart of Destin, Florida, is a lively destination for locals and tourists alike. Known for its vibrant atmosphere, delicious food and unique attractions, Fudpucker's offers an unforgettable experience for all ages.

Delicious Dining

At the core of Fudpucker's appeal is its mouth-watering menu. From signature seafood combos to classic Southern favorites, there's something for everyone. Indulge in signature dishes like the Fudpucker's World-Famous Alligator Tail, Stuffed Shrimp Parmesan, and their World Famous Fudburgers. The restaurant also offers a variety of vegetarian and gluten-free options, ensuring all guests can find something delicious to enjoy.

Live Entertainment

Fudpucker's is renowned for its entertainment scene. Throughout the week, you can catch live music performances by talented local artists. The outdoor stage hosts a variety of genres, from rock and country to blues, providing the perfect backdrop for a fun night out. During the day time, families can enjoy interactive fun with the Fudnominals – hosted by Stars Dance Team.

Gator Beach

One of the most unique attractions at Fudpucker's is Gator Beach, "The World's Greatest Alligator Park." Visitors can get up close and personal with live alligators in a safe and controlled environment. You can hold an alligator and even feed an alligator. It's an exciting experience for kids and adults alike.

Father Fud's Photo Scavenger Hunt

A unique family scavenger hunt experience that starts with a list of awesome places and things at Fudpucker's to snap a photo of, and ends with a spin on the Wheel of Fud! You can win a trip to the Father Fud's Treasure Chest, Desserts, and even a World Famous T-Shirt. It's fun for the entire family!

Fudpucker's Gift Shop

Take home a piece of Fud-



pucker's with a visit to the on-site gift shop. Here, you'll find a wide range of souvenirs, including our World Famous Fudpucker T-Shirts, hats, and other branded merchandise. The shop also offers unique gifts and beach essentials, making it a great place to pick up a memento of your visit or find the perfect gift for friends and family.

Kid-Friendly Fun

Fudpucker's is a family-friendly destination with plenty of activities to keep the little ones entertained. In addition to Gator Beach, we have a playground and deck games, like large Connect 4 and Jenga, as well as Corn Hole and Ring & Hook games. Get blasted in our Hurricane Simulator, and get some artistic henna tattoos as a fond memory of Destin & Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill.

Friendly Atmosphere

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill is known for its friendly and welcoming atmosphere. The staff goes above and beyond to ensure that every guest has a memorable experience. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a regular, you'll feel right at home at Fudpucker's.

With its lively atmosphere, delicious food, and array of fun activities, Fudpucker's is the perfect place to create lasting memories with family and friends.

So, bring the family and have some fun at Fudpucker's today!

Visit us in Destin at 20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin, FL 32541.

www.GatorBeach.com

www.Fudpucker.com



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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-seafood-and-oyster-bar-events

and-music and ad in Destin Life for Tribute Tuesdays.

(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. Austons 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 lattes. And there are diverse fresh fruit smoothies and a variety of tantalizing teas, plus a special kids menu. Indoor and outdoor seating on the large covered patio are both available. Book after-hours for private events or special occasions. Open for breakfast and lunch every day, 7 a.m.-2 p.m.

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

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

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Continued on page 24

BOATHOUSE

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Tuesdays:	8pm: Austin Jennings
Wednesdays:	4pm: Hunter & Tony 8pm: Smoke Show
Thursdays:	4pm: Flash Flood 8pm: Austin Jennings
Fridays:	4pm: Jason Findley 8pm: Airavata
Saturdays:	12pm: Rotating Spot 4pm: Flash Flood 8pm: Gunner
Sundays:	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

2024 Gulf Coast Jam Wraps with Record Crowds

The sold-out 2024 Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam wrapped when the last note of Morgan Wallen's rousing set rang through the speakers. Approximately 120,000 country music fans filled the festival grounds over four days to witness previous day's headliners Jelly Roll, Cody Johnson and Parker McCollum and more than 20 other artists. Jammers from all 50 states and 10 foreign countries descended on Panama City Beach for stunning beaches and the best country music.

Each evening, 300 lighted, choreographed drones lit up the night sky with messages celebrating country music, patriotism, and even spelled out the

first headliner for 2025. Listed by Billboard as one of "The 10 Best Country Music Festivals," the Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam launched in Panama City Beach in 2013. Organizers added an extra night of entertainment in 2022 to commemorate the festival's 10-year anniversary, which is now a permanent part of the schedule.

"We are so thankful to the artists, their teams, our crews who worked tirelessly behind the scenes and especially our Jammers for giving us a sold-out festival," said Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam Executive Producer Rendy Lovelady. "We had an incredible four days and nights of music, and



PHOTO: GULF COAST JAM

we can't wait to do it again next year!"

Highlights:

- After vocal issues forced the rescheduling of Morgan Wallen's headline show last year, he did not disappoint Sunday night with a 90-minute set to packed festival grounds.

- Friday afternoon, Gulf Coast Jam hosted Maj. Gen. Michael A. Valle, Air National Guard Assistant to the Commander, Continental United States North American Aerospace Defense Command Region (CONR) and First Air Force (Air Forces Northern & Air Forces Space) from Tyndall Air Force Base, as he administered the oath of enlistment to 15 new Airmen and Guardians on the massive stage.

- Following the oath-taking, Valle introduced Technical Sgt. Melissa Lackore from the USAF Heritage of America Band from Langley AFB to sing National Anthem as the 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron from Eglin Air Force Base executed a spectacular flyover, featuring F-16 and F-15 fighter jets.

Four-day tickets for the 2025 Gulf Coast Jam are currently on sale at www.gulfcoastjam.com.

Headliners and the full lineup will be announced in the coming weeks. Follow Gulf Coast Jam at www.GulfCoastJam.com, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for special announcements.

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights Now Offers Tea Parties!

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights is thrilled to announce the launch of its new offering: Exquisite Tea Parties!

Whether you're planning a sophisticated gathering, celebrating a special occasion or simply looking to indulge in an afternoon of elegance and charm, Lady Ray's is your perfect destination. With two daily seatings, Lady Ray's aim is to provide a serene escape from the hustle and bustle.

"At Lady Ray's Culinary Delights, we believe in the magic of moments shared over a cup of tea," says co-owner Tim Vondell. "Our tea parties are designed to provide an enchanting experience, combining the finest teas, delectable bites and a serene atmosphere. During your tea party, you can expect a variety of premium teas, ranging from classic black and green teas to unique herbal blends. Our knowledgeable staff is on hand to guide you through the selection, ensuring a perfect match for your palate. Enjoy an array of handcrafted treats including delicate finger sandwiches, freshly baked scones with clotted cream and jam, and an assortment of pastries and cookies."

Lady Ray's tea parties are perfect for a variety of occasions, including Bridal Showers, Birthday Celebrations,



Book Clubs Or just Casual Get-Togethers. Each tea party can be customized to reflect the theme and tone of your event, making it as unique and special as the guests you invite.

To accommodate guests, two daily seatings are offered:
Morning Tea: 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Afternoon Tea: 1- 2:30 p.m.

Reservations are now open, and we invite you to book early to secure your preferred date and time. To make a reservation or to learn more about Lady Ray's tea parties, visit lady-rays-culinary-delights.myshopify.com, call (850) 269-0763 or email contact@ladyrays.biz.

Lady Ray's looks forward to hosting you and making your event truly special. Please share with friends and family and follow Lady Ray's on social media for updates and special promotions.

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights
833 Harbor Blvd #19,
Destin, FL 32541

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DESTIN DINING*continued from page 22*

to be sure they are free from fertilizers and pesticides. Whether you're shopping for yourself or a friend, need a customized gift or interested in learning more about quality flavors and tastes, visit Emerald Coast Olive Oil for the highest quality olive oils

and aged vinegars, spices, pastas, sauces, jams, and other gourmet specialties. Accessories include an array of cutting boards, utensils, bowls, towels, aprons, pillows and more. Gift cards and shipping available, too—all online.

(850) 460-2210

34940 Emerald Coast Pkwy.

Destin

emeraldcoastoliveoil.com

Lady Ray's Culinary Delights

"Summer has arrived at Lady Ray's Culinary Delights, the newly expanded and popular bakery, café, and culinary brand. Lady Ray's offers a mouthwatering selection of baked goods, pastries, and oversized sandwiches. Café favorites include the Ray's Reuben,



the Megalossant, and croissant breakfast sandwiches. Bakery favorites feature 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.

Breakfast and lunch are served from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday, with baked goods and pastries continuing from 2 to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday.

Email Contact@ladyrays.biz.

833 Harbor Blvd. Unit 19,

Destin

(850) 269-0763

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Miramar Beach

www.meltingpot.com/destin-fl

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

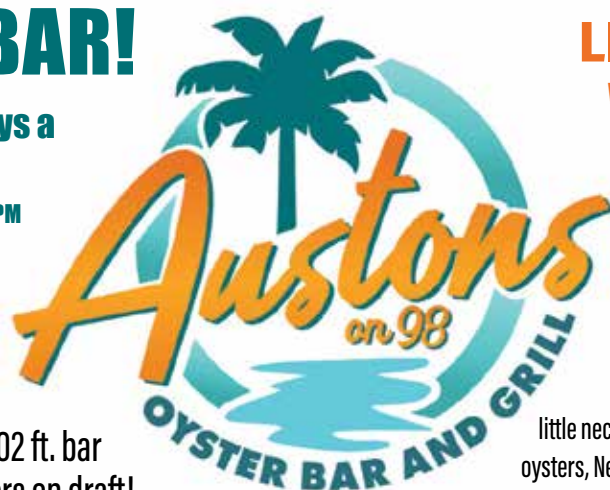
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Melting Pot Destin

Join The Melting Pot Destin before the fireworks for chocolate fondue and free sparklers! With every purchase of chocolate fondue on July 3rd, get a free festive sparkler and enjoy a mini fireworks show at Melting Pot before you watch the real one at Destin Harbor on the 4th. Reservations recommended. One sparkler per table.

Forever Fondue Endless Entrée is here! Every Monday through Thursday until August 1st, you can enjoy ENDLESS Land & Sea*, Steak Lovers, or Classic entrée, along with a fresh salad and decadent chocolate fondue. Get all of your favorite entree items endlessly at Melting Pot this July. Reservations recommended.

Your favorite fondue items can now be enjoyed in your favorite spot! Melting Pot To-Go is here. Cheese and chocolate fondue is now available to bring

Bears In Unexpected Places And What You Should Do

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is sharing the annual reminder that juvenile black bears might be seen in unexpected areas as they leave their mothers' home ranges in search of new locations of their own to settle down. Spring also marks a general increase in activity for bears after limited movements in winter.

"Juvenile or yearling bears – between the ages of 1½ -2½ – start dispersing in spring and summer each year," said the FWC's Bear Management Program Coordinator, Mike Orlando. "The best thing people can do if they see a bear in an unexpected area is to give them plenty of space and to never approach or feed them and they will typically move along on their own."

During this time of year, black bear sightings increase in suburban and urban areas, including in cities such as Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville and others around the state. Seeing a bear in a neighborhood is not necessarily cause for alarm.

However, it is important that people secure food attractants so that bears do not linger in the area. Generally, if a bear is not able to find food and is given space, it will move on. Feeding bears can make them lose their natural fear of people. It is also illegal in Florida to intentionally feed bears or leave out food or garbage that will attract bears.

Black bears are not generally aggressive, but like any wild animal, if they feel threatened, can become defensive. Dogs have been involved in over half of the incidents of people being injured by bears in Florida. When walking dogs, keep them close to you – ideally on a non-retractable leash – and be aware of your surroundings, which is good practice for preventing conflicts with any wildlife. Before letting your dog out at night in your yard, flip lights on and off and bang on the door to give bears and other wildlife a chance to leave the area.

As bears become more active this time of year, they cross more roadways. For your own safety and to avoid hitting bears and

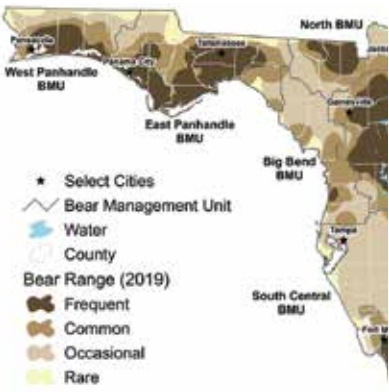
other wildlife, remember to slow down when driving, particularly on rural highways at dawn or dusk. Watch for road signs identifying bear crossing areas. Each year in Florida, an average of 300 bears are killed after being hit by vehicles.

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

Secure food and garbage. Store garbage in a sturdy shed or garage and then put it out on the morning of pickup rather than the night before. If not stored in a secured building, modify your existing garbage can to make it more bear-resistant or use a bear-resistant container. Secure commercial garbage in bear-resistant dumpsters.

Protect gardens, beehives, compost and livestock with electric fencing. Pick ripe fruit from trees and bushes and remove fallen fruit from the ground.

Remove or secure bird and



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

Never leave pet food outdoors. Feed pets indoors. If feeding pets outdoors, only put food outside for short time periods and bring in leftover food and dishes after each feeding.

Clean, degrease and store grills after each use. If mobile, store them in a secure shed or garage.

Alert neighbors to bear activity. For bear conflicts, visit MyFWC.com/Contact, and click on "Contact Regional Offices."

If you spot an injured, orphaned or dead bear, feel threatened by a bear or to report someone who is either harming bears or intentionally feeding them, call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).

More information is available at MyFWC.com/Bear where you can access the "Guide to Living in Bear Country" brochure. Find additional ways to be BearWise at BearWise.org. Florida is included with 38 other states that support BearWise®, an innovative program that helps people learn ways to responsibly live around bears.

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Dive into Summer Fun and More at Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park!

By MARY FOMBY

Splash 'N Play with Dolphins in This Unique Encounter!

Are you looking for a memorable experience for the whole

family this summer? Look no further than the Splash 'N Play encounter at the Gulfarium! Join us for an interactive and educational water adventure that will leave you smiling from ear to ear.

During this unique encounter led by one of our expert Marine Mammal trainers, guests ages eight and up will have the opportunity to get waist-deep in the water with a member of our playful dolphin family, touching,



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or Call **850-243-9046**

Follow Us **or Call 850-243-9046**

Located in Destin-Fort Walton Beach



feeding and learning all about this magnificent species.

Whether you're a lifelong dolphin enthusiast or experiencing the magic for the first time, the Splash 'N Play encounter promises an experience you'll never forget. Book your encounter at Gulfarium.com today to ensure your spot in the water!

Gulfarium Invites Kids to Sunset Camp for an Unforgettable Experience

Get ready for an adventure like no other! The Gulfarium is thrilled to announce this year's Sunset Camp dates, where kids can dive into the wonders of marine life and create memories to last a lifetime. On select evenings throughout the summer, children aged 6-14 are invited to join us for an immersive evening-long camp experience.

During Sunset Camp, young explorers will have the opportunity to engage with our incredible dolphin pod in a dock-side encounter, learn from our expert trainers and education specialists, enjoy an exploratory venture along the Emerald Coast beach at dusk, eat dinner next to our pinniped friends at Seal Harbor, and participate in

hands-on activities designed to inspire a love for conservation and marine life.

Spaces are limited. So, be sure to reserve your child's spot today for an unforgettable Sunset Camp experience at the Gulfarium!

All information regarding dates, tickets and requirements can be found at Gulfarium.com.

Manatees, Coming This Fall

Patrick Berry, CEO of Gulfarium, announced recently a multi-million dollar renovation of the original 300,000-gallon dolphin habitat to accommodate manatee rehabilitation patients as part of the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP). This initiative underscores Gulfarium's dedication to marine life conservation, with plans to welcome manatees in need beginning fall of 2024.

Follow Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park and Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center on Facebook and Instagram for event updates and marine conservation news.

Dorothy and Friends Are Headed Home!

Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center Releases Five More Sea Turtles Back to the Gulf

Amidst a gathering of locals, tourists and passionate sea turtle advocates in June, five rehabilitated sea turtle patients were joyously returned to their natural habitat in the Gulf of Mexico. The event, held at Topsail Hill State Preserve, marked a significant milestone for these remarkable animals and the dedicated team at the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center who tirelessly worked towards their recovery.

Lapinta, a subadult loggerhead sea turtle, was accidentally foul-hooked at Okaloosa Fishing Pier on June 7, 2024. She had no other hooks or injuries and received supportive care at the C.A.R.E. Center. Lapinta was named by Kim through his donation at the inaugural “C.A.R.E. on the Coast” fundraising event held in May. Weighing 103 lbs., Lapinta excitedly returned home to the Gulf.

Dorothy, hooked in the mouth at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier, had one internal hook in her GI, but thankfully it passed naturally. Weighing 84 lbs., Dorothy returned to her natural environment with a promising future ahead.

Charlotte, an adult Kemp’s ridley weighing 60.5 lbs., was foul hooked at Okaloosa Island Fishing Pier on June 12, 2024. Charlotte was medically cleared for release by the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center veterinary staff and eagerly made her way back to the emerald waters.

Rallis, a subadult loggerhead who weighs 136 lbs., was hooked in the front left flipper with a tarpon jig at the Pensacola Beach fishing pier. The care provided to Rallis and all the sea turtles that come through



the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center is funded by the gracious donations of the community. Rallis braved the waves to return to his home.

Finally, Lilith, an adult Kemp’s ridley was hooked at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier on June 11, 2024. Weighing 60 lbs., luckily, she suffered from no internal hooks so once she received a clean bill of health from staff, she was ready to return to the Gulf.

If you see a sea turtle in distress, injured, or deceased please

sion immediately at 1-888-404-FWCC (1-888-404-3922).

Follow the C.A.R.E. Center on Facebook to learn more about sea turtles and the center’s rehabilitation efforts. The C.A.R.E. Center and its patients can be visited as part of a general admission ticket to Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park.

The Gulfarium CARE Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is proud to act as a beacon for coastal conservation through marine animal rescue and rehabilitation.

Donations are tax-deductible and can be made online on the C.A.R.E. Center’s webpage or through their Amazon Wishlist.

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Safety

Local Marine Biologist's Shark Insights and Safety Tips

By JOE MOORE, FOUNDER, 30A SEALIFE DISCOVERY CENTER AND APPLESEED EXPEDITIONS

Hello, my name is Joe Moore. I hold a master's degree in Fishery Science from the University of West Florida and have extensive experience teaching marine biology in Hawaii, the Galapagos, California, and Florida. As the founder of the 30A Sealife Discovery Center and Appleseed Expeditions, as well as a Walton County resident, I'd like to share my perspective on the recent shark attacks along 30A in the Florida Panhandle.

I recently conducted an aerial survey using my paraglider over the region where the incidents occurred to investigate potential threats or anomalies in the ocean waters. Here are my findings:

Factors Contributing to Shark Presence

June Grass Proliferation: I observed extensive June grass along the shoreline. This phenomenon attracts baitfish, sea turtles, and other marine wildlife closer to the shore, creating a rich feeding ground for predators.

Abundance of Bait Fish: I noted an unusually high number of baitfish near the shore and around artificial reefs. This dense population of prey attracts small sharks, likely blacktip and sandbar sharks, which I identified from the air due to their sleek bodies and pointy snouts.

Early Arrival of Tarpon: Typically, tarpon migrate north in May and June, peaking in August and September. However, this year, they arrived early and in larger numbers, feeding on



baitfish near the shore.

Goliath Groupers and Devil Rays: I spotted large goliath groupers under the piers and numerous devil rays feeding on plankton. The presence of these rays indicates a significant amount of plankton in the water, further enriching the food web.

Loggerhead Sea Turtles: I observed many large loggerhead sea turtles offshore. June marks the peak nesting season for these gentle giants. Large sharks often wait in shallow waters to ambush these turtles, making the waters near shore more susceptible to shark interaction.

Shark Behavior and Human Interaction

The combination of abundant baitfish, plankton, and sea

turtles has drawn more sharks, including potentially dangerous bull sharks, closer to shore. The increase in marine activity has also coincided with a peak tourist season, increasing the chances of shark encounters.

Safety Tips for Enjoying the Emerald Coast

To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience at the beach, here are some important precautions:

Swim in Groups: Sharks are less likely to approach groups of people.

Avoid Dawn and Dusk: These are peak feeding times for sharks. Stay out of the water during these times.

Stay Out of Murky Waters: Sharks may bite out of curiosity when visibility is low. Our waters along the Emerald

Coast are usually clear, so avoid swimming when the water is churned up.

Avoid Night Swimming: Sharks are more active at night.

Stay Clear of Fishing Areas: Avoid swimming where bait is present in the water, as this attracts sharks.

By following these guidelines, you can greatly reduce the risk of a shark encounter and enjoy the beauty of our white sandy beaches safely.

Enhancing Marine Science Education

As the founder of the 30A Sealife Discovery Center and Appleseed Expeditions, I am dedicated to educating students about marine science. We offer school marine science trips and school trips focused on studying sharks and other marine life. These programs provide hands-on learning experiences, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our oceans.

If you are interested in learning more about marine biology, shark behavior and ocean conservation, consider joining one of our educational trips. Together, we can enhance our knowledge and contribute to the preservation of our precious marine ecosystems.

Stay safe, enjoy the beach, and remember to respect the ocean and its inhabitants.

For more information, visit appleseedexpeditions.com or on Facebook at Appleseed Expeditions.

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By MACKENZIE MCCLINTOCK,
SWFD PUBLIC INFORMATION
OFFICER

South Walton Fire District (SWFD) wants to remind the our communities about the proper precautions to take to make summer safer.

SWFD’s firefighters and lifeguards experience a significant uptick in preventable medical incidents during the summer months. Many times, these events happen without warning and do not discriminate between individuals who are long-time Florida locals, or first-time visitors to the area.

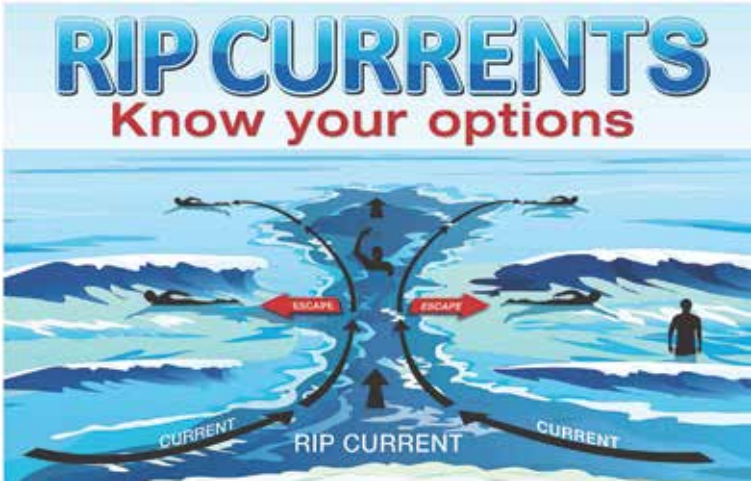
“Anyone can fall victim to impacts of the Florida heat,” said SWFD Beach Safety Director David Vaughan. “When you combine that hot weather with dangerous surf, we start to experience incredibly busy and difficult days. Unfortunately, it doesn’t take long for a nice day at the beach to end in tragedy, and that’s what we’re trying to prevent.”

The Gulf of Mexico does have smaller surf compared to other beaches across the country, however, the waves are not the primary danger to swimmers. Instead, rip currents pose the most significant threat.

“Each year, it’s estimated rip currents are responsible for approximately 100 deaths in the United States,” Vaughan said. “These deaths are preventable. It starts with an understanding that any open body of water poses a threat to swimmers and demands your respect.”

Often incorrectly referred to as “riptides” or “undertow,” rip currents typically form due to a break in the sandbar, as well as near structures such as jetties and piers.

A rip current’s size and speed can vary depending on the day’s conditions, but one thing remains the same: even elite swimmers can’t outlast the grip of the rip.



“It’s the panic that kills people,” Vaughan said. “A swimmer realizes they aren’t making any progress toward shore and suddenly, they start to swim straight toward shore not realizing they are swimming against the current. This is a race that no one can win.”

Instead, SWFD lifeguards recommend a swimmer remains calm, relaxes their body, and allows themselves to float to conserve their energy. Then, they can wave back to shore or yell for help. Strong swimmers also can consider swimming parallel to shore to break out of the rip current.

“Rip currents often have a natural dispersion point where the current comes to an end and will essentially spit you out back into a section of breaking waves,” Vaughan said. “At this point, you may find yourself close to the sandbar on our beaches, where

the water is shallow, and you are able to stand or rest.”

Some clues that rip currents may be present include:

- 1. The color of the beach warning flags**
Rip currents are more likely to be present on days of single red or double red flag conditions. However, they can also be present on a yellow flag day.
- 2. Differences in water color**
Rip currents are often darker in color than the water immediately surrounding them.
- 3. Irregular water texture**
Areas where waves are not breaking or appear disorganized can indicate the presence of a rip current.
- 4. Debris and foam**
A trail of marine debris or sea foam being pulled in a line

Beach Warning Flags

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LOW HAZARD
Calm Conditions, Exercise Caution

STINGING MARINE LIFE
Man O' War, Jellyfish, Stingrays

the beach and the closer you can get to us, the quicker we can be there to help.”

SWFD staffs 15 lifeguard towers across the 26 miles of South Walton’s coastline. For a better understanding of lifeguard tower locations, rip current safety, and daily beach condition updates, follow the South

Walton Fire District on Facebook or Instagram, or visit www.swfd.org.

Anyone interested in joining SWFD’s team and serving the community as a beach lifeguard can email career@swfd.org to learn more about career opportunities.

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2024 Will Be Biggest Year Ever for Cyberattacks in The Florida Panhandle

Local businesses will face the greatest ever number of cyber-attacks in 2024. That's the prediction from a local security expert, who has watched the number of attacks grow year on year. "The

question isn't whether your business will face a cyber-attack, but when? And more importantly, will you be prepared?" explained CEO of SNH TECHNOLOGIES, Russell Hale.

"The human element is often the weakest link in the cyber security chain," he said. "But it can also be our strongest defense, IF you engage employees in cyber security. It's not just important; it's now become critical."

Below are Hale's five strategies for Florida businesses to create a strong culture of cyber security.

Education: Knowledge is power. The more employees understand about the threats they face, the better equipped they'll be to prevent them. Provide regular training sessions on recognizing phishing emails, using strong passwords and understanding the latest threats.

Training simulations: Practice makes perfect. An annual training class doesn't work. Regularly scheduled cyber security simulations can help employees understand how to respond in the event of a real cyber-attack. "Simulations provide a safe space for employees



to learn from their mistakes and improve their response times. It also keeps your business running if you suddenly have to switch everything to paper," said Hale.

Policies: Clear, concise, and comprehensive policies lay the groundwork for what is expected from each employee regarding cyber security. Ensure that these policies are regularly updated to reflect the evolving landscape of cyber threats.

Leading by example: Leaders should be the first to adhere strictly to cyber security protocols. This sets an example for the entire organization. Your First Name said: "When leaders prioritize cyber security, it sends a clear message to the team that this is a matter of utmost importance".

Open communication: Encourage employees to voice their concerns and questions about cyber security. An open dialogue creates a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable discussing cyber security issues.

In the face of rising cyber threats, businesses must take proactive steps to secure their digital assets. "We can't afford to be complacent," warned Hale. "Cyber security is everyone's responsibility."

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It's Back! Bring HOPE Dragon Boat Race and Festival for Suicide Prevention

If you've never attended or participated in a Dragon Boat Race – THIS IS YOUR CHANCE! In last year's inaugural event, nine teams of 21 people raced for the win in the Bring HOPE Dragon Boat Race held at The Gulf Restaurant on Okaloosa Island. The City of Fort Walton Beach took the Mayor's Cup race and a group from Hurlburt Field took the Commander's Cup race. Teams from companies like Eglin Federal Credit Union (already registered as one of this year's big sponsors), Bridgeway and the Fort Walton Elks Lodge #1795 laughed and cheered their way through the day having fun and working for the mission of SAVING LIVES.

This year's race is slated for Saturday, September 7th, and will be back at The Gulf. Festivities begin at 9 a.m. starting with the parade of costumes and the dotting of the dragon's eye to kick off the races. The races should conclude around 3 p.m. followed by a celebration party,



complete with live music, food and drinks. Check out photos from last year's race, sign up to become a sponsor or register a team by visiting <https://BringHopeNow.com>. With a limit of 20 teams this year, spots are filling up fast. The deadline for entry is the end of July. But, don't wait!

In 2019, two thought leaders came together to solve a quickly growing problem: Okaloosa County and more-so, Northwest Florida, having one of the fastest growing and highest youth suicide rates in the state. Together with a great team and a whole lot of community support, they began solving that concern. David Triana, founder of United for a Good Cause, Inc (U4aGC)



and entrepreneur Peggy Brockman agreed that although it was not the mission of U4aGC, it was a problem big enough that something should be done. They secured the URL BringHopeNow.com with the thought they might one day need to separate into two organizations in order to grow forward. With that, they began bringing HOPE to the community through a national peer-to-peer suicide prevention

program designed for schools.

After achieving their original goal of making sure every school in the Okaloosa School District had a paid for program, they exceeded that goal by making sure other school districts also had free access to the program and helped schools in two other districts get up and running.

Bring Hope Now, Inc. (BHN) became an official 501c3 charitable foundation in the fall of 2023 after accomplishing its original mission with U4aGC of raising and funding over a half million dollars for school programs. It established the Bring HOPE Dragon Boat Race & Festival in September of 2023 to serve as an annual fundraiser for suicide prevention. In February of 2024, U4aGC and BHN officially separated so Bring HOPE Now could begin working on the next phase of its mission of saving lives – focusing on ensuring every family with a child who needs long-term mental health treatment can receive that locally and that every military base

could have a peer program to help stop the rise in active-duty suicides. They will also team up with other non-profits to create postvention teams for family and group support in the unfortunate event of a suicide, completing its mission of prevention, intervention and postvention. It will continue to support area schools with needed supplies and special funding for their HOPE programs and will help provide QPR Gatekeeper Training to as many groups, businesses and organizations as possible, so more people come to know the warning signs of suicide and how to have the right conversation with people they are concerned about.

Suicide prevention, intervention and postvention is a community responsibility. Together we can save lives! Join us as we continue to Bring HOPE Now to our communities!! For more information, contact Peggy Brockman, BringHopeNow22@gmail.com.



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Golf Series: The Links at Sandestin—Simply Irresistible

By BARBARA PALMGREN

Imagine a young man living in upstate New York, an undergraduate degree in accounting and a love of golf. Imagine him working in the golf business for several years and looking outside a closed clubhouse in the dead of winter, waiting for the course to open in the spring. What should he do?

Rick Hileman, PGA Executive Director of Golf Operations and Golf Maintenance for Sandestin Golf and Beach Resorts, left upstate New York to first move to Atlanta for several years and then to the Destin area. The beaches and salt air proved to be irresistible and the best decision of his life.

Revising the lyrics of “Simply Irresistible,” I envision the draw of golf and the Destin area for Rick.

*“Her love is so powerful,
Sandestin’s unavoidable,
The trend irreversible,
The golf course is invincible.
She’s a natural law, and she leaves
me in awe,
She deserves the applause, I sur-
render because,
Golf used to look good to me, but
now I find her,
Simply irresistible.”*

Yes, since 2007, Rick has been the leader, watching over the four jewels of golf with the



help of a staff he credits for the ongoing success of golf in this area. Greg Hafely, Director of Agronomy, has a crew that maintains the course itself: tee boxes, greens, sand traps, fairways and the “rough.” At each course there is separate leadership: Ty Waite, Superintendent, The Links and Baytowne; James Gasbarro, Superintendent for The Raven and Burnt Pine and Liam Branagan, Golf Director Burnt Pine. There are three other assistant professionals as well: Andy Lombardi, 1st Assistant Professional, Kirk McKenna, Assistant Professional and Tom Wocjulewski, Assistant Professional.

What works well for the 400 members of the Sandestin Golf Club is they have use of either the Links, The Raven or Bay-

towne courses. If a tournament is being hosted at one club, they can find tee times at the other. Rick stated that having a strong membership base is important for year-round support. Not every day is sunny in Florida to rely on strong public play, especially from tourists. Businesses and groups hosting seminars and staying at Sandestin hotels also benefit from special pricing to play a round after business hours. Why wouldn’t you want to host a seminar if golf perks were included? I would market that as “A Place to Stay, a Place to Play.”

Each month, I will highlight one of the four courses under Rick’s care. We begin with the first of the four: The Links.

I chose The Links because it is the oldest of the Sandes-

tin group. In 2023, The Links celebrated its 50th anniversary. Playing from 4,897 to 6,710 yards and offering four sets of tees, Sandestin’s original course offers play for golfers of all skill levels. A beautiful layout with Par of 72, the course is a Tom Jackson design that weaves around housing as well as lakes and marshland with five holes on Choctawhatchee Bay.

Rick’s favorite hole is number 13. It’s a Par 5 with a narrow landing area and views along the entire edge of Choctawhatchee Bay with Baytowne Marina as a backdrop. Picturesque and challenging, it is a postcard photo indeed! Although the course is not a true links-style layout, it offers some of the classic elements of

links golf. Ever-present winds off the Bay and large flat greens are part of a Links experience.

The Links course offers a challenge that encourages a risk reward approach to your round. Players are expected to honor a logical code of conduct important to protect the integrity and image of the game of golf. Practice facilities include a putting green and practice range and a snack bar.

Close to the white sandy beaches, members and visitors have the best of both worlds—golf and beach activities. Yes, the lure of golf close to fun in the sun, is “simply irresistible” at The Links.

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Growing Through Disruption



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

After three years of talking about moving to Florida, we listed our house thinking it might sell in six months to a year. Twelve days later we were thrust into disruption when the house sold and the reality of a cross country move set in. In some ways, talking about the possibility of a move for three years instead of taking meaningful action was a way of avoiding the inevitable disruption of a location change.

On some level, humans are designed to avoid change, discomfort and emotional turmoil. Disruption presents itself with feeling emotionally and physically stirred up. You might experience symptoms of anxiety or depression. You might feel angry, sad, stressed and overwhelmed.

Disruption comes in many forms including moves, relationship conflict, mistakes, failures, endings, beginnings, births, death, diagnosis, job transitions, developmental transitions and environmental stress. You might avoid disruption because it forces you out of your comfort zone, it necessitates you facing personal challenges, it reminds you of all you can't control, it invites you to admit you are wrong, it creates fear of the unknown and it invites you to feel like the discomfort associated with disruption will be never ending.

However, if you look back in your life, you will likely see that times of disruption and struggle have often been openings

for tremendous growth, change and maturing in wisdom. When things get shaken up, you can often find an opportunity to examine and adjust your approach to life. The growth does not change the discomfort of disruption. But, the invitation to grow is present if you know to seek it. So, how do we shift from viewing disruption as something to be avoided to seeing disruption as an invitation to grow?

Seven Ways to Grow Through Disruption

Notice your personal signs of disruption. Notice irritability, tightness in your chest, low energy, controlling behavior, changes in sleep, busy thoughts, physical ailments and notice if these discomforts are related to a disruptive circumstance, thought or feeling.

Identify the origin of disruption. When did the disrupted feelings begin? Can you connect the disrupted feeling to an event, circumstance or relationship?

Validate your experience. "What I'm dealing with is stressful and it makes sense I am emotionally and physically disrupted."

Identify growth opportunities. "How can I understand



something new about myself?" "How can I take responsibility for myself instead of blaming others?" "How can I increase my life skills and understanding of others?" "How can I cope in healthy ways in the midst of disruption?" Consistently be on the lookout for ways to grow through your struggle.

Engage intentionally in growth activities. See that therapist, find a mentor, develop spiritual disciplines, read an instructive book about relationships, listen to a podcast related to your struggle, spend time with healthy people, deepen healthy relationships.

Apply and sustain learn-

ing. Try new, healthier coping strategies, new ways of communicating, new ways of problem solving, new ways of relating to others. Keep the new ways of doing things in front of mind for six weeks with post it notes and phone reminders un-

til they have become healthier habits.

Notice change and celebrate. Look back over a six month to one-year arc of time to notice how you have grown and changed. Express gratitude

for the changes and sustained growth in your life.

After about six months of significant disruption and discomfort around our move, we settled into Santa Rosa Beach and have built a life we love. On the other side of disruption has been learning to take healthy risks, learning to chase a dream, learning to plant ourselves in a new community and learning to face fears. The result has been something new and beautiful and gratitude-worthy. Disruption can be very uncomfortable and avoidance is tempting. But, when you engage disruption as a tool of growth, beautiful and life changing things can happen.

Connect with us along your journey of growth at Journeybravely.com for counseling and coaching.

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- Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
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 Wellness

SAVING LIVES
continued from page 1

and 82% of veterans reported a decrease in suicidal thoughts after getting a service dog. Some have reported improved sleep patterns, increased social interactions, and shown significant improvements in quality of life.

The service dog program through Healing Paws for Warriors, Inc. is completely free to veterans who qualify. Veterans can apply directly on their website. There are basic criteria that applicants must meet, but those who qualify won't be turned away. If a dog cannot be found immediately, they will keep looking for a perfect match. Additionally, if a dog paired with a previous graduate terms out of their service abilities, the veteran will be invited back to train with a new dog and the old dog can become a comfort/emotional support animal.

If you've ever been interested in fostering a dog, this would be a great opportunity for you to honor veterans. "The great thing about our foster program



is we provide the food, the crate, dog toys, and a 24/7 connection in case there's a problem with the dog, so the trainer can be notified," said Dennis. "If we have the right amount of fosters, for the amount of dogs we have, that saves us money from having to pay for kenneling them, so it can go back into the program."

Dogs usually need a foster home from one to three months, and everything they need is provided. If the foster needs to go on vacation or a weekend off, they will go to another foster home while they are away. While the fosters are not responsible for training the dog, it is recommended that they continue with basic commands and reinforce positive behaviors.

Another way you can help Healing Paws for Warriors, Inc. is through volunteering. "We have so many events, and we need volunteers all the time," said Dennis. Outreach in the



community is typically military-oriented, such as hosting events at the American Legion. Volunteers are needed to hand out brochures and merchandise and discuss the application process.

Graduation for this round of veterans and service dogs was on June 22 at the Air Force Armament Museum. Volunteers are always needed to assist with the coordination of graduates and guests and photography of the ceremony. Graduations are open to the public.

Healing Paws for Warriors, Inc. is also reaching out to other organizations such as One

Hopeful Place, a local homeless shelter, in order to pay it forward. "The community has been so supportive of us," stated Dennis. "We all need to support each other. It's a great community that we live in and we can do so much by pooling our resources together. We're starting to reach out to other organizations to assist them."

If you are interested in the application process, fostering, volunteering or donating, please visit the Healing Paws for Warriors, Inc. website at <https://www.healingpawsforwarriors.org>.

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small foot (I wear a 3.5 in children's shoes), so I was so excited to find shoes here that I could actually try on before purchasing. The lady helping me was very sweet. I love that I got to run on the treadmill before purchasing as well! I also got some really wonderful socks and flip flops."

"Came in here to find some running shoes. I have a very
Continued on page 37



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By KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

LAUGH: To express certain emotions, especially mirth or delight, by a series of spontaneous, usually unarticulated sounds often accompanied by corresponding facial and bodily movements.

People bring laughter into their lives in various ways. From watching comedy, to animal videos, telling jokes, listening to songs, reading, etc. The newest trend is laughing yoga. If you haven't tried it, I recommend you consider it. You can grab a Youtube video or find a class.

My mom had a large and wicked sense of humor. Our home experienced a plethora of jokes and comedy television shows. If we fell, mom would say 'Are you ok?' and then proceed with laughter. It helped and hurt all at the same time. As I've gotten older, I've learned to appreciate good humor. It lessens the load and reminds me that life is better and a bit easier when laughter is taken regularly.

What happens during a laughing spell? Your brain releases endorphins (feel good chemicals), reducing stress and bringing on feelings of happiness and well-being. It causes us to take deeper breaths, bringing increased oxygen to the brain, heart, lungs and muscles.

A good laugh offers the short-term effects of lightening our mental load (stress) and abating anger. (It's hard to be angry when you're laughing.) It also stimulates many organs by enhancing our intake of oxygen-rich air.

Hearty laughter fires up and cools down the stress response, raising and lowering our heart rate and blood pressure. It brings on a good relaxing feeling, soothes tension and stimulates circulations and muscle relaxation.

Long term benefits include:
An improved immune system due to the increase of immune cells and antibodies. Negative

Laughter Improves Our Health

thoughts manifest chemical reactions that can affect body by raising stress & lowering immunity. Positive thoughts release neuropeptides that help to fight stress & potentially more serious illnesses.

Relieves pain - Laughter can produce its own pain killers.



Improved mood - We experience less stress, depression and anxiety and our self-esteem improves.

Greater personal satisfaction

makes it easier to cope with difficult situations and connect with other people.

Protects the heart by improving function of blood vessels and increases flow.

If you can laugh 10-15 minutes per day, you can burn up to 40 calories, equaling a loss of 3-4 lbs./year. Maybe I should create a laughter diet. hehehe:-)

Research shows that children laugh about 400 times a day, whereas adults, on average, laugh only about 15 times. I wonder what our yearly checkups would look like if we worked on maintaining our childlike laughter.

We can start by learning to laugh at ourselves again. A study in Norway found people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who didn't laugh as much.

The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

Are you someone who doesn't laugh very often? Did you know that humor can be learned? Attend laughing yoga regularly or get around jovial people, read

a funny book, etc. and discover the benefits of laughter.

It's never too late to start a new habit. Make laughter a habit worth laughing over. Here's to Health!

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Experience the Benefits of Hormone Therapy



BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD
Are you seeking to regain your energy, improve your well-being, and reclaim your zest for life? If you're a man or woman over 40, and some as young

as 30, the Hormone Restoration Center in Miramar Beach offers a transformative opportunity through hormone therapy. Step into a world of renewed vitality and optimal health with advanced treatments.
In today's fast-paced world, hormonal imbalances can often disrupt our lives, leaving us feeling fatigued, experiencing mood swings and struggling with various symptoms. The Hormone Restoration Center specializes in personalized hormone therapy programs that cater to the unique needs of individuals suffering from these symptoms.
The cornerstone of our approach is bioidentical hormone

replacement therapy (BHRT). Unlike synthetic hormones, bioidentical hormones are derived from natural sources and mirror the hormones naturally produced by your body. This enables a seamless assimilation process and enhances the effectiveness of the treatment with minimal side effects. The expert providers at the Hormone Restoration Center will conduct a comprehensive evaluation to create a customized treatment plan tailored to your specific needs and goals.
The advantages of hormone therapy are clear. Patients frequently report increased energy levels, improved mental clarity, enhanced mood stability, and an overall sense of well-being. Furthermore, hormone therapy can aid in weight management, boost libido and help maintain muscle tone and bone density. The experienced team at the Hormone Restoration Center will guide you through the pro-

cess, ensuring you experience a transformation that extends beyond symptom relief, empowering you to live your life to the fullest.
Your safety and well-being are of utmost importance at the Hormone Restoration Center. It adheres to the highest standards of care, utilizing state-of-the-art diagnostic tools and evidence-based treatments. The expert physicians and staff closely monitor your progress, making adjustments as necessary to maximize results and minimize potential risks. Rest assured, you will receive comprehensive care that is tailored to your unique needs and guided by a commitment to your health and satisfaction.
Conveniently located in Miramar Beach, the Hormone Restoration Center offers a warm and welcoming environment. The compassionate and knowledgeable team will provide the support and guid-

ance you need throughout your journey. Complementing the hormone therapy program, the center offers weight loss options including the newest semaglutide to optimize your long-term success in maintaining your newfound vitality.
Take charge of your well-being and rediscover the joy of life. Experience the transformative power of bio-identical hormone therapy at the Hormone Restoration Center in Miramar Beach. Embark on a journey towards enhanced wellness, irrespective of your age. Schedule your consultation today and embrace a life filled with energy, vitality, and renewed purpose by calling us at (850) 837-1271.
Dr. Richard Chern, MD provides hormone therapy to men and women across the country and treats many of the doctors and nurses in the area. Call him for an appointment at The Hormone Restoration Center at (850) 837-1271.

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



BY KRISY ANDERSON, OWNER
It's really HOT. Experts say slow down and reduce, eliminate or reschedule strenuous activities until the coolest time of the day. Wear lightweight, loose fitting, light-colored clothing to reflect heat and sunlight. Minimize direct exposure to the sun; sunburn reduces your body's ability to dissipate heat. Stay hydrated.
So, get out of the sun and into the spa and repair and reverse sun damage with Red Light Therapy. In fact, the vast array of Red Light Therapy benefits can include increased energy, wound healing and tissue repair,

increased collagen production, hair growth stimulation, increased metabolism, increased fat loss, increased strength gains, faster recovery post workout, flawless skin, anti-aging, psoriasis reduction, dental pain reduction, skin damage reversal, reduced inflammation, improved hormonal health, better quality sleep and improved liver function. Outwardly, your skin becomes smoother, pores shrink, wrinkles diminish and collagen is restored. Inwardly, light therapy works directly with your cells, generating an increase of ATP, the energy that fuels your body.
As you know, when you have sun damage, aging or skin disorders, your healthy skin cells are compromised, leaving them helpless to renew on their own. But Red Light Therapy can come to the rescue, using its color wavelengths of visible light, each with specific skin benefits, to repair and restore. Besides, it's a much better alternative to surgery.
Your skin will soak it up, turning it into fuel for your cells, helping them reproduce faster

and more efficiently. This repairs and rejuvenates damaged cells, while also killing bacteria. Collagen production is stimulated, circulation is boosted and tissue repair is accelerated. Because it works inside your cells, you feel better, too, physically and mentally. Even the outer layer of your skin, hair and nails thrive when you sustain yourself internally. Hence, the reason Red Light Therapy is gaining in popularity is due to its long-term positive effects, internally and externally. And when you're in Beverly Hills Day Spa, you're out of the heat!
A package of 10 red light therapy treatments is \$200 or \$30 per 10-15-minute treatment and can be added onto other services. Ready to make a positive major change in YOUR overall well-being? Schedule an appointment with me at Beverly Hills Day Spa for an in-depth consultation. Call me at (850) 654-8544. Or visit us at beverlyhillsdayspa.com.

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Panhandle Assistant Care:

Committed to In-Home Assisted Care Excellence

Panhandle Assistant Care in Destin (PAC) is a team of dedicated health care professionals committed to in-home assisted care excellence. And with over 20 years experience in the field, PAC has mastered the art of creating independence with peace of mind. “With every client interaction, that is our goal; to bring peace of mind to both the client and their families,” says owner and founder, Cheri Allen. “Above all, we promote and support an independent lifestyle for our client, empowering and assisting him or her to live their best life, while in the safety and comfort of their home.”

Cheri was born and raised in Minnesota and adopted into a large, and God-loving family. At the age of 5, Cheri’s love and passion for helping others began when the family moved into an elderly building that her family would manage.

“In a sense, I grew up with 70 sets of grandparents” She said. I fell in love with caring for and assisting others. It gave me a sense of purpose and pride; to

bring peace, joy and comfort to others.”

After graduation, Cheri pursued her passion and enrolled in the Lakeland Medical Academy in Minneapolis. She has spent the last 20 years caring for others. Four years ago, after much prodding from friends, Cheri decided to open her own business in Minnesota. Now, she has relocated to Florida and chosen the Panhandle to fully invest herself, her passion for others, and share her experiences to better the lives of those on the Emerald Coast.

“Our Mission is to provide compassionate, personalized in-home care for clients of all ages, ensuring their comfort, safety, and dignity,” Cheri says. “We are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for our clients by offering supportive, independent care right at their doorstep. We have a team of skilled assistants committed to delivering exceptional service with warmth, respect, and professionalism, fostering a sense of independence and well-being for every individual we serve.



Panhandle Assistant Care Services

Each client receives a personalized, care-giving plan, tailored to their individual character, hobbies, health, and capabilities. A few of the most popular services requested are: In-home care, 24-hour care, personalized care plans, travel staff, live-in staff, meal preparation, help with errands and tasks, technology, household chores, visiting local senior centers, grocery shopping, nails and hair, attending church services and more.

Cheri and Company are guided by a set of core values; First, compassion: “We listen with empathy, respond with kindness, and are committed to



understanding and addressing the unique needs and concerns of our clients with the utmost care and respect.”

Next is honesty: “From our transparent pricing to our straightforward advice, we pride ourselves on creating an environment where clients can expect nothing but genuine and honest service.”

Third is professionalism: “Entrusting someone else to assist with a loved one you care deeply about is a big decision, one that requires immense trust and confidence. We believe professionalism is fundamental to providing high-quality compassionate care.

And finally, reliability: “We understand that our clients count on us, which is why we’ve made reliability a Core Value — always exceeding expectations, and being there when our clients need us the most.

Cheri Allen and the team at Panhandle Assistant Care is dedicated to provide the highest quality care and attention for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please contact Cheri at (850) 517-5745, panhandleassistantcarefl@yahoo.com or visit www.PanhandleAssistantCare.com.

RUN WITH IT

continued from page 34

“Great running apparel/accessories/shoe store (and they’ve got lots of Pickleball apparel/accessories as well). The staff can get you in the right pair of shoes for your gait/bio-mechanics for running (or walking). There is a large assortment of shoes, and a nice selection of apparel for the runner/athlete or someone who just likes



athleisure apparel for everyday wear. The owners are sweet folks who support the commu-

nity. The store also organizes several local races (5Ks, 10Ks, and Half marathons) during the year as well as supports the local track club and other groups with races those groups sponsor. Stop in for some new shoes, an outfit, or a neat accessory (GPS watch, hydration bottle, running fuel, electrolyte supplement, sunglasses, or to register for an upcoming local run). RWI is my running home.”

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From Fired to Fortune: The Unstoppable Journey of Steve Jobs



By **BILL MASON**,
ROCKET FUEL COACH

Steve Jobs, the brilliant co-founder of Apple Inc., went on this amazing journey that shaped the tech world. With an unstoppable passion for innovation, he led Apple to revolutionize personal computing, smartphones and digital music, changing how we interact with technology.

Right from the start, Jobs saw the endless potential of personal computing. He created ground-

breaking products like the Macintosh, which introduced a graphical user interface and transformed computing.

But here's the twist: his focus on creativity actually cost him his CEO position when his board decided to remove him from his own company! The board started focusing on his weaknesses and let him go. This almost caused Apple to go bankrupt.

In the meantime, Jobs started two other companies, NeXT and Pixar, after leaving Apple. While Apple was struggling, the board realized their mistake and brought Jobs back as CEO to save the company. And guess what? When he returned, he fired many of the people who fired him and put his creativity back to work at Apple!

Sure, his passion led to setbacks at times. But, Jobs learned from them. He came back to Apple and redefined its future with the iPhone.



Jobs took innovation to the next level with the iPhone, combining phone, music player and internet communicator functionalities. This gadget completely revolutionized the mo-

bile industry and paved the way for today's smartphones.

His unwavering commitment to innovation made Apple one of the most valuable companies in the world. Jobs' legacy continues to inspire entrepreneurs, reminding us of the importance of thinking big and leading with creativity.

Jobs trusted his creative instincts and brought together a team that created something truly revolutionary. The iPhone completely changed the tech landscape, redefining how we interact with our devices.

And you know what? His emphasis on creativity paid off big time, making Apple the first trillion-dollar company. Jobs' resilience and commitment to his unique strengths made an incredible impact.

Steve Jobs' story is a testament to the transformative power of creativity and focusing on our strengths to achieve greatness. From being fired for his ideas to achieving unparalleled success, his journey inspires those who dare to think differently.

Like Steve Jobs, let's use our unique strengths to "Put a Ding in the Universe!"

Want to grow your strengths? Contact Bill Mason, Rocket Fuel Coach, and set up a 30-minute free session; call today at 850-855-3430. Find out more about us @ www.rocketfuelcoach.com



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BY CHRIS BALZER, Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

When planning your next beach day, take some extra time and enjoy the beach Emerald Coast Energy Solutions (ECES) style. Of course, we like the traditional beach things: sitting by the water, watching the waves curl ever so slightly, looking for that pod of dolphin fins, listening for and watching low fly bys or watching a sea turtle grab breakfast—you know, the ordinary beach stuff. However, going to the beach here is anything but ordinary; we are blessed to have on a regular basis air and sea shows almost every time we go to the beach. Below are a few more things to think about on your next beach day:

Check the heat index. One of the first things you should know is what the heat index is. The heat index is the “feels like” temperature to the body when relative humidity is combined with the air temperature. It could be 93° with a “feels like” 102°. Heat indexes of 103° or higher are considered dangerous. So, use caution when planning beach days or outings with a high heat index.

Check the UV forecast. While checking the weather forecast and heat index, review the UV forecast. Checking UV (ultraviolet radiation) should become as much as a habit as checking the weather. UV forecasts include many factors. So,

Beach Time – ECES Style!

ENERGY TIPS

by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions



don’t assume cloud cover or lower temperatures mean low UV. Anyone who has gotten a sun burn on a cloudy day understands. Checking UV is particularly important if you plan to spend several hours outside and even more so at the beach where UV radiation can be increased by reflecting off our white sands and water.

Wear reef safe sunscreen. The best way to protect yourself from UV radiation is by staying in the shade or wearing protective clothing. Another way is slather on reef safe sunscreen. Be sure to check the back of the sunscreen bottle; some sunscreens contain chemicals that can harm marine life

including corals, fish and even dolphins.

Get to know the sand between your toes. We have some of the whitest beaches in the world thanks to the Appalachian Mountains and the Apalachicola River. 20,000 years ago, when the world temperatures began warming after the last Ice Age, large volumes of water were carried by rivers to the world’s oceans. The Apalachicola River carried small quartz particles to the Gulf of Mexico and continues today. These unique quartz particles created our shorelines and beautiful white beaches.

Share the shore. Our beaches are great, but they aren’t just ours; we’re all just vis-

itors. Snorkeling, diving and even sitting, one can experience a whole world coexisting at the beach. Share the shore and take the pledge that you will find out how to keep yourself and the marine animals around you safe. As tempting as it is, keep your distance from marine life and leave that shell souvenir behind. Some shells play a vital role in our beach ecosystem and taking some washed up items can actually be illegal. If you are looking for that perfect souvenir, try an airbrushed t-shirt reading “My friends visited the beach and all I got was this lousy t-shirt.”

The next time you plan to

go the beach, do it ECES style: Check the heat index and UV forecast, use reef safe sunscreen, enjoy the sand, share the shore and Beat the Heat!

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions (ECES), 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. Call (850) 588-2870, visit www.trusteces.com or email wecare@trusteces.com and Beat the Heat!



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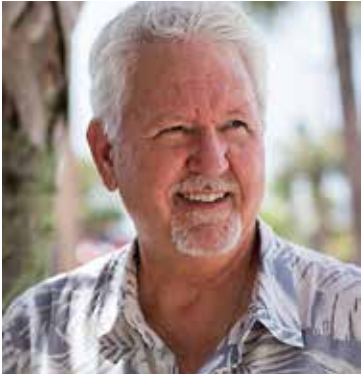
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Musing



BY PASTOR DAVE HOLLAND

If you are wondering where God is and if He cares about you, I challenge you to do this. When you go to bed tonight, turn out the lights, climb into bed and whisper this prayer:

God. If you're there, please show Yourself to me in a way I will understand. It's a great big universe out there and I'm finding it hard down here. I know I have messed up, but I need you.

Then roll over and go to sleep. The answer is on its way; so, be sure to watch for it tomorrow. God can't resist a challenge and He comes through every time.

There are several reasons we don't see God move in our lives. First, we don't ask. Jesus said we have not because we

ask not. We're not open to the possibility of God acting on our behalf, because we don't feel like we deserve it or because we are too proud to admit we need Him. Ask Him to show Himself to you.

Second, we don't see God's hand working to help us because we're not looking. Skeptical of a real, personal and loving God, we blithely ignore the surrounding evidence that testifies to His magnificence. Open your eyes to the pattern in the universe that reveals the mind of the Creator. Logical systems emerging everywhere and reproducing themselves in similar ways. Look at the lily with more radiance than a room full of beauty queens. If you have eyes to see, you can see God everywhere.

Many people refuse to acknowledge God's presence because they are sick of religion. Beautiful buildings and prosperity seeking clergy sour people's hunger for God. Does God need golden-gilded goblets and star-studded stages? Jesus walked dusty roads and lived a simple life while calling us to



know the unpretentious pleasure of a Father who loves us from the time we open our eyes in the morning. Repeat after me, "Lord, I believe in You."

Finally, we rarely hear from

God because we don't make room for Him. God shows up where people want Him. He is a Gentleman who goes wherever people invite Him. Is there a place for God in your soul? Will

you invite Him in? Jesus came to show what God is like and I think He desires to live in your heart.

King David compared our heart to an ancient castle with great gates. He wrote, "Lift up your heads, o you gates! And be lifted up you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in." (Psalm 24:7, NKJV) Will you open the gates of your heart and invite Him in?

Mutter a prayer to God. Let Him in. He's listening. He's wanting to know you. Breathe in the Spirit of Jesus and exhale the prayer of your heart. God is near. He is but a whisper away.

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 DavidHolland54@gmail.com.



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Sean of the South: I Heart America

BY SEAN DIETRICH

A television is playing in a Birmingham bar. The talking head is shouting politics. Most folks in this joint are below thirty, and aren't even watching TV. They're transfixed with the opiate glows of their smartphones.

The bartender looks thirteen. He stares at the television screen and says something under his breath. Something sad.

"This country sucks, man."

I know he probably doesn't mean it. He's just upset. But it stings just the same, and I wish he wouldn't say such things.

Still, maybe it's not his fault. I don't know what his story is, I don't know what his beliefs are, but perhaps this boy has missed a few uniquely American blessings in his accumulated years of harrowed wisdom.

Maybe if he could see a few wondrous things in this country he'd change his opinion about us.

Perhaps he's never seen things like big, neon-pink azaleas bright enough to give you trouble breathing. Those don't suck.

Neither do the Waffle Houses lining the interstates. The shoebox buildings with the canary-yellow tops and the interior globe lights over the faux-wood tables. Nothing sucks about those. I've neither had a bad meal at such an establishment, nor bad service. And no matter which season I visit a Waffle House, it is always cold enough inside to hang meat.

The Everglades at sunrise, no sucking there. The Suwannee River definitely doesn't suck. The fat-bottomed cypress trees, swollen with bayou water. Spanish moss—which, as it turns out, is neither moss, nor Spanish.

My bartender needs to see these things. They would bless his heart.

If you ask me, the boy needs to ride a riverboat on the Mighty Missouri at dusk, watch the shrimp trawlers combing Lake Pontchartrain. Or listen to stories from the roughnecks who raised beef in Ottawa County, Oklahoma. He should meet the

roughnecks who farmed the oyster beds of the Apalachicola Bay.

And he needs smoked ribs from Kendall's Barbecue in Georgiana, Alabama. Food that comes out of that tin shack is worth crying over.

He needs to witness Charles-

any church house that backs up to a hayfield. The quintessential American rural congregational house. The kinds of assemblies that pepper this country from Missoula to Uvalde.

And I'd like to carry the kid to an American funeral. Like my

galows of O'ahu. The 960,000 acres of remaining American prairieland. We have nurses, EMTs, special-ed teachers, janitors, meat-packers, cab drivers and bartenders. That's us. America doesn't suck.

Your television does.

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



ton at sunrise. Yellowstone at sundown. He deserves the right to see the outerbanks of The Old North State.

What the kid needs is county fairs, livestock exhibitions, and children with prize-winning show hogs.

A porterhouse in Kansas City. The Copper Art Museum in Clarkdale, Arizona. A hot-air balloon flight over the Appalachians. A ballgame at Fenway. The little horserace they do each year at Churchill Downs.

String bands, playing beneath festival tents. Gospel music with Hammond organs. Music from the bayou played on button accordions by men with white hair. Jazz.

The kid needs to hold a butter-yellow Case XX knife in his hand. And he ought to own at least one Stetson to keep the sun out of his eyes. He needs to taste chicken and dumplings prepared by a woman who has raised seven kids without the support of a husband.

He needs to meet the Walmart greeter named Phillip. The hospice chaplain named Marge. The family therapist named Jason. He deserves to meet the truck drivers, the pipefitters, the songwriters, the storytellers, the novelists, the oil painters, the shipbuilders, the dentists, the hair stylists, the brewmasters, and the small-town principals named Barbara.

I wish I could take this kid to a Church of God chapel in Senoia, Georgia. Or perhaps a Catholic Mass in Valentine, Nebraska. Or a synagogue in Yonkers. Or the Green Cove Missionary Baptist Church in Damascus, Virginia. Or the Thai temple in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

I wish I could take him to

grandmother's service. Wherein a string of a million-and-three cars drove with their headlights on. I'd like the boy to attend an honest-to-goodness repast, and eat the food of grieving people.

I'd like him to receive a hug from an elderly Norwegian woman in Minnesota. I'd like him to taste pierogies in Lancaster County. Chilaquiles verdes in Taos. Crab cakes in Baltimore.

I don't care what the suits on television say, kid. Don't believe them. Yes, we have problems in this nation. Yes, we have haters. Yes, we're a gigantic dysfunctional family fit for an episode of Jerry Springer. Yes, we have division.

But we also have pediatric oncologists, Fort Bragg, national park rangers, historic sod cabins, longleaf forests, Pikes Peak and James Brown. The sandstone arches of Moab. The beach bun-





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Arts & Music

Book Review: 12 Ways to Age Gracefully

By DAVID HOLLAND

The ancient Norse saying, “time stops for no man,” slaps me in the face each time I look at myself in the mirror. The reminder of my mortality is growing with each new gray hair and laugh line. Fighting the reminders of passing time, Susan Neal shows a better way. Her newly released book, “12 Ways to Age Gracefully,” reveals how to accept the challenge of aging with grace and gratitude.

As a nurse and certified health coach, Susan has the medical background and training to explain groundbreaking research in ways people can use in their lives. Reading this book inspired me to engage in its strategies. I can be healthier, and Susan shows me how in practical, manageable steps.

You can find “12 Ways to Age Gracefully” published by Iron Stream Media in bookstores and on Amazon.com. Doctors

and scholars alike recommend her refreshing book.

The following testimonies attest to the timeliness of her topic. “In ‘12 Ways to Age Gracefully,’ Susan Neal weaves relatable stories from her personal health journey. Her extensive dietary expertise results in an empowering guide that reads like a conversation with a trusted friend. From dietary insights to scriptural wisdom, Susan provides readers with actionable strategies to help them prioritize wellness in every area of their lives,” says Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, physician, best-selling author, and host of “I Choose My Best Life” podcast.

Dr. Michelle Bengtson, author of “Breaking Anxiety’s Grip,” also says “12 Ways to Age Gracefully” explains how to make better decisions in diet and physical activities. The book provides well-balanced applications for issues we face as we age, including our spiritual health. Through this book, we learn the secrets to healthy habits and a long life.”

Billie Jauss, international speaker, author of “Making Room,” “Distraction Detox,” and host of “The Family Room,” podcast says, “Susan Neal shares how she overcame ten serious medical problems that impacted her lifespan. The

information includes checklists of conditions related to various problems and changes to make in response. She covers health, emotional, mental, and physical choices for a better, longer life, to start at any age.”

Ginny Cruz, PT, MPA, author of “The New Mom’s Guide,” relates, “Whether you’re already in your senior years or not there yet, the best time to begin aging gracefully is today. Susan shares her own poor health experiences, which motivate her ongoing journey to better health. As a nurse and certified health and wellness coach, she has the medical background and training to understand and explain groundbreaking research in ways everyday people can use in their lives. Whatever your dreams are for your senior years, you’ll want to feel good and have the energy to enjoy them fully. Get started today. I have.”

Rick Bennett, MD, says, “This is an excellent comprehensive book that details the various vital areas of health and how it can positively impact longevity. A healthy body and mind that work together are essential. The author has done a great job emphasizing both the biochem-



ical and psychological components that contribute to overall well-being. Most importantly, you will get a healthy dose of scripture along with it.”

Linda J. Dindzans, MD, author of “A Certain Man” says, “Whether you are just starting your wellness journey or on the path to longevity, ‘12 Ways to Age Gracefully’ is the ultimate resource to guide you every step of the way. You can reclaim that youthful energy and glow, and keep disease and illness from claiming you as its next victim. Susan offers practical advice in addition to the best proven scientific methods. You will want to reference this book often and give it to the ones you love!”

Order your copy today of Susan Neal’s book, “12 Ways to Age Gracefully” published by Iron Stream Media and available at your local bookstore and Amazon.com.



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Destin Library's Mermaids and More!

BY TAMARA L. YOUNG, PhD,
PUBLIC INFORMATION DIRECTOR,
WORLD'S LUCKIEST FISHING
VILLAGE

Wearing a green dress with thousands of tiny white flowers, carrying hundreds of pieces of her artwork into the Destin Library on one of the summer's hottest days, she still wears a smile.

She is whimsy and childlike and stubbornly says not to use her first name if writing about her. Why? "I don't like the name." Nothing more is offered. LaPine, it is then.

She also prefers not to be photographed, refusing to look directly at the camera. She prefers you to look at her art.

You cannot help but immediately like her. She is a blend of mischievousness and happiness, and it is abundantly clear in the artwork she has chosen to display, now lovingly filling the nooks and crannies around the Library.

"Art is a celebration of imagination aimed at enticing a response of creativity from the inner child whether five or 85,"



she says.

"If you create it, practice it, perfect it and it evokes emotion or reaction – positive or negative – you've won. The world can take it or leave it, but you made them look."

LaPine isn't wrong. People are stopping by the Library for a book, yes, but also to look. Her artwork, some for sell, is meant for all to enjoy.

She admits growing up she wanted to be a musician more

than an artist. "But I'm tone deaf."

She turns serious for a moment, saying we are all so much more capable than we believe. "Share your gifts, art, music, theater, dancing, gardening, fishing, sewing, sailing. All the creative things you do. Show the children now so their minds will be open to endless possibilities later."

The wit and whimsy and creativity in her work speaks for itself, but the care is there, too.



Her aim is to inspire others. "I want everyone to discover their hidden inner artist and encourage them to experiment with multiple mediums to express their unique personal styles. We

are all multi-faceted," she reminds us.

"I draw, carve, cast, polish and try to make everything happy." But she encourages others to find their own space and style.

"You are your own target audience. You are not in competition with anyone except yourself. Your own growth depends on your willingness to reach beyond your comfort zone and experiment with ideas. Folk art is a spontaneous, scattered energy and mood-induced. But fine art is more thought out, practiced, refined, detailed and time-consuming. You can do both and create your own masterpieces beyond expectations."


"Art is not a hobby; it's a beautiful lifestyle," says LaPine.



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A Year-End ECTC Celebration!

A gathering of theatre students came together recently at Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) to celebrate the close of their 11th Season, induct Jr. Thespians and commemorate the end of a fruitful season of children’s educational theatre. This event allowed ECTC’s students and parents to come together with food and fellowship for middle school level Jr. Thespians, as well as their high school aged Teen Company counterparts.

The 2024 Inductees included: Ashlynn Aigret, Campbell Carter, Alice Heller, John Kerrigan, Maggie Kerrigan and Noah Modinger. They were joined by their fellow Jr. Thespians: Lucca Bucalo, Hailey Estrada, Jordyn Fowler, Jenna King, Mackenzie Krout, Clara Petersik, and Preston Smith.

In partnership with the Sea-



side Neighborhood School, ECTC’s Junior Thespian Troupe (No. 89447) is a part of District 10 and a chartered

member of the Educational Theatre Association’s Junior Thespians. The troupe competes in regional and state competitions and focuses on specialized training, acting techniques and implementing those techniques into performance.

2024 Jr. Thespian inductees:

Ms. Darla, Noah Modinger, Alice Heller, Maggie Kerrigan, John Kerrigan, Campbell Carter, Lucca Bulaco, Mr. Heath

2024 Jr. Thespian Jr. Company Ed Students:

Back Row: Ms Darla, Preston Smith, Noah Modinger, Jenna King, Hailey Estrada, Alice Heller, Campbell Carter, Tabitha Sheldon, Mr Heath, Caden Gray, Ben Bathula, Leya Bathula, Maggie Bingham

Middle Row: Maggie Kerri-

gan, Mackenzie Krout, Clara Petersik, Jordyn Fowler, Mercie Taylor, Alex Koehler

Bottom Row: Zoe Fisher, John Kerrigan, Lucca Bucalo, Teddy Petersik

2024 Jr. Thespians:

Ms Darla, Preston Smith, Noah Modinger, Jenna King, Hailey Estrada, Alice Heller, Maggie Kerrigan, Campbell Carter, Mackenzie Krout, Lucca Bucalo, Mr Heath, Clara Petersik, Jordyn Fowler

2024 Best Thespian: John Kerrigan

ECTC Announces Broadway’s Lulu Picart for Musical Theatre Intensive in July

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is proud to announce Broadway’s Lulu



Picart will serve as Musical Director for the Musical Theatre Intensive: Disney’s High School Musical for Teens July 8 - 28, 2024. This three-week camp will stretch students’ theatre skills and grow them as performers. Students work on acting, vocals and dance while receiving high quality instruction and direction from ECTC professionals and former Broadway performer Lulu Picart, an acting and creativity coach. Her work in musicals and on-stage direction includes Norwegian Cruise Lines, Walt Disney World, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, Universal Orlando, The Choir of Man. As a performer, Lulu has appeared on Broadway (1776), off-Broadway (Disenchanted!, Lortel nominated), around the world on tour (1776, R+H Cinderella, Madagascar Live!), and at many theaters and theme parks. Lulu is also an adjunct faculty member at Pace University. Follow Lulu - @lulupicart

Students can register for the Musical Theatre Intensive at emeraldcoasttheatre.org/summer-camps.



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www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org

Around Town

2024 Okaloosa County Candidate Forum

The Destin Chamber is partnering with the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors, Crestview and Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber to hold a 2024 Candidate Forum, Tuesday, July 9th, at 5 p.m. in the Niceville High School Auditorium, 800 John Sims Pkwy. Candidates for School Board and County Commission plan to participate.

Okaloosa County to Break Ground on Historic Bridge-to-Bridge Multi-use Path

Okaloosa County will be holding a groundbreaking ceremony on Monday, July 8, 2024, at 7 a.m. at John Beasley Park on Okaloosa Island (1550 Miracle Strip Pkwy. S.E.) to begin construction on a multi-use path that will stretch about four miles between the Brooks Bridge and Marler Bridge on Okaloosa Island. The 12-foot wide path will allow cyclists and pedestrians to enjoy the unique Destin-Fort Walton Beach scenery while having a protected route between both bridges. The project includes stabilizing the shoulders and parking areas along the south side of U.S. Highway 98 where the path will be built. Multiple funding sources, including tourism revenue and an FDOT grant, are being used for construction. The path is expected to be open to the public in early 2025.

Marcus Chambers Appointed to FHSAA Board



Recently, Governor Ron DeSantis announced the appointment of Marcus Chambers, Superintendent of Schools for Okaloosa County, to the Florida High School Athletic Association Board of Directors. With more than 26 years of experience in education, Chambers received the First Year Teacher of the Year Award for Ruckel Middle School in 1999, the

Okaloosa County Reading Leader of the Year Award in 2010 and the Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Achievement Award in 2013. Chambers also currently serves as Chairman of the Florida School Labor Relations Service Board of Directors and is a member of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the Okaloosa County Association of School Administrators. This appointment is subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate.

Secure Temporary Storage of Luggage and Personal Items on the Destin Harbor



Locks on the Docks, LLC, recently celebrated a ribbon cutting with the Destin Chamber. Its goal is to provide security to locals and tourists, while they enjoy a harbor excursion, a day on the beach or any other occasion where they need a locker to temporarily store luggage and

other items. You will find the lockers on the docks at Harbor-Walk Village between The Cantina and Boogies Watersports' jet skis on the Destin Harbor. Visit Locks on the Docks on Facebook to learn more.

CVHN Record-Breaking Community Impact for 2023-24 School Year

Children's Volunteer Health Network (CVHN) is proud to share the significant impact made on children's dental health across Okaloosa and Walton Counties. This school year alone, CVHN's efforts have more than doubled in regards to services provided, demonstrating their dedication to providing accessible and affordable healthcare to children in need.

CVHN's two Mobile Dental Clinics, Pearl and Niecy, brought smiles and much-needed care to 1,265 children from preschool through 5th grades across the Florida panhandle. Combined, their team offered a total of \$488,630 in donated dental services to children in need over the 2023-2024 school year in Okaloosa and Walton counties.

In a record-breaking year, CVHN's impact was profound. Across both counties, 1,265 students received much needed dental care. 81% of students



with cavities had their decay arrested on campus using the Atraumatic Restorative Technique (A.R.T.), which is a minimally invasive procedure that offers lasting protection against decay. CVHN's network of generous dental providers were able to offer urgent dental care to the 16% of children that had pain and severe infection.

In addition to their two Mobile Dental Clinics, CVHN has several other programs to encourage laying the foundation for a lifetime of good health. The 'Early Intervention Preschool Program' rotates through preschool classes six times a year, applying a medicament that can reduce the incidence of decay by up to 97%. CVHN's "My First Toothbrush Program" provides donations of toothbrush kits to students and non-profits throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties. This year alone, over 14 miles of

floss went out into our community to encourage proper dental hygiene. CVHN's 'Non-Profit Partnership Program' focuses on delivering care directly to their non-profit partners, ensuring that children most in need receive essential dental care, setting them on a path to a healthier future.

Looking ahead, the 2024-2025 school year will bring exciting expansions to all of CVHN's programs. CVHN is thrilled to announce their services will be available to students at Destin Elementary School, Southside Primary School, and preschool students at the Wise Center and Freeport Learning Center. Furthermore, CVHN will be extending care to 5th graders at Freeport Middle School. These additions will increase the number of sites served to 24 locations.

CVHN plans to expand its network to include more dental, vision and mental health professionals. Physicians in the community interested in joining the network, and providing their time and occasional services, are encouraged to contact CVHN's Executive Director, Megan Trent at megan@cvhnkids.org for more information.

Visit www.cvhnkids.org and follow them on Facebook and Instagram.

05.28

piano man

a tribute to billy joel

06.04

80s & 90s street party

with doc roc & dj boom

06.11

us

a tribute to 80s party rock

06.18

80s & 90s street party

with doc roc & dj boom

06.25

still standing

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07.30

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 Around Town



Ask Destinities: Good Fatherly Advice

By PATRICIA LEE, OWNER
DESTINITIES.COM

In our Destinities Facebook group (www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinities) this past month, I asked members what is at least one thing your father told you or taught you that really stuck with you and made a difference in your life? My daddy taught me, “Never let ‘em see you sweat,” long before that saying was popular. Keep a grin on your face, stay calm and carry a big stick, was his motto. He was the Clint Eastwood type throughout his life. He was a cool, good looking guy with uncanny street smarts, and I learned a lot about life and



people from him. This was my first time in 65 years to be without him for Father’s Day and it was tough. I loved him so much. May he rest in peace.

Below are words of wisdom from the dads of some of our group members. I hope you enjoy reading these as much as I did.

1. My dad taught me to be strong...and that’s what I am!
2. Keep a low profile.
3. Don’t have debt.
4. “If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas.”
5. To believe in God.
6. “Never trust a blinker.”
7. “Never let a man hit you, and if he does, let me and your brothers know and we’ll take care of it.” Made me a strong woman—thank you Dad!”
8. “A real man never hits a woman. A little dirt never hurt no one.”
9. That there are three “R’s in life that are the easiest to lose and the hardest to gain back, so value them: 1) Respect 2) Responsibility 3) Reputation.
10. My daddy told me I could do ANYTHING I set my mind

to and be who and what I wanted to be. Never back down and stand tall no matter how short I would grow up to be. Daddy always added a little humor to his instructions.

11. My dad said, “When you leave this house you carry my name. Do good, be kind and remember who your father is!” I use this now with my grandkids. But, I say it when days are hard. People are mean, straighten your crown and remember you’re the son/daughter of the most-high king!

12. My dad always said, “In order to be on time, you must be early.”

13. “Buy locally. If you don’t support your friends and community who will?”

14. “Little girl, you make your own happiness, don’t depend on other people to make it for you.”

15. “Try to learn something new every day.”

16. “Honesty is the best policy.”

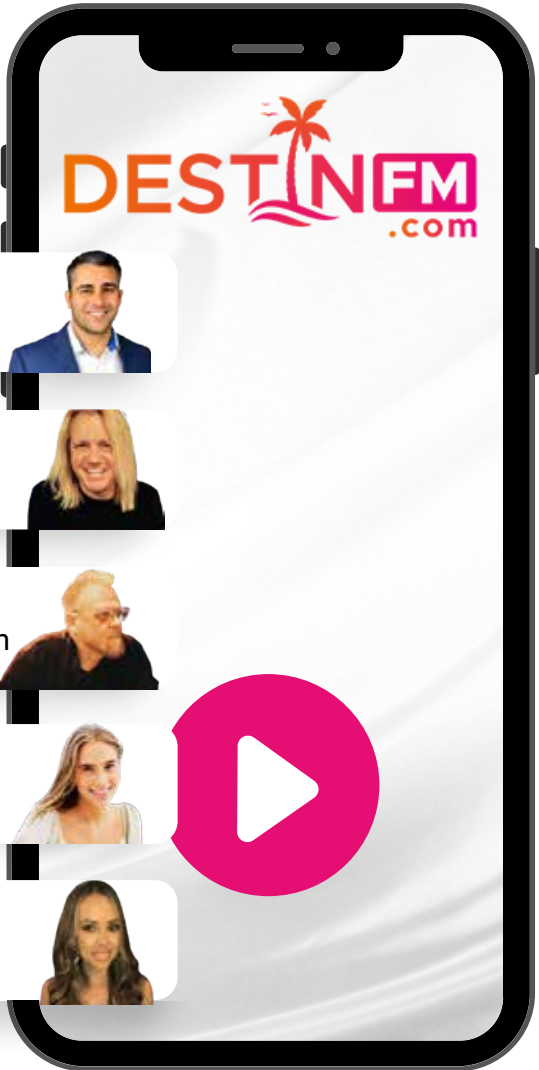
17. “Work hard, trust in the Lord and treat others as you would like to be treated.”






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/Destinities with 10,300+ members (Est. Oct. 2018). Check out our monthly newsletter and sponsored local business directory at www.Destinities.com.

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

Walk to End Alzheimer’s Scheduled for Oct 27 Planning Committee Formed

Are you passionate about the fight against Alzheimer’s? Do you want to get more involved with the Alzheimer’s Association and Walk to End Alzheimer’s - Air Force Armament Museum? Join the Air Force Armament Museum Walk Planning Committee and help shape the movement to end this disease.

Committee members are the heart of the event, planning everything from the kick-off to the wrap-up. Some members focus on growing the event by recruiting teams and sponsors, others coordinate logistics and some work on promoting the event in the



community. There’s a role for everyone!

To learn more about joining our volunteer Walk Planning Committee, contact:

Tina Henson, (850) 502-5947 or email thenson@alz.org or visit www.act.alz.org/goto/panhandleassistantcarefl

New members are welcome to join any time throughout the year. Subcommittees may meet separately as needed.

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