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DESTIN Life

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Honoring Our Heroes: Okaloosa County Wreaths Across America

By "DOC" DOUG STAUFFER

On Saturday, December 14, 2024, the Beal Cemetery, Gulf Cemetery, Heritage Gardens, Destin Memorial Cemetery and Sunset Cemetery will join more than 3,000 cemeteries nationwide for the annual Wreaths Across America Ceremony. These local events are more than just part of a national program; for many in Okaloosa County, they are deeply personal and significant. The ceremonies include nationally coordinated moments of silence, followed by laying wreaths on veterans' graves as a simple gesture of gratitude.

While many are familiar with the wreaths program at Arlington National Cemetery, communities throughout America also participate in this solemn tradition. Here in Okaloosa County, Wreaths Across America is a community effort that honors our local veterans and ensures their sacrifices are remembered and never forgotten.



Local volunteers play a crucial role in making this event possible. In **Fort Walton Beach**, Tom Rice, owner of Magnolia Grill, is a key figure in the Wreaths Across America event. Rice has been instrumental in bringing this event to Beal Memorial Cemetery. He shares that their target goal for wreaths increases annually, with just over 2,000 wreaths expected to be laid at Beal this December. "This

year marks the sixth year that veterans buried at Beal Memorial Cemetery will receive wreaths," Rice explains. "There's never a day that goes by without a blue tent being raised for a veteran laid to rest at Beal Cemetery. No matter when or where they served, they need to be honored, and that's the goal."

The Beal Memorial Cemetery ceremony is a meaningful event showcasing the collab-

oration between the community and local businesses. Tom Rice highlights the importance of this collective effort: "It takes a community effort." For instance, the City Produce Company helps by keeping the wreaths in cold storage, and Step One Automotive staff delivers them to the cemetery the day before placement. Last year, nearly 300 volunteers participated, and Rice notes that support continues to grow, with more people stepping up each year. The logistics coordinator, Retired CMSgt Dennis Krebs, expertly manages the staging of volunteers, serves as the NCOIC for Placement Day, and oversees the post-Christmas cleanup of the wreaths at the cemetery.

The 30-minute ceremony will feature remarks by Brigadier General Mark A. Massaro, 96th Test Wing Commander, and the unveil-

WREATHS
continued on page 10



A Conversation with The Conductor

Discover how Sinfonia Gulf Coast is redefining the symphony experience in its 2024-2025 season — with powerhouse performances, innovative concerts and can't-miss events — in this exclusive Q&A.

By ZANDRA WOLFGRAM

For the 19th season you are once again "redefining the symphony experience" with fresh offerings. Tell us about the first concert of the season, Luminescence: Catalyst by Candlelight on November 7.

Sinfonia is no stranger to unique performance offerings and, in fact,

SINFONIA
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Community

Santa's Coming To Town and More!

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

Friday, Nov. 22 Hometown Holiday Parade And Coastal White Christmas Holiday Celebration

Grand Boulevard Town Center, Miramar Beach, 5 p.m.
grandboulevard.com

Thousands upon thousands of brilliant white lights and an expansive celebratory parade featuring the South Walton High School Marching Band, Emerald Coast Theatre Company, Destin High School, Dog-Harmony, Santa Claus and more.

Santa's Arrival and Tree Lighting

Destin Commons, 6-8 p.m.
destincommons.com

A magical holiday celebration for all ages, with face painting, complimentary photo booth, balloon sculpting, Santa's sleigh, and a fireworks finale.

Friday, Nov. 22 Saturday, Nov. 23

**Sunday, Nov. 24
Northwest Florida Ballet's "The Nutcracker"**
Mattie Kelly Arts Center, Niceville, 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 2:30 p.m. Sunday
nfballet.org

The 45th annual production of the classic seasonal fairytale, and the only full-length version presented on the Emerald Coast. Tickets are \$48 for adults and \$22 for children ages 12 and under. Purchase tickets online.

Saturday, Nov. 30 Santa's Arrival

HarborWalk Village, Destin, 12:30-4 p.m.
emeraldgrande.com

Mr. Ho-ho-ho hits the Destin Harbor, with a parade at 12:30, followed by visits with the kiddos and a special holiday performance from 1 to 4.

Tuesday, Dec. 3 Kick-Off for Festival of Trees Benefiting Local Charities

Grand Park, Grand Boulevard at Sandestin, Miramar Beach, 4-6:30 p.m.
grandboulevard.com

Eighteen nonprofits compete to win cash prizes totaling \$8,500 in a tree-decorating spectacular. The People's Choice winner will be voted on and announced along with Best of Show. Trees remain on display through Christmas Day.

Wednesday, Dec. 4 Holiday Concert Series and Visits with Santa

The Village of Baytowne Wharf, Miramar Beach, 6-8 p.m.
baytownewharf.com

Holiday classics and quality time with Mr. Claus.

Friday, Dec. 6- Saturday, Dec. 28 Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides! "Rock Around The Christmas Tree" Music Revue! Photos With Santa!

Town Center, Grand Boulevard at Sandestin, Miramar Beach

Continued on next page

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SANTA'S COMING

continued from previous page

grandboulevard.com

Enjoy complimentary carriage rides while soaking in the Coastal White Christmas Lights and Festival of Trees display. Seasonal sounds provided by Emerald Coast Theatre Company.



Saturday, Dec. 7 Holiday Open House and Walkabout

Grand Boulevard at Sandestin, Miramar Beach
grandboulevard.com

Enjoy holiday specials and promotions from Grand Boulevard merchants and restaurants while vying for "Taste of Grand Boulevard" prize baskets valued at more than \$1,000 a pop.



Sunday, Dec. 8- Sunday, Dec. 22 Emerald Coast Theatre Company Presents "All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce Of 1914"

560 Grand Boulevard, Miramar Beach, 7 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 2 p.m. Sundays and 6pm Sunday, Dec. 22
Field Trips Friday, Dec. 6, at 6 p.m.
emeraldcoasttheatre.org

Christmas 1914. All quiet on the Western Front, then a song, kicking off an extraordinary night of camaraderie, music and peace. This is the true story of soldiers laying down their weapons to celebrate Christmas together, based on firsthand accounts from the soldiers who lived through it. Tickets are available for purchase online.



Wednesday, Dec. 11 Wednesday, Dec. 18 Holiday Concert Series and Visits with Santa

The Village of Baytowne Wharf, Miramar Beach, 6-8 p.m.
baytownewharf.com

Holiday classics and quality time with Mr. Claus.

Saturday, Dec. 14 Destin Christmas Parade: Flashback To 1984

City of Destin, 10 a.m.
cityofdestin.com

Commemorating the city's

40th birthday, the parade begins at Destin Methodist Church on Beach Drive and proceeds down Harbor Boulevard to Stahlman Avenue. If you wish to enter a float in the parade, please donate a new toy or money by Dec. 6. Call 850.654.8998 or email recreation@cityofdestin.com to learn more.

Friday, December 20th at 6 p.m.

Saturday, December 21st at 6 p.m.

Sunday, December 22nd at 2 p.m.

The Nutcracker presented by studio6twenty5

New venue this year! FWB Civic Auditorium in Fort Walton Beach

Don't miss this festive holiday tradition! Experience Clara's

magical journey to the Kingdom of Sweets as studio6twenty5 presents The Nutcracker featuring the talented dancers from the children's program and adult/open program.

Doors open one hour before each performance. Tickets range from \$15-\$30 and are available now at studio6twenty5.com.



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Community

What Are You Thankful For?

BY LORI LEATH SMITH,
PUBLISHER

“Reflect upon your present blessings—of which every man has many—not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”

— Charles Dickens

A sunset over the Bay; schools where parents are involved and teachers are impeccable; community parks with so much to offer; a business community based on relationships and trust—these are just a few of the positive highlights in our community!

Each year, Destin Life asks, “What are you thankful for?” and offers readers the opportunity to express appreciation for the people and things in their lives. Indeed, there is so much to be grateful for!

As you gather to celebrate this Thanksgiving, resolve to make it more than a reason to take a day off, eat some great food or watch a football game. Make it a time of counting your blessings. After all, the Pilgrims founded our nation on thankful-

ness and, instead of focusing on their losses, they chose to offer thanks for all their blessings.



As your publisher, I’m thankful for so many reasons. But one thing is certain—I’m grateful for this community of friends and colleagues who, with compassion and caring, support and patience, have come alongside me and my family as we continue to navigate through the tragic passing of my nephew—our beloved Wesley Turpin. It is truly comforting and blessed, and we cherish all of you. I’m also thankful for our partners and readers. It’s your voices and

your continued support that make this publication popular and valuable.

— Lori Leath Smith, Life Media Group

Although there are so many reasons to feel and be thankful, my list begins with family. God has truly blessed me with an amazing family which, by the way, keeps on growing ☐. After that what comes to mind is how fortunate and thankful I am to live here in this beautiful slice of heaven, to do the work I do with Life Media, and for good health, which we can never take for granted. And, above all for Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior without who none of this would be possible. Happy Thanksgiving everyone.

— Scott Miller, Director of Sales and Advertising, Life Media Group

I’m thankful to be able to work in the arts. I believe a vibrant arts scene is key to a destination’s Quality of Place and it’s rewarding to me to play a small part.

— Zandra Wolferam, Director of

Marketing & Communications, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation & Sinfonia Gulf Coast

I am thankful for my beautiful, and equally brilliant wife, Laura, the incredible love we share and the beauty of being in love with my best friend. I am also immensely thankful for my parents, siblings, and especially my three children and the close relationship we all have, as well as the opportunity to share in each of their incredible journeys as young adults making their way in the world and doing so with a positive outlook and a friendly smile, to share with all around them. I am also so thankful for my and Laura’s close group of friends who have been beside us since our very first date and continue to enrich our lives in a way that makes them all more like family than friends. You know who you are—we love you! Lastly, I am thankful for the opportunity and God given privilege to live, love, believe, create, worship, work, and speak --largely without persecution-- in a state where free-

dom still matters, but morals, love, and our fellow citizens and neighbors do too.

— Will Estell, Estell Hussey Media LLC/Century 21 AllPoints Realty/ NAVARRE BEACH Magazine

I am ever so thankful for my locals’ Facebook group of six years, at www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinties. The helpfulness which members continue to show each other and blessings they bring to me personally day to day are unprecedented.

— Patricia Lee

“I am thankful for the incredible blessings in my life: my family, who bring a special joy to my days; my role as a pastor, where I have the privilege of uniquely sharing my faith; and my community involvement, where I can influence others positively. Above all, I am thankful for God’s unwavering grace, which guides me through my every endeavor.”

— Pastor “Doc” Doug Stauffer



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Listed by Jodie Snell 850.621.6535



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 \$659,000 | ready December 2024
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Community



Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

"Reel Talk" from the City of Destin

Seasons of Change

TAMARA L. YOUNG, PhD,
PUBLIC INFORMATION DIRECTOR

This month the mayor, Bobby Wagner, and I sat down and reflected on the changing seasons and surrounding activities in Destin.

TY: Both of us have spent some time separately in New York lately, and it's hard to be there and not appreciate the crisp autumn weather and seasons changing. For us in Destin, this time of year means a lot of favorite annual activities. We just had our largest Open House yet, which is our chance to say thank you to our residents and let them know what we've been working on.

BW: This year's Open House was truly something special! A BIG thank you to yourself, city staff and our partners in the community for making

this celebration so great. Seeing the community come together to hear about our projects and plans and having the chance to listen to their feedback face-to-face—it's a reminder of why we do what we do. There's nothing like a full gym of engaged residents asking thoughtful questions, sharing ideas, and helping to shape the future of Destin. It's an exciting time for the city, and I think we all left feeling grateful for the community's support and ready to roll up our sleeves for the next steps.

TY: Absolutely, and I think that energy carries over to other events that connect our community. The Pinfish Classic is such a perfect example—it's all about getting kids outdoors and connecting them to our local waters, which has been part of Destin's heritage for generations. It's encouraging to see discussions happening around keeping the docks accessible and ensuring everyone feels welcome and safe, while respecting the space and taking



care of it. It's that kind of balance that preserves these special places for the next generation of anglers.

BW: The Pinfish Classic is such a fantastic event in our city! Watching kids of all ages compete in a fishing tournament right from shore and harbor is a fun, safe way to pass on the love of fishing to the next generation. Plus, it's perfect for those of us, like me, who get seasick out on the Gulf—this tournament keeps the excitement on solid ground!



It's a small event with a big impact, building a lasting connection to our local fishing heritage.

TY: I suppose the last big change for the season will come with the election results. What's your hope nationally and locally in terms of progress and overall change?

BW: As we look toward the election results, the outcomes will shape what's possible for both our community and the nation. I hope to see progress rooted in thoughtful, community-centered



initiatives. Locally, I envision us continuing to build on recent achievements—investing in infrastructure and keeping Destin a safe, vibrant place for all ages. Nationally, I'd love to see a focus on the real issues that impact our communities: strengthening local economies, investing in resilient infrastructure, and ensuring cities have the support they need to thrive without getting tangled in unnecessary red tape.

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'Tis the Season in the Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Events Fill November and Usher in the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

We're thankful for this time of year to celebrate! The Village of Baytowne Wharf welcomes you to November events and the beginning of the holidays!

Performers are kids through adults! Feel free to sing along! Grab a chair or blanket and enjoy the evening! Can't wait to see you there!

Tribute Weekend
Friday, November 8 -
Sunday, November 10 |
FREE
Friday and Saturday |
7-9 p.m.
Sunday | 4:30-7 p.m.

The Village of Baytowne Wharf is thrilled to be bringing back Tribute Weekend! Rock out the weekend and enjoy live music from great tribute bands. Grab your blankets and lawn chairs and meet us on the events plaza lawn for a jam-packed weekend of incredible talent.

Friday, November 8 |
 Heartbreaker - Pat Benatar Tribute
Saturday, November 9 | World Turning - Tribute to Fleetwood Mac
Sunday, November 10 | Boys In The Band - Alabama Tribute

Alissa Steffens Vocal Studios presents a Fall Concert
Friday, November 15 |
7 p.m. | Events Plaza Stage | FREE

Alissa Steffens Vocal Studios Presents "A Fall Showcase." All Invited! Please join Vocal Coach Alissa and some of her very talented students as they showcase a night of singers, performing various styles of music! Come on out and support local talent!

Sparkling Wine and Holiday Lights
Saturday, November 23 |
4-6 p.m.

The holiday season kicks off with the 11th Annual Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights benefiting one of our local charities. On Nov. 23, Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort and Sandestin Wine Festival will host this seasonal event on the beautifully decorated streets of Baytowne Wharf. Showcasing more than 30 champagnes and delicious appetizers from featured Village restaurants, Sparkling Wine and Holiday Lights features an evening of holiday cheer, singing carolers and plenty of fun bubbles. The finale showcases the first festive tree lighting of the season and Baytowne Wharf's choreographed light show, 12 Nights of Lights. Visit baytownesparklingwinefest.com for tickets and more information.

Baytowne On Ice is Back! Open Now! Continues through Feb. 8th!

Dust off those skates and get in the winter spirit at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Baytowne on Ice. For those visitors who miss the cold and ice, this seasonal ice rink is the perfect opportunity to share some of your favorite holiday traditions, open now - Feb. 8th. Hours



vary daily. Check the schedule at baytownewharf.com. The cost is \$15 for 90-minute skate and \$3 skate rentals. Skaters must be at least age 3 and fit into appropriately sized skates. Children under the age of 6 must be accompanied by a parent or adult family member. Rent the rink for private parties and functions starting at \$300. Call 850-428-2736 or visit baytownewharf.com.

Santa's Arrival
Saturday, November 30 |
6-9 p.m. | FREE

Here Comes Santa Claus! Santa's Arrival at Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin is a highlight of the season! The word



on the street is Santa will be arriving in seasonal fashion with the fireworks show starting sometime between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m. You can visit Santa in the Village at his sleigh beginning Sat., Nov. 30, at his arrival celebration, and on Wednesday nights, Dec. 4, 11, and 18, from 6-8 p.m. during the Wednesday Night Concert Series-Holiday Edition. Visit www.baytownewharf.com.

The Polar Express
Sunday, December 1 |
6 p.m. | FREE

Watch a holiday favorite and join us for a special showing of the Polar Express in the Events Plaza—a family tradition! Bring blankets and lawn chairs and enjoy this Christmas favorite movie under the stars.

Plan ahead!
Nights of Lights
December 1-31 | 6, 7 and 8 p.m. | Events Plaza Lawn | FREE

The Village of Baytowne Wharf will host a special light show on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights from Dec. 1-31 during the 12 Nights of Lights where the NEW tree lights in the events plaza will dance and blink to music at 6, 7 and 8 p.m.

Grinchmas!
December 13 | 5 p.m. | Events Plaza

During this holiday season, put a little snark in your holiday spirit with The MEAN One on December 13th! Meet the maven of mischief himself for a photo opportunity from 5-7 p.m., then enjoy a movie showing of *The Grinch* starting at 7 p.m. Don't miss out on this *Who*-liday spectacular!



Community

Cali's To Do In Destin! NOVEMBER 2024

..... 5
VOTE!
Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou
..... 6
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery
..... 7
The Salon Trinity Ribbon Cutting | 4pm | 50 S. Holiday Rd. Ste. 300 | Miramar Beach
Thursdate | 4-9pm | The Melting Pot Destin
Darts & Music | 6pm | American Legion Destin
Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community Center
Canard Wine Dinner | 6pm | Bijoux Destin
Timber Creek Distillery Dinner Pairing | 6pm | Henderson Beach Resort
FWBHS Viking Symphonic Band Veteran's Day Concert | 6:30pm | Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village
Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Café
Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Luminescence: Catalyst by Candlelight | 7:30pm | Seaside Chapel
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
..... 7-23
Shrek 2 | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. | Miramar Beach
..... 8
Destin Chamber's Business Before Hours | 7:30am | Destin
Sacred Heart 22nd Annual Charity Golf Classic | 7:45am | Burnt Pine Golf Club
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Special Operators Transition Foundation | Noon-6pm | Stronghold Solutions | Defuniak Springs
Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
30A BBQ Festival | 5pm | Grand Boulevard
Emerald Coast PCA Rodeo | 6:30pm | NWFSC | Niceville
Goat Yoga | 6:30pm | Palm Folly
Karaoke | 7pm | American Legion Destin
Tribute Weekend | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
..... 9
Emerald Coast Auburn Club Game Watching | TBD | Gulf Coast Burger Co. | Destin Commons
Vets Day 5K | 8am | American Legion Destin
Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Chili Cook Off | 12pm | Cabana Cafe



Blues, Brews & BBQ | 1pm | Harborwalk Village
Hops & Harmonies | 4pm | Harborwalk Village
Emerald Coast PCA Rodeo | 6:30pm | NWFSC | Niceville
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
Tribute Weekend | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
..... 10
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin
DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk
Cultural Arts Alliance's Flutterby Arts Festival | 10am-4pm | Watersound Town Center SRB
Navarre Beach Art, Crafts & Holiday Fest | 10am | Andy D's on Navarre Beach
Music Tribute Weekend | 4:30pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Women's Climbing Circle | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
..... 11
Veteran's Day on the Harbor | 4pm | Harborwalk Village
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery
..... 12
Speed Networking | 11:30am | Bitterroot
Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou
..... 13
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Alys Beach Crafted: Emerald Coast Storytellers | 5:30pm | Alys Beach
Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery
..... 14
Nothing But Networking - FWB Chamber | 11am | AJ's on the Bayou
Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community Center
Alys Beach Crafted: La Dolce Vita Mixology Dinner | 5pm | Alys Beach
Thursdate | 4-9pm | The Melting Pot Destin
Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Café

United We Worship Tour | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
..... 15
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Alys Beach Crafted: Holiday Makers Market | 2pm | Alys Beach
Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Pints & Prints | 5:45pm | Emerald Coast Science Center
Alys Beach Crafted: Firkin Fete | 6:30pm | Alys Beach
Destin Truck Meet | 6:30pm | Hooter's Destin
Karaoke | 7pm | American Legion Destin
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
..... 16
Emerald Coast Auburn Club Game Watching | TBD | Gulf Coast Burger Co. | Destin Commons
Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Turkey Trot Slacker Series Fundraiser | 10am | Boathouse Oyster Bar
One Hopeful Place Color Run | 10am | One Hopeful Place FWB
Cones With Cops | 11am | Pink Coyote Dessert Co
Pups at the Pier | 11am | Angler's Beachside Grill
Alys Beach Crafted: Spirited Soiree | 1pm | Alys Beach
Chili Cook Off | 4pm | LJ Schooner's Dockside
Hops & Harmonies | 4pm | Harborwalk Village
3rd Annual Gala for Autism | 5pm | Home2Suites Freedom Tech Park
..... 17
Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab Trap Destin
Toys 4 Tots Ride | 8:30am | Emerald Coast Harley Davidson
Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin
DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
..... 18
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery
..... 19
Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou
..... 20
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

..... 21
Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community Center
Thursdate | 4-9pm | The Melting Pot Destin
Bubbly Baytowne | 5pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Sandestin
Bourbon at the Bay | 5:30pm | Regatta Bay Golf & Yacht Club
Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Café
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin
..... 22
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Hometown Holiday Parade & Celebration | 5pm | Grand Boulevard
Santa's Arrival & Tree Lighting | 6-8pm | Destin Commons
Northwest Florida Ballet's The Nutcracker | 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
..... 23
Crop Drop | 7:30am | Destin Methodist Church
Emerald Coast Auburn Club Game Watching | TBD | Gulf Coast Burger Co. | Destin Commons
Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Beach Santa | 10am | Silver Sands Premium Outlets
Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights | 4pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Hops & Harmonies | 4pm | Harborwalk Village
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
Northwest Florida Ballet's The Nutcracker | 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center
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Sandestin Turkey Trot | 8am | Marina Bar & Grill Sandestin
Destin Community Farmers BOO Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin
DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk
Thanksgiving Boulderling Competition | 10 am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
Destin Community Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin
Northwest Florida Ballet's The Nutcracker | 2:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar
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Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery
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Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou
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Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery
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THANKSGIVING!
Thanksgiving Day Meal | 11am-4pm | AJ's on the Bayou | FWB
Annual Dinner for Habitat for Humanity | 11am-4:30pm | Harbor Docks | Destin
Thanksgiving Dinner | 11am-2pm | Henderson Beach Resort
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Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Jolly Jubilee Holiday Festival | 5pm | Destin Commons
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
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Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Jolly Jubilee Holiday Festival | 10am | Destin Commons
Meet Santa | 12pm | Boom Boom Room 30a
Seaside Holiday Parade | 3pm | Hwy 30A Seaside
Santa's Arrival | 12:30-4pm | Harborwalk Village
Grande Tree Lighting | 4:30pm | Harborwalk Village
Here Comes Santa Claus | 6pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 7pm | The Palms Good Vibes Bar

SAVE THE DATES! DECEMBER:

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Festival of Trees | 4-6:30pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin
..... 6
Holiday Pops: Christmas on Broadway | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center at NWFSC
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Carriage Rides, Santa, Rock Around the Christmas Tree | 5-8pm | Grand Blvd. at Sandestin
Christmas Candlelight Open House & Luminaries | 5-8pm | Eden Gardens State Park & Wesley House
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Destin Snowbirds Roost Ribbon-Cutting | 1pm | Destin Community Center



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 Community

WREATHS

continued from page 1

ing of wreaths for each military branch, including a new wreath for the Space Force. Wreaths will also be placed in honor of POW/MIA veterans and Gold Star families. Among the attendees will be State Representative

Patt Maney, a retired judge and Army Brigadier General, who will raise the Gold Star wreath. Tom Rice, who served as Maney's First Sergeant in the Army, reflects on the deep meaning of these ceremonies, adding that "honoring all military services is essential."

"When the wreath is placed,"

Rice explains, "the individual performing the placement either gives a hand salute if they served in the military or places their hand over their heart if they did not. It's a powerful moment of respect." With each veteran's wreath placed by a volunteer, he or she is asked to "say their name" to ensure that the



legacy of duty, service, and sacrifice is never forgotten.

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the casting of the Veterans Tribute Bell, which will be rung as part of the ceremony. The bell, housed in the Veterans Tribute Tower, further symbolizes the community's dedication to honoring veterans.

Dora Carrano, who helps coordinate the local Wreaths Across America efforts in **Niceville** and **Valparaiso**, brings a unique, personal perspective. She comes from a multi-generational military family. "This has given me a deep appreciation for the military, our service members and the sacrifices they make. Bringing Wreaths Across America to our area gives me and others within the community the opportunity to honor our local veterans, their service and their sacrifice."

Therese Baker and her son Gaige are dedicated volunteers at the Heritage Gardens in Niceville and Sunset Cemetery in Valparaiso. Their participation is not just about the wreaths; it's about honoring the memory of loved ones like Dave, Therese's late husband, and others throughout America who have served. "People often hear about the large ceremonies at national cemeteries, but aren't aware that communities do this locally as well," Therese shared.

"Gaige and I do it to honor Dave and those like him who served for us." Wreaths are \$17 and 1,500 graves need sponsorship. You can join the joint ceremony for both Heritage Gardens and Sunset Cemetery on Dec. 14 at 11 a.m. at Heritage Gardens Funeral Home-Cemetery. Wreath placement immediately follows at both locations of Sunset Cemetery (Valparaiso) and Heritage Gardens (Niceville). Contact Dora at wreathsacrossamerica850@gmail.com for more information.

In **Destin**, the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 296 and community volunteers will place wreaths at every veteran's grave in both the Destin Memorial and Marler cemeteries. "We remember the fallen, honor those who serve and teach about free-

dom," says Corlene Ziegler, president, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 296. "No matter the weather, they come—all ages, from all walks of life to honor the lives of the veterans who served. Parents bring their children so they can learn about service and sacrifice."

Wreaths Across America is not merely a one-day event; it is a powerful mission woven into the fabric of our community—a mission to remember the fallen, honor those who serve and impart the profound value of freedom to the next generation. As we gather this year at local cemeteries, we are reminded that each wreath laid represents more than a gesture; it is a living tribute to our veterans' courage, sacrifice and legacy. Each live, balsam remembrance wreath is a gift of respect and appreciation, donated by a private citizen or organization and placed on the graves by volunteers as a small gesture of gratitude for the freedoms Americans enjoy. Including children in this solemn act makes it a moment of remembrance and a family tradition that instills reverence for those who have safeguarded our freedoms.

Supporting Wreaths Across America in Okaloosa County offers more than just an opportunity to give back; it provides a chance to ensure that the legacies of our local heroes live on. Whether you sponsor a wreath, volunteer or attend the ceremonies to pay your respects, you contribute to a cause that transcends generations. Through this shared commitment, we ensure that the stories of our veterans are not forgotten but carried forward—reminding us all that freedom is both a gift and a responsibility we must pass down with honor.

For those interested in supporting the local Wreaths Across America efforts, you can sponsor a wreath, volunteer or attend the local ceremony to pay your respects. To sponsor a wreath, visit wreathsacrossamerica.org. Find your location and ceremony and click the red sponsor button.

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Remember Our Seniors During this Holiday Season

Caring for Those that Cared for Us

BY TERESA HALVERSON

As the holiday season approaches, it is a time for reflection, connection and joy. At Destination Health and Rehabilitation, we understand that this time of year can be particularly meaningful for seniors and their families. We believe in the power of connection, and we strive to create an environment where every resident feels valued and cherished.

It is also time to remember to spend time with those that have cared for us. The holidays can be a depressing time for a lot of people, especially seniors. It tends to serve as a reminder about who is not there to celebrate anymore and how they cannot often go to where everyone else is gathering. Long-Term Care/Skilled Nursing facilities often have seniors without any extended family in the area. Little to no visitors, birthdays and holidays often leave an empty feeling for our aging population. While caregivers do their best to make every occasion special,

having a visitor, friend and/or family member visit makes all the difference in the world to each individual. It is human nature to want to feel loved, appreciated and cared for.

One reason why the holidays are so important to seniors is that it gives them time to reflect on their lives. Looking through photo albums is a great way to reminisce about the past. Taking time to look at photos and ask questions creates an opportunity for one to “tell a story.” Becoming a “senior” is an achievement in life. We need to remind them how blessed they are and how much richer our lives are for spending time with them.

Perhaps it is time to start a new tradition this holiday season and carry it through 2025. All facilities have a volunteer program. Have you considered including in your holiday plans to adopt a “grandmother or grandfather” in a facility? Maybe your church or civic group would be interested in volun-

teering and spending time with seniors. Spare a little time to help bring joy to others during this joyous time of the year.

Our dedicated team provides specialized care tailored to the unique needs of everyone, enhancing their quality of life during this festive season. With personalized support, we ensure that our seniors not only receive the care they need, but also enjoy the warmth and companionship that the holidays bring.

We encourage families to remember and engage with their loved ones during this time. A simple phone call, a visit or even sharing memories can make a world of difference. Our compassionate staff is here to foster these connections, helping to create joyful moments for both residents and their families.

If you are seeking support or would like to learn more about how Destination Health and Rehabilitation can assist your loved ones during this holiday season, we invite you to reach out to us. We offer short term



post-hospital care, long-term residential care and respite services. Together, let's make this holiday season a memorable one.

If you have questions or would like to seek a consultation, we encourage you to reach out to us. We are excited to be a new provider in Destin and look forward to meeting the needs of the community. For addition-

al information, please call our admissions Department at 850-654-4588.

Perhaps this holiday season is your year to “make a difference” in the lives of others. Happy Holidays!

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full of diamond and gemstone bracelets, rings, necklaces and earrings for the gift-giving season! Owner Ashleigh Woolly is passionate about exquisite and custom-designed jewelry. Actual customer review: "Ashleigh has the most fascinating jewelry in her shop! Her knowledge of jewelry is extensive...They are the cutting edge of major trends... and the highest quality! The diamonds are unbelievably "sparkling" and dynamic in nature. I love shopping at the store and have received the finest customer service available in the, well, world!" So, what's on your wish list this Christmas? A special gift? An engagement ring? Diamonds galore? Beyond Measure is here!

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wireless EMS training by Vision Body (\$50). More geared towards esthetics? A Cryo Express Facial builds collagen, smooths wrinkles and reduces teen acne.

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The SOTF Transitions Elite Veterans to Civilian Success

By “DOC” DOUG STAUFFER

The Special Operators Transition Foundation (SOTF) is a one-of-a-kind organization that provides unparalleled support to elite Special Operations Forces (SOF) veterans transitioning from military service to successful civilian careers. Since

its establishment in 2013, the foundation has significantly assisted over 500 SOF veterans in finding meaningful employment with more than 150 leading companies throughout the United States. These success stories underscore the unique value of the SOTF’s mission and its po-

tential for further growth.

The Challenge of Transition for SOF Veterans

The transition from a military career, particularly from within Special Operations, presents a unique set of challenges. The SOF veterans, renowned for their exceptional leadership,



strategic thinking and ability to operate in high-pressure environments, often require assistance in finding roles that recognize and understand these attributes in the corporate world. The SOTF not only recognizes, but also deeply understands these unique qualifications, and is committed to facilitating a successful transition.

Furthermore, the military culture and the close-knit community within Special Operations can lead to a sense of isolation when veterans leave the service. However, the SOTF steps in to provide a robust and supportive network that helps veterans navigate this transition, significantly reducing the stress and uncertainty of entering an unfamiliar job market. The SOTF’s unwavering presence in this journey reassures the SOF veterans that they are not alone, instilling confidence and reassurance.

The SOTF’s Comprehensive Approach

The SOTF’s program is strategically designed to address these challenges. It begins with psychometric and behavioral assessments, a crucial step that helps identify the strengths, skills and potential career paths that align with each veteran’s unique profile. This initial step is instrumental in ensuring a smooth transition.

Following the assessments, the SOTF provides executive coaching tailored to each individual. This coaching is designed to enhance veterans’ leadership skills and adapt them to the corporate environment. It also helps prepare veterans for the cultural shift they will encounter in the civilian workplace.

Resume tailoring is another

critical component of the SOTF program. Many SOF veterans have resumes that reflect their extensive military experience, but civilian employers sometimes do not immediately grasp the unique qualifications. The SOTF assists in translating military achievements into language that resonates with corporate recruiters, ensuring that veterans can effectively communicate their value.

Networking and Post-Placement Support

One of the SOTF program’s most significant advantages is its extensive network of corporate partners. The SOTF leverages this network to connect veterans with potential employers actively seeking the leadership and problem-solving skills that the SOF veterans bring. These partnerships have led to placements in various industries, from technology and finance to consulting and manufacturing.

However, the SOTF’s support does not end once a veteran has secured a job. Recognizing that the first few months in a new role are critical, the SOTF provides ongoing post-placement support. This ensures veterans have the resources and guidance they need to thrive in their new careers.

A Proven Track Record

The SOTF’s success is evident in the stories of the veterans it has helped. Many have held senior positions in Fortune 500 companies, leveraging the skills and experiences gained in Special Operations to drive success in their new roles. The foundation’s ability to match veterans with the right opportunities has transformed individual lives

Continued on page 35



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30TH ANNIVERSARY! Harbor Docks Restaurant Annual Thanksgiving Dinner

In what has become a local Thanksgiving tradition like no other, Harbor Docks Restaurant will provide complimentary meals to locals and out-of-towners for the 30th consecutive year this November 28th, Thanksgiving Day.

The restaurant will have its sit-down dinners inside the restaurant serving hundreds of people a traditional Thanksgiving meal including turkey, ham, dessert, beverages and all the "fixins." There is no charge for the meal, but donations are accepted benefitting Habitat For Humanity of Okaloosa County and Destin Harvest. All of the volunteers for the Thanksgiving feast are provided by Habitat For Humanity Okaloosa, from the cooks to servers and everyone in-between. The volunteer staff will include homeowners who will benefit from the fundraiser!

Credit cards will be accepted for donations and alcoholic beverages can be purchased at



the bar separately, but not included with the meals. Large family groups of 10 or more are encouraged and asked to please call the restaurant ahead of time, so that a table can be re-

served to avoid long waits. Call (850) 837-2506.

Harbor Docks will begin seating at 11 a.m. and will take the last sitting at 4:30 p.m. Please note that food will be served

while it lasts. The serving is not buffet style, but served individually to patrons. Parking will be available across the street from the restaurant with plenty of parking signage and handicap

parking available also.

Harbor Docks Restaurant is a Destin institution located in the "Heart of Destin" at 538 Harbor Boulevard.

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Simplifying Medicare Advantage vs. Supplement Choices

By GREG DURETTE, FLORIDA HEALTH CONNECTOR

This is the time of year when you should review your Medicare options and make important decisions about your cover-

age for 2025.

Right now, we are in the Annual Election Period (AEP) for all Medicare beneficiaries. It is often referred to as the Annual Open Enrollment Period. This

annual event runs from October 15th through December 7th.

Because this period allows ALL Medicare eligible folks to make switches and changes to their plans, it is the most heavily advertised time of the year—not like I have to tell you that! Folks on Original Medicare (Parts A&B), Supplements (MediGap), Stand Alone Prescription Plans (Part D) and Advantage Plans have a chance to pretty much do anything they want with their coverage mix. The hard part comes with sorting it all out.

One of the things I often talk about with Medicare beneficiaries around this time of year is to make sure you don't get so overwhelmed by all the information out there that you run out of time to take action. It can sometimes become "paralysis by analysis" syndrome. Remember, the AEP ends on December 7th!

Figuring out which coverage options are best for you can be confusing at any age, but understanding healthcare options for those 65 and older can be even more difficult.

I suggest considering these three things when shopping for Medicare Advantage/Supplement plans:

Choice: When it comes to Medicare, one size does not fit all - what works for your neighbor (or doctor/provider!) may not work best for you. Take the time to learn and understand the benefits and costs of each plan so you can feel confident in your decision and your health care coverage. Remember, you are getting the best for you, not your doctor or other provider.

Care: Care starts with a strong relationship with your primary care provider. If your plan has a network, make sure you're comfortable with the doctors and hospitals in that network. Check to see if your plan will coordinate your care with the rest of your providers...in and out of State.

Experience: Medicare can be complex and confusing. It's important to find a seasoned agent that works for you and supports you throughout your health care journey with plan benefits and resources that can help you live more and worry less about out of pocket costs.

Since Medicare Advantage Plans are offered by private companies, one excellent feature is they have more freedom and motivation to include extra benefits such as vision, hearing, gym memberships, dental, over-the-counter pharmacy items and more.

However, it is important to note that, not only do Medicare Advantage plans vary by state, but are different right down to each individual county in each state. Supplements are universal regardless of state/county, but often times cost more premium per month and do not cover prescriptions, requiring additional premium costs to pick up that coverage.

Your sibling in North Dakota is not going to have the same insurance company/coverage options you would in your Florida county. Try not to get trapped into believing the terms Supplement and Advantage are the same. It is critical to know your specific differences before making choice that works for you.

This is why it is vitally important to work with a local agent that knows the area and understands the benefits landscape as it applies to you. A famous actor or retired athlete on TV touting a toll-free number from who knows where will likely not.

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the State of Florida and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for over 41 years and can be reached at his office number of 850-842-2400 or mobile at 978-509-2941.



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10 Budget-Friendly Upgrades to Boost Your Home's Value



BY PAUL DOMENECH

You don't need to tear down walls or break the bank to give your home a boost in value. In fact, there are plenty of small, budget-friendly improvements that can make a big impact without the headache or expense. Here are 10 effective ways to upgrade your space and increase its value without an arm and a leg.

1. Paint Inside and Out. A fresh coat of paint is one of

the easiest ways to breathe new life into your home. Stick to neutral tones that appeal to a broad audience. A clean, updated look on the walls, trim, or even the front door can instantly increase appeal.

2. Boost Curb Appeal. First impressions matter. Simple changes like trimming bushes, planting flowers, or adding a layer of mulch can go a long way in boosting curb appeal. Add some outdoor lighting, and your home looks welcoming and well kept.

3. Modernize Light Fixtures. Swapping out outdated light fixtures for modern designs can dramatically transform a room. Choose fixtures that fit the style of the home but bring in a fresh, updated look. You'll be surprised by the difference in ambiance.

4. Upgrade Hardware. Old, worn-out hardware in the kitchen or bathroom can date your home. Replacing handles, knobs, and even faucets with modern, polished options can



make cabinets and doors look brand new without a full remodel.

5. Install a Backsplash. Adding a simple tile backsplash in the kitchen or bathroom can provide an instant focal point and make the space look high-end. It's a DIY-friendly project that adds character and sophistication for minimal cost.

6. Clean or Replace Carpets and Rugs. Flooring takes a beating, and nothing says "neglected" like stained carpet. Have carpets professionally cleaned or, if they're too worn, replace them with new carpet or budget-friendly laminate. Clean floors instantly make a home look more polished.

7. Upgrade Bathroom Caulk and Grout. Over time, grout and caulk can get discolored, making your bathroom look older than it is. Freshening up grout and caulk around sinks, tubs, and showers can make the bathroom look newer and more inviting.

8. Add Crown Molding. Crown molding adds a touch of elegance to any room. You can purchase pre-made moldings from a hardware store and install them yourself, or hire a pro for a little extra. This upgrade gives rooms a finished, high-end look without too much investment.

9. Improve Storage and Organization. Potential buyers love to see ample storage, so show off what you have. Add shelving, organize closets, and install storage solutions in cluttered areas. Maximizing your storage not only makes your life easier but also adds value in the eyes of future buyers.

10. Consider Energy-Efficient Upgrades. Many buyers are looking for energy-efficient features. Simple changes like installing LED lighting, a programmable thermostat, or low-flow showerheads can make your home more appealing and save money in the long run.

You don't need a huge budget to add value to your home. Small updates can add up to a big impact when it's time to sell, and most of these projects are DIY-friendly. With a little time and effort, you'll be able to boost your home's appeal without burning through your savings.

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Tis' the Season to Protect Your Treasures



By JULIE A. MARTIN

In the upcoming holiday season, many beautiful baubles will be bought, beautifully wrapped and gifted to loved ones to smile, ooh and ah over. Rings and earrings, bracelets and necklaces, Oh My! So, once you have these beautiful gems, gold and silver, too, how do you insure these beautiful treasures?

There are two ways to insure your new valuables. One is to schedule your new jewelry onto your existing home insurance policy for its specifically

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

The other way to insure your valuables is on an Inland Marine Floater policy. These policies typically cover for the perils of theft, breakage or mysterious



- Antiques/collectibles
- Stamps
- Coins
- Rare books and Manuscripts

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

In the event of

disappearance, but are not tied to your home insurance.

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

There are 12 categories of personal property that are typically classified as Scheduled Items:

- Jewelry, goldware, silverware, pewterware
- Furs
- Sports equipment
- Firearms
- Artwork

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

Many carriers offer discounts for the scheduling multiple items on one policy. For example, if you have a 10K ring and your husband has a Rolex, scheduling them together under one policy would reduce the premiums for both, as it would make more sense than to have a separate policy for each item.

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

You may also add other items to the same policy such as rare books, antique firearms or other valuable items from the list, provided they have been appraised within the timeframe of the carrier's rules, usually either 12 months, or sometimes up to 36 months, depending on the carrier.

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

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

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Decorating with the Cooler Temps in Mind



BY KIM SCHNEIDER,
COASTAL DESIGN BY KIM

The cooler weather is finally upon us! For many, it's a welcomed relief and we want to embrace all the cozy things. While we may not experience the change of seasons, we can create a "warm" space that'll give us a "cozy feeling." Here's a few tips to help you get started in creating a welcoming "cool weather" space.

Let's start by adding **DRAPES** – you'll improve your warm, cozy aesthetic by hanging drapes. When drapes are closed, they'll improve the energy efficiency in your home by keeping the warm air in and providing an extra barrier against cold window drafts. They can be



placed over your existing blinds. You can change the drapes out for light and airy curtains in the spring and summer months for a different vibe. **TIP:** Hang the rod a minimum of 10"-12" past the window on each side (if you have the room) and at least 3"-4" below the ceiling or your crown moulding.

The **COLOR** of your drapes will make an impact in your space. Moody colors are a big hit right now and selecting colors like Navy Blue, Dark Green, Chocolate and Camel will certainly add warmth to your space. You can also choose to match your walls or go for a contrasting color. Velvet is a great fabric choice and will add to the cool, wintery feel regardless of color.

Add cozy **TEXTILES** – changing out your throw pillows, blankets and lamp shades will help you create a warmer feel. You can use textured pillow covers such as fur, flannel or tartan plaid. Faux fur or chunky cable knit throws on your sofa or favorite chair creates a great cozy and inviting look. Select a warm fabric or even a darker colored lampshade for added warmth to your space. **TIP:** Use one lampshade style per room.

Most of us spend time on our lanai or dine al fresco in the cooler months, so don't forget to add your cozy textiles outside, too. Adding throw blankets and pillows to your patio furniture lends itself to a cozy evening ahead.

Speaking of **OUTDOORS** – you can fill your planters with cool weather florals such as asters, dahlias or pansies. Nothing cozier than a chunky blanket, blooming flowers and a candle on a chilly night. Yes, please! **TIP:** If it's breezy consider using a battery-operated candle instead of a real flame.

CANDLES – add soft ambience to any space. You can purchase candles that match the color scheme of your space and if you're into scents there's many fall inspired aromas such as Teakwood, Fir, Cinnamon Apple, Pumpkin Spice and so many more. The soft glow of a candle will provide the perfect amount of light for a cozy evening. **TIP:** Using an unscented candle at the dinner table is recommended so it doesn't com-

pete with the yummy smells of dinner.

TABLESCAPE – pumpkins, gourds, pomegranates and even a rosemary plant can create a beautiful centerpiece that will add beautiful color and texture to your dining table. **TIP:** Keep your tablescapes low so your dinner guests will be able to easily see and converse with one another.

Cheers to you as you create a perfectly cozy, inviting space

that you can enjoy during the cooler months. If you need assistance creating your cozy space, Coastal Design by Kim is just a phone call away, (850) 904-6622.

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

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The Power of a New Hue: Self-Care Through Fall Hair Color



BY ALLEN PADGETT, OWNER OF THE SALON TRINITY

As the holiday season approaches, themes of gratitude and self-care take on renewed importance, especially for the countless moms who juggle an endless list of responsibilities. Whether it's planning festive gatherings, keeping up with family schedules, or ensuring that the holidays run smoothly, moms often find themselves at the heart of it all. But, in a year where self-care has finally taken center stage, there's a growing movement encouraging mothers to take time for themselves—moments of indulgence that remind them they deserve to feel as special as they make everyone else feel.

One of the most expressive and uplifting ways to embrace this spirit of self-love is through the transformative power of fall hair color trends. This season, it's all about warmth and richness. Deep auburns, caramel highlights and honey blondes are not just colors—they're reflections of the beautiful hues that autumn brings. These shades can brighten a mom's look, giving her that refreshed, rejuvenated feeling that often comes as the year winds down. But, more than that, a new hair color can do wonders for the soul, boosting confidence and offering a tangible reminder to appreciate oneself amidst the busyness of the season.

For many moms, visiting the salon has become a meaningful form of self-care. Sitting in a stylist's chair, away from the demands of everyday life, is often a rare moment of quiet. In those moments, something as simple as a fresh color and cut can provide a sense of renewal. There's something powerful about watching a transformation in the mirror—a subtle reminder that you, too, deserve to feel your best.

Some mothers, however, find joy in DIY haircare, taking the



time at home to experiment with new colors or techniques. For them, the process of changing their hair can be a form of meditative self-expression. It's an escape from routine, offering a moment of creativity and individuality that, for a brief time, is just for them. Whether done in a professional salon or in the comfort of home, the ritual of hair care becomes an opportunity to step away from the hustle and reflect on personal needs.

But, the concept of self-care, especially in the holiday season, extends far beyond hair. It's found in those quiet spa days, a cozy evening with a favorite book or a peaceful moment sipping tea while watching the world slow down outside. These small but meaningful acts of

self-nurturing help replenish the energy needed to navigate the busy weeks ahead, allowing moms to show up for their families with renewed enthusiasm.

This season, let's redefine self-care as an act of gratitude—not only for the people we love, but also for ourselves. It's about finding that balance between giving to others and giving back to ourselves, whether through a gorgeous new hairstyle or a peaceful moment of solitude. As the year draws to a close, it's the perfect time to reflect on how we can celebrate both the beauty around us and the beauty within.

At The Salon Trinity, we believe in the power of these small moments. We celebrate the strength, grace and beauty that our clients bring, and we're here to provide a space where self-care can truly shine. We invite you to take a little time for yourself, refresh your look and step into the festivities feeling your best this holiday season. Because at The Salon Trinity, your well-being is always in style.

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All I Want for Christmas...

BY LIESEL SCHMIDT

If you're looking to score some serious points with your loved ones this Christmas, Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. has curated a sassy, standout gift list that's bound to make everyone's holiday merry and bright. Here's the lowdown on unique, thoughtful and downright cool presents they'll love unwrapping.

She's Birdie Personal Safety Alarms

Perfect for any girl boss in your life, this stylish personal safety alarm is designed by women, for women—which we absolutely love. A quick pull of the metal loop at the top releases an ear-piercing sound and flashing light—enough to deter any potential danger. Nothing says girl power like this discreet, TSA-friendly piece of personal protection.

Whiskey River Candles

Who doesn't need a candle that smells like "Calm the F Down" or "A Candle for Day Drinking?" These snarky candles don't just fill the air with yummy scents—they bring humor and personality to any

room. And sometimes, you just need a candle to say it for you.

Sweet Water Decor Candles and Diffusers

Give the gift of Zen and good smells with these deliciously scented candles and diffusers, in warm, inviting fragrances like "Driftwood + Mahogany," "Warm + Cozy," "Hello Fall" and "Wildflower + Salt." Not only are they pretty, they're a treat for the nose and the soul.

Avery's Home Tea Towels and Swedish Dishcloths

With their cute, hand painted designs—ahem, we're looking at you, pickleballers—these are way more than your average tea towels and dishcloths. Not to mention created by a woman-owned small business in Texas; so, you're supporting someone's dream. Sure, they're functional—but they're also fun, and perfect for adding a pop of personality to anyone's kitchen.

Ellebee Gift

You know those things you think in your head, but you're too afraid to say out loud? Things like, "I keep hearing it takes a village to raise a child.



Do they just show up? Or is there like, a number to call?" This Detroit-based, women-owned small business is all about the snark and funny internal musings. And, they've put it all right out there on tea towels and canvas makeup bags. Perfect for anyone with a sense of humor, these will make whomever you give them to laugh out loud. Plus, they'll see that you really, really do get them.

Emerald Coast Essentials Soaps

Love to support local artisans? You'll adore these locally made artisan soaps, made right here in Fort Walton Beach! Pretty designs, divine scents—each one is a little bar of luxury. They'll make any recipient feel like they're on a spa vacation, right at home.

Ellesee Women Polymer Clay Earrings

Pretty little accessories with a big mission, these pieces are made for women, by women, with an ethos of paying it forward. Lightweight, vibrant and so chic, these polymer clay earrings are handmade for a one-of-a-kind accessory that's sure to be a hit with the trendsetters in your life—and each purchase helps support a women's shelter.

Lizou Jewelry

Born in Tahoe, each of the line's beautiful earrings, bracelets, and necklaces is French inspired and and incredibly chic. Lizou jewelry is all about layering, stacking, and making a statement—the perfect gift for anyone who wants to add a bit of sparkle to their wardrobe.

Fran & Bel Accessories

Each of these earrings is created with quality metals, wood and leather—plus tons of love, handmade on a dairy farm in Wisconsin. Fun, lightweight and super unique, every piece is sure to get tons of compliments and become a new favorite.


Sunski Polarized Sunglasses



Made with recycled frames and a forever warranty, these are the ultimate gift for the eco-conscious adventurer. They come in a variety of shapes, colors and styles, making them perfect for any face shape and sensibility. Stylish? Check. Environmentally friendly? Check. Big points for you, the gift-giver? Check, check.

Maui Jim Sunglasses

Perfect for the sunglass aficionado, Maui Jim's polarized lenses and sleek styles are an absolute game-changer on sunny days. As a brand with almost 40 years of trusted wear, the quality speaks for itself, making them the ultimate sun-smart gift.


Continued on page 34



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Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

"Ya Ain't Been Pucked Til Ya

AJ's Feeds the Community this Thanksgiving!

For the 9th year, AJ's on the Bayou, will host a free Thanksgiving Day meal from 11 a.m. till 4 p.m. Last year, the waterfront restaurant served roughly 1,000 meals! "We open up our doors to everyone, to ensure that no one is alone or hungry for the holiday," says Keith Waters, Director of Operations for AJ's.

AJ's Thanksgiving feast will feature time-honored classics such as turkey, ham, stuffing, turkey gravy, mashed potatoes, sweet potato casserole, green bean casserole, cranberry relish, garden salad, dinner rolls and assortment of pies.

"We have expanded our outreach to include our sister store in Grayton Beach; this will be their 5th year," adds Waters. "We are open to everyone, and invite the community to join our AJ's family on this day, to give thanks. While there is absolutely no charge, donations will be accepted from those capable of making them."

Alan Laird, owner of AJ's says, "We want to give back to those that may not have the means to celebrate Thanksgiving. We also want to provide a gathering place for those who don't have anyone with which to share the holiday meal or for those who simply want to



celebrate with their neighbors. This is our way to thank the community that provides for us and our families, each and every day."

No reservations are accepted, and diners will be served on a first come basis. AJ's Grayton Beach will open its doors from 12 p.m. till 5 p.m. to serve Thanksgiving dinner, then host family Karaoke starting at 6 p.m.

All donations received from both Thanksgiving feasts will benefit Kids on the Coast Foundation. Donations will be used to assist local high school youth this upcoming holiday season. Kids on the Coast is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports various charities which provide assistance and offer support to local children and youth. For more information, contact the Special Events and Promotions department: Rachael Green at info@ajs-destin.com or 850-259-2057.

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Seven Tikis, One Fudpucker's Bringing Wild Tiki Art to The Emerald Coast

Tiki, Tiki, Everywhere

In a delightful blend of art and culture, Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill has added a tropical flourish to its popular Destin location with the unveiling of seven new custom-carved tikis by Aaron DeLuca, master carver and founder of Fat Boy Tiki. With each tiki representing a unique aspect of Fudpucker's character and community, DeLuca's latest creations offer a lively, immersive experience for visitors and tiki enthusiasts alike.

Tradition With A Twist

The first tiki in the lineup is a traditional guardian, designed to stand as a sentinel at the entrance to Fudpucker's, welcoming guests and giving a nod to Polynesian tiki culture's rich history. "Guardian Tikis" are believed to offer protection, setting a tone of hospitality and warmth. But the artistry of Aaron DeLuca takes a playful, modern turn from this initial guardian. Each of the remaining tikis is inspired by different aspects of Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill, capturing the essence of the restaurant's eclectic personality.

From this traditional starting point, DeLuca's imagination runs wild. The second tiki in the series celebrates Fudpucker's famous alligators, a homage to the resident reptiles who have become beloved mascots for visitors and locals alike. This tiki is lively, detailed, and represents the spirit of adventure that visitors experience at Fudpucker's. "Working on this piece was fun because it lets people see the quirky, adventurous side of Fudpucker's before they even step inside," says DeLuca.

Another tiki, known as the "Mad Chef," speaks to the vibrant energy in Fudpucker's kitchen and its culinary artistry. With exaggerated expressions and a chef's hat, this tiki embodies the passion behind the grill and the enthusiasm of Fudpucker's food culture.

The "Beer Can Tiki"

One of the most visually striking of DeLuca's tikis is the "Beer Can Tiki." This sculpture is inspired by Fudpucker's fa-

mous collection of vintage beer cans, which lines nine walls of the restaurant. The can collection is a hit among guests, a display of nostalgia and dedication to curating a quirky, memorable atmosphere. DeLuca's "Beer Can Tiki" captures the playfulness and devotion to unique decor that defines Fudpucker's interior.

"Fudpucker's is known for its extensive collection of memorabilia, and we wanted to incorporate that spirit into the artwork. The 'Beer Can Tiki' reflects the restaurant's homage to pop culture and its sense of humor," DeLuca shares. Guests can experience the nostalgia woven into Fudpucker's design, now brought to life outdoors as a carved piece of history.

What's In A Name

A particularly meaningful addition to the series is the tiki that celebrates Fudpucker's origins and namesake. DeLuca created a scene in which two fishermen are depicted angling for triggerfish, a tribute to the fishing culture and coastal spirit that inspired Fudpucker's founders. This tiki is an ode to the restaurant's roots, offering a nostalgic look at Fudpucker's backstory while connecting the tiki series to the Destin community's fishing traditions.

"Working on this tiki was like writing a love letter to Fudpucker's roots," DeLuca explains. "It's important to honor the history and the coastal vibe that makes this place unique."

The Heart Of The Palm

Tiki carving requires ongoing care, as DeLuca encountered with Fudpucker's older palms, which still release moisture long after carving. "Some of these tikis are nearly 40 years old, and water in the palm heart continues to sweat out," he explains.

To keep the tikis vibrant, DeLuca will return in December for touch-ups, applying sealant to protect against coastal weather. "Outdoor art requires regular maintenance to stay fresh," he notes, reflecting both Fudpucker's and DeLuca's dedication to preserving these unique pieces.



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Spellbound Father Fud

As the new tikis took shape, even Fudpucker's founder and local personality, Father Fud, couldn't help but marvel at DeLuca's work. Known for his sense of humor and larger-than-life personality, Father Fud was famously overheard mumbling, "...how much fud could a Fudpucker puck if a Fudpucker could puck fud?" when he first took in the sight of these sculptures. This light-hearted remark has quickly become a local catchphrase, capturing the fun and whimsy that defines the spirit of Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill.

Must-See Experience

Visitors and locals alike are invited to experience these remarkable tikis firsthand. From the guardian that greets you at the entrance to the Mad Chef, the Beer Can Tiki, and the triggerfish fishermen, each piece offers a unique way to engage with Fudpucker's eclectic atmosphere. The tikis are more than just carvings; they are a testament to the creativity, humor, and community spirit that make Fudpucker's a beloved staple in Destin.

For art lovers, tiki enthusiasts, and those simply looking

for an extraordinary experience, Fudpucker's new tiki sculptures bring an exciting new dimension to the Destin community. Each tiki tells a story, crafted to celebrate both the traditional roots of tiki art and the playful, vibrant personality of Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill.

So, stop by and discover the hidden story within each tiki!

Visit Us in Destin.
20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy.
Destin, FL 32541
www.Fudpucker.com

2024 Football Guide

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



BY SCOTT MILLER

Where does the time go? As we head into November, it's always a bittersweet feeling for me when it comes to college football. On one hand, we're coming down the home stretch and the season will soon be over. On the other hand, the BIG games, the rivalry matchups we love to watch are just around the corner! What an incredible month November is for college football fans. The hard work and dedication put in year-round by these

Best Places to Watch Your Favorite Teams

players and coaches will be put to the test once again as we see how things sort out. One thing is for sure, it's going to be an exciting finish to the season. Where will you be watching? Here are a few of my favorite places to go on game day...I hope to see you there, too!

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

For 40 years, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hang out known for fresh oysters and cold beer has grown into one of the most iconic "hot spots" on the Destin Harbor. From its humble beginning shucking oysters off the deck behind a small trailer on the Destin Harbor, it has grown to four locations along our Emerald Coast, serving fresh sea-

food, live music and exciting water activities in the Destin area. Attention all die hard football fans, AJ's boasts the one and only Jumbotron on the Destin Harbor, where you can watch your favorite games on the BIG, BIG screen surrounded by the energy and beauty of the Destin Harbor. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month, too. Don't miss any of the action! Come on down to AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar all season long.

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

Austons on 98

Offering an amazing raw oyster bar and the best happy hour in town, Austons is the place to be and home of the



102-foot bar, including 32 beers on draft! Some of the specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail. With big screen TVs all around and football season upon us, there's no bad seat in the house. So, come by and watch the games

all season long. Happy Hour Specials from Monday-Friday, 2-5 p.m., \$2 off all bar drinks and Monday-Friday from 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. \$3 off a dozen raw oysters. Bucket Specials all day every day. Auston's on 98 is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and features its own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce." View full menu at austonson98.com.

(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. Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, the Boathouse specializes in

Continued on page 26

AJ's FOOTBALL IS BACK!

WATCH
THE **BIG** GAMES
NFL SUNDAY TICKET
& COLLEGE GAMEPLAN

EAT
SPECIAL FOOTBALL
MENUS AT EACH LOCATION

DRINK
BEER SPECIALS & GREAT DRINKS!

Logos at the bottom include: NFL SUNDAY TICKET, ESPN COLLEGE GAMEDAY, AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, AJ's On the Bayou, AJ's Oyster Shanty, and AJ's Grayton Beach.



2024 College Football Game Day Highlights

Week 10: November 2

Penn State vs Ohio State TBA
 Auburn vs Vanderbilt TBA
 Mississippi @ Arkansas TBA
 Kentucky @ Tennessee TBA
 Florida @ Georgia TBA
 Duke @ Miami TBA
 USC @ Washington TBA

Week 11: November 9

Georgia @ Mississippi TBA
 Florida ST. @ ND TBA
 LSU vs Alabama TBA
 Oklahoma @ Missouri TBA
 Miami @ Ga Tech TBA
 Florida @ Texas 11am ESPN
 Miss St. @ Tennessee TBA

Week 12: November 16

Tennessee @ Georgia TBD
 LSU @ Florida TBD
 Missouri @ S. Carolina TBD
 Texas @ Arkansas 11am ESPN
 Penn State @ Purdue TBD
 Oregon @ Wisconsin TBD
 Ohio St. @ Northwestern TBD

Week 13: November 23

Texas A&M @ Auburn
 Kentucky @ Texas TBD
 Alabama @ Oklahoma TBD
 Vanderbilt @ LSU TBD
 Mississippi @ Florida 11am ESPN
 Penn St. @ Minnesota TBD
 Army @ Notre Dame 6pm NBC

Week 14: November 30

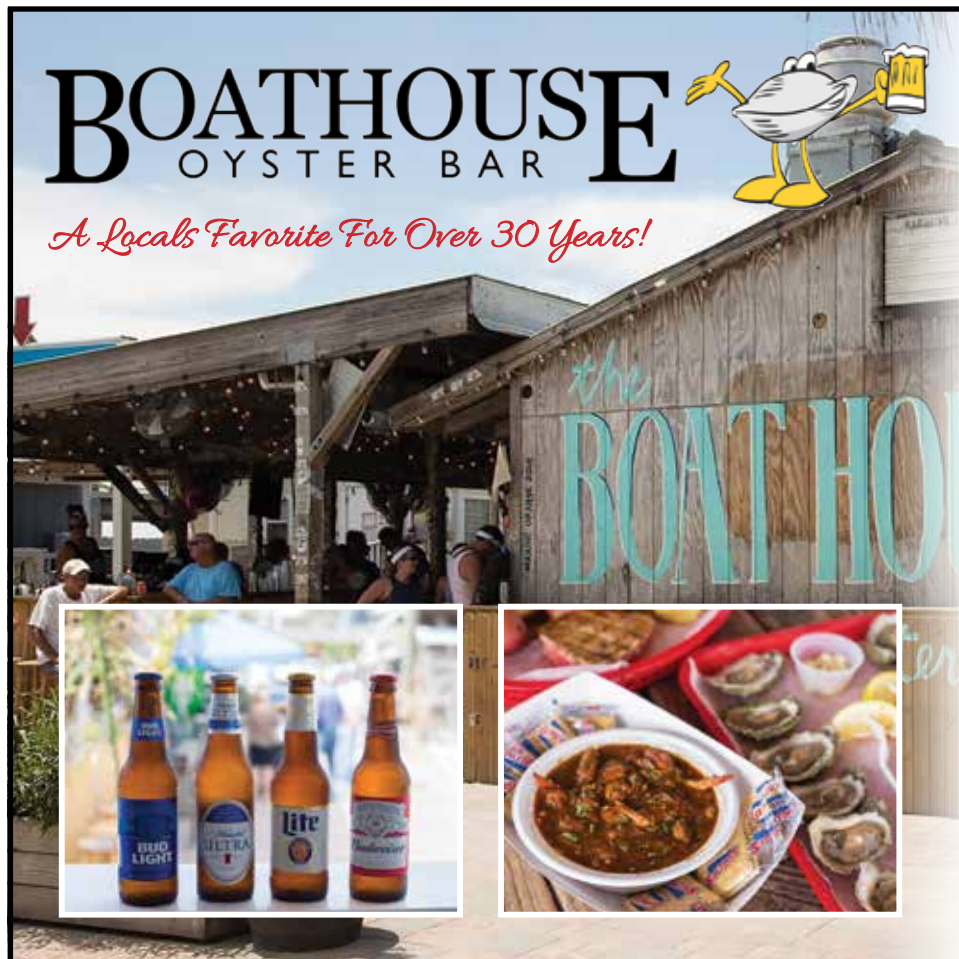
Auburn @ Alabama
 Michigan @ Ohio St. 11am FOX
 Notre Dame @ USC TBD
 Texas @ Texas A&M TBD
 Florida @ Florida ST. TBD
 Oklahoma @ LSU TBD
 Ga Tech @ Georgia 6:30pm ABC
 Tennessee @ Vanderbilt TBD
 Maryland @ Penn State TBD

SEC Football Schedule

SEC	Nov 2	Nov 9	Nov 16	Nov 23	Nov 30
Alabama	OPEN	@LSU	MERCER	@OU	AUB
Arkansas	OLE MISS	OPEN	TEXAS	LA TECH	@MIZZ
Auburn	VANDY	OPEN	UL MONROE	TEX A&M	@BAMA
Florida	UGA	@TEXAS	LSU	OLE MISS	@FL ST
Georgia	FLA	@OLE MISS	TENN	U MASS	GA TECH
Kentucky	@TENN	OPEN	MURRAY ST	@TEXAS	LOUISVILLE
LSU	OPEN	BAMA	@FLA	VANDY	OU
MSU	U MASS	@TENN	OPEN	MIZZOU	@OLE MISS
Missouri	OPEN	OU	@S. CAR	@MISS ST	ARK
Oklahoma	MAINE	@MIZZOU	OPEN	BAMA	@LSU
Ole Miss	@ARK	UGA	OPEN	@FLA	MISS ST
SC	A&M	@VANDY	MIZZOU	WOFFORD	@CLEMSON
Tenn	UK	MISS ST	@UGA	UTEP	@VANDY
Tex A&M	@S. CAR	OPEN	N MEX ST	@AUB	TEXAS
Texas	OPEN	FLA	@ARK	UK	@A&M
VANDY	@AUB	S. CAR	OPEN	@LSU	TENN

ACC Football Schedule

BIG 10	Nov 2	Nov 9	Nov 16	Nov 23	Nov 30
Illinois	MINNESOTA	OPEN	MICH ST	@RUTGERS	@N WESTERN
Indiana	@MICH ST	MICH	OPEN	@OHIO ST	PURDUE
Iowa	WISCONSIN	11/8-UCLA	OPEN	@MARYLAND	11/29 NEB
Maryland	OPEN	@OREGON	RUTGERS	IOWA	@PENN ST
Michigan	OREGON	@INDIANA	OPEN	N WESTERN	@OHIO ST
Mich St	INDIANA	OPEN	@ILLINOIS	11/22 PURDUE	RUTGERS
Minnesota	@ILLINOIS	@RUTGERS	OPEN	PENN ST	11/29 @WIS
Nebraska	UCLA	OPEN	@USC	WISCONSIN	11/29 @IOWA
N'Western	@PURDUE	OPEN	OHIO ST	@MICH	ILLINOIS
Ohio St	@PENN ST	PURDUE	@N WESTERN	INDIANA	MICHIGAN
Oregon	@MICH	MARYLAND	@WIS	OPEN	WASH
Penn St	OHIO ST	WASH	@PURDUE	@MINN	MARYLAND
Purdue	N WESTERN	@OHIO ST	PENN ST	11/22 @MCHST	@INDIANA
Rutgers	OPEN	MINNESOTA	@MARYLAND	ILLINOIS	@MICH ST
UCLA	@NEBRASKA	11/8 IOWA	11/15 @WASH	USC	FRESNO ST
USC	@WASH	OPEN	NEBRASKA	@UCLA	NOTRE DAME
Wash	USC	@PENN ST	11/15 UCLA	OPEN	@OREGON
Wisconsin	@IOWA	OPEN	OREGON	@NEBRASKA	11/29 MINN



LIVE MUSIC!

- Mondays:** 4pm: Cole Jordan
8pm: Roshambo
- 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
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BEST PLACES

continued from page 24

making oysters a delicacy. Boat-house'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 Boat-house hosts locals on the Destin

Harbor from 5-7 p.m. Listen and move with live entertainment daily. See ad for bands and times. Music schedule subject to change. Follow on Facebook for updates. During or after the game, mosey on over to hang with the locals.

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

Tailfins Waterfront Grill

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

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast before the game? Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast from 8-11 a.m., sev-



en days a week. Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mimosas and bloody marys. Watch Tailfins' sushi chef create right in front of your eyes. Enjoy some of your favorite food and drinks, scrumptious early bird dinner specials Monday to Friday, 4-6 p.m. Happy hour from 4-6 p.m. Monday through Friday, featuring \$24 domestic bottle buckets, \$7 house wines and well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas. Live music on the docks. Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than 70 big screen TVs showing all college football games and Sunday Ticket.

(850) 650-1200
On the Harbor in Destin,
172 Harbor Blvd.
tailfinsdestin.com

world class, jumbo-sized margaritas, Mexican food favorites inspired by years of tradition and authentic spices such as the Tequila's Plate, chili con carne, The Three Amigos and the new Master Parrillada – a unique fusion of sports bar food and delightful Mexican dishes. Football season is here, so don't miss a game all season long. Celebrate Taco Tuesdays with 2-for-1 margaritas. Lunch specials are offered Monday-Friday for \$8.99. "Our love lies in the food we make and the connections we create with our customers every day," says Oni, Tequila's owner. "Our goal is to have the widest selection of tequila brands in town. You're sure to find your favorites here." Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner or call ahead to place your take out and to-go orders.

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11225 U.S. 98 W,
Miramar Beach
Tequilasmiramarbeach.com

Tequila's Sports Bar & Grill

Did someone say Margaritas? Tequila's Mexican Restaurant is a local favorite, with

DESTIN DINING

continued from page 24

their meal for free at Melting Pot as a thank you for their service to our country. Reserve a Veteran's Day table today! Not valid for family members or active military.

Melting Pot is partnering with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital this holiday season, making it easier to donate and make a difference through its annual St. Jude Thanks and Giving® campaign. Now - Jan. 5, when you visit The Melting Pot Destin, you can donate \$10 to St. Jude Children's Research

Hospital® and receive a \$20 Donate and Dine Card, or donate \$20 and receive a \$40 Donate and Dine Card valid Jan. 6 through Aug. 31, 2025. To learn more, visit www.meltingpot.com/donateanddine.aspx. Happy Hour? Enjoy HALF OFF delicious cheese and decadent chocolate fondue. Also, enjoy handcrafted cocktails and beer and wine specials served exclusively in the bar area.

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www.meltingpot.com/destin-fl

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November 2024 NFL Schedule Dates, Times, Where to Watch

Week 10

Thursday, Nov. 7
Cincinnati Bengals at Baltimore Ravens — 7:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 10
New York Giants vs Carolina Panthers (Munich) — 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
New England Patriots at Chicago Bears — Noon, Fox
Buffalo Bills at Indianapolis Colts — Noon, CBS
Minnesota Vikings at Jacksonville Jaguars — Noon, Fox
Denver Broncos at Kansas City Chiefs — Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at New Orleans Saints — Noon, Fox
San Francisco 49ers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers — Noon, Fox
Pittsburgh Steelers at Washington Commanders — Noon, CBS
Tennessee Titans at Los Angeles Chargers — 3:05 p.m., Fox
New York Jets at Arizona Cardinals — 3:25 p.m., CBS
Philadelphia Eagles at Dallas Cowboys — 3:25 p.m., CBS
Detroit Lions at Houston Texans — 7:20 p.m., NBC*

Monday, Nov. 11
Miami Dolphins at Los Angeles Rams — 7:15 p.m., ESPN

Week 11

Thursday, Nov. 14
Washington Commanders at Philadelphia Eagles — 7:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 17
Green Bay Packers at Chicago Bears — Noon, Fox
Jacksonville Jaguars at Detroit Lions — Noon, CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at Miami Dolphins — Noon, CBS
Los Angeles Rams at New England Patriots — Noon, Fox
Cleveland Browns at New Orleans Saints — Noon, Fox
Baltimore Ravens at Pittsburgh Steelers — Noon, CBS
Minnesota Vikings at Tennessee Titans — Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at Denver Broncos — 3:05 p.m., Fox
Seattle Seahawks at San Francisco 49ers — 3:05 p.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Buffalo Bills — 3:25 p.m., CBS
Cincinnati Bengals at Los Angeles Chargers — 3:25 p.m., CBS
Indianapolis Colts at New York Jets — 7:20 p.m., NBC*

Monday, Nov. 18
Houston Texans at Dallas Cowboys — 7:15 p.m., ESPN

Week 12

Thursday, Nov. 21
Pittsburgh Steelers at Cleveland Browns — 7:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 24
Kansas City Chiefs at Carolina Panthers — Noon, CBS
Minnesota Vikings at Chicago Bears — Noon, Fox
Tennessee Titans at Houston Texans — Noon, CBS
Detroit Lions at Indianapolis Colts — Noon, Fox
New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins — Noon, CBS
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at New York Giants — Noon, CBS
Dallas Cowboys at Washington Commanders

— Noon, Fox
Denver Broncos at Las Vegas Raiders — 3:05 p.m., CBS
San Francisco 49ers at Green Bay Packers — 3:25 p.m., Fox
Arizona Cardinals at Seattle Seahawks — 3:25 p.m., Fox
Philadelphia Eagles at Los Angeles Rams — 7:20 p.m., NBC*

Monday, Nov. 25
Baltimore Ravens at Los Angeles Chargers — 7:15 p.m., ESPN*

Week 13

Thursday, Nov. 28 (Thanksgiving)
Chicago Bears at Detroit Lions — 11:30 a.m., CBS
New York Giants at Dallas Cowboys — 3:30 p.m., Fox
Miami Dolphins at Green Bay Packers — 7:20 p.m., NBC

Friday, Nov. 29 (Black Friday)
Las Vegas Raiders at Kansas City Chiefs — 2 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Dec. 1
Los Angeles Chargers at Atlanta Falcons — Noon, CBS
Pittsburgh Steelers at Cincinnati Bengals — Noon, CBS
Houston Texans at Jacksonville Jaguars — Noon, Fox
Arizona Cardinals at Minnesota Vikings — Noon, Fox
Indianapolis Colts at New England Patriots — Noon, Fox
Seattle Seahawks at New York Jets — Noon, Fox
Tennessee Titans at Washington Commanders — Noon, CBS
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Carolina Panthers — 3:05 p.m., Fox
Los Angeles Rams at New Orleans Saints — 3:05 p.m., Fox
Philadelphia Eagles at Baltimore Ravens — 3:25 p.m., CBS
San Francisco 49ers at Buffalo Bills — 7:20 p.m., NBC*

Monday, Dec. 2
Cleveland Browns at Denver Broncos — 7:15 p.m., ESPN*

Week 14

Thursday, Dec. 5
Green Bay Packers at Detroit Lions — 7:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Dec. 8
New York Jets at Miami Dolphins — Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at Minnesota Vikings — Noon, Fox
New Orleans Saints at New York Giants — Noon, Fox
Carolina Panthers at Philadelphia Eagles — Noon, Fox
Cleveland Browns at Pittsburgh Steelers — Noon, CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at Tampa Bay Buccaneers — Noon, CBS
Jacksonville Jaguars at Tennessee Titans — Noon, CBS
Seattle Seahawks at Arizona Cardinals — 3:05 p.m., CBS
Buffalo Bills at Los Angeles Rams — 3:25 p.m., Fox
Chicago Bears at San Francisco 49ers — 3:25 p.m., Fox
Los Angeles Chargers at Kansas City Chiefs — 7:20 p.m., NBC*

Monday, Dec. 9
Cincinnati Bengals at Dallas Cowboys — 7:15 p.m., ESPN/ABC*



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All Sports Association Announces Urban Meyer as Guest Speaker for Annual Banquet

All Sports Association has announced that Urban Meyer will be the guest speaker for its 56th Annual All Sports Awards Banquet, February 21st, 2025. This banquet is a key event for the association, honoring outstanding athletes and people who have significantly contributed to youth sports in the area.

Urban Meyer, who has won three national championships at the University of Florida and Ohio State University, brings extensive knowledge and dedication to athletics. His participation is expected to enhance the event, giving attendees valuable insights into sports leadership and dedication.

Kevin Bowyer, the association's president, shared his excitement about Meyer's involvement. "We are thrilled to have Urban Meyer as our guest speaker this year. His contributions to college football and his commitment to nurturing young talent make him a perfect fit for our event. Our goal is to inspire and celebrate those who



excel in athletics, and having a figure like Coach Meyer aligns perfectly with that mission," Bowyer said.

Held every February, the Annual Awards Banquet celebrates top athletes from high school, college, amateur, professional and Special Olympic levels. It also acknowledges individuals who have made notable efforts

in promoting youth activities. Several prestigious awards are given out, including the Wuerffel Trophy, the Colonel Al Byrne Award and the Taylor Haugen Trophy.

The Wuerffel Trophy is awarded to a college football player who shines not only on the field but also in community service and academics. The Col-

onel Al Byrne Award goes to a local individual who has shown exceptional support for youth sports. The Taylor Haugen Trophy, established in memory of Taylor Reid Haugen, a Niceville High School wide receiver who tragically passed away from football injuries in 2009, is awarded to an area athlete who best demonstrates a balance between academics, athleticism, leadership, community service and faith.

Based in Fort Walton Beach, the All Sports Association is a non-profit organization focused on supporting local youth sports programs. Founded in 1970, the association has raised over \$2 million in the last 10 years, thanks to its volunteers and supporters. These funds help various youth sports organizations and charitable causes, fostering the development of young athletes.

Key beneficiaries include the Boys & Girls Club of the Emerald Coast, Special Olympics Florida-Okaloosa, Eleanor

J. Johnson Youth Center, and Okaloosa Walton FCA. The association's dedication to youth sports and community development is also seen in its Hall of Fame, which honors individuals who've made significant contributions to sports in Northwest Florida.

To attend or support the event, visit allsportsassociation.com or [Facebook.com/AllSportsAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/AllSportsAssociation).

All Sports Association continues to celebrate and support youth athletics. The 56th Annual Awards Banquet promises to be another memorable event that aligns with their mission of fostering community spirit through sports. "This event is more than just a celebration; it's a testament to the hard work and dedication of our young athletes and the community that supports them. Having Urban Meyer speak adds an extra layer of inspiration that we hope will resonate with everyone involved," Bowyer said.



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First Step Toward World's Largest Artificial Reef?



Commission, for every dollar spent on artificial reefs in the Florida Panhandle, the conservative overall economic benefit of the artificial reef system over its life span is \$138, a 13,800% return on investment. This includes job creation in the construction and maintenance of reefs and increased economic activity in related sectors such as retail.

“The SS United States has inspired millions the world over

as a symbol of American pride and excellence. Should the ship be converted into an artificial reef, she will become a unique historic attraction above and below the waterline. A land-based museum and immersive experience utilizing the latest technology will showcase her unique story and proud history. Converting the world's fastest ship into the world's largest artificial reef will write a new chapter for the SS United States as a world

class destination,” stated Conservancy President Susan Gibbs.

For more information on Destin-Fort Walton Beach's extensive artificial reef program, including coordinates and 3-D mapping, visit <https://www.destinfb.com/explore/eco-tourism/artificial-reefs/>. To learn more about the history of America's Flagship, visit <https://www.ssusc.org/>.

The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners recently approved a contingent contract to acquire the SS United States that could see the historic ocean liner converted into the world's largest artificial reef, in an announcement from Destin-Fort Walton Beach and the SS United States Conservancy. Part of the deal would also include funding from the county to support the Conservancy's establishment of an innovative land-based museum that will provide divers, local residents and visitors an opportunity to learn about the legacy of America's Flagship.

Launched in 1951, the SS United States still holds the transatlantic speed record, achieved on her maiden voyage using only two-thirds of her power. She transported presidents, stars of stage and screen, heads of state, tourists, members of the armed forces and immigrants until the advent of the jet age forced her retirement in 1969. Notable passengers included four U.S. Presidents (Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, and a young Bill Clinton), plus Marlon Brando, Coco Chanel, Sean Connery, Duke Ellington, Salvador Dali, Walt Disney, Judy Garland, Cary Grant, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe and John Wayne. (To learn more about the ship's historical importance, visit <https://www.ssusc.org/history-the-glory-years>.)

Designed as a top-secret, convertible troop carrier and Cold War weapon, she could transport 14,000 troops 10,000 miles without refueling. The vessel is widely considered the pinnacle of American post-war maritime engineering and a

soaring symbol of her namesake nation. The SS United States Conservancy has kept the famous ocean liner safely afloat since acquiring her in 2011.

Once deployed off Destin-Fort Walton Beach, at nearly 1,000-feet long, the SS United States will be a home for a diverse range of marine life and attract divers and anglers from around the world and will continue the growth of Destin-Fort Walton Beach's robust artificial reef program, the most active, and one of the largest vessel artificial reef collections in the U.S.

The deal to acquire the vessel from the Conservancy is contingent upon the conclusion of the current U.S. District Court-imposed mediation. The vessel would then be moved from Philadelphia after initial preparations and a towing plan are completed. A conservative allocation of up to \$10.1 million is estimated for the acquisition, remediation, transport and deployment of the historic ocean liner, as well as partial funding to help establish the Conservancy's land-based museum and immersive experience.

“Having the title of the World's Largest Artificial Reef continues to elevate Destin-Fort Walton Beach as a premier destination to visit for scuba diving and fishing. The SS United States will be an exciting addition to the many artificial reefs and wrecks available in Destin-Fort Walton Beach for divers to explore while providing essential habitat for the fishery that our fleet is so dependent on,” said Jennifer Adams, Tourism Director.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation

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What's New at ECES?



ENERGY TIPS

by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions



By CHRIS BALZER

At ECES (Emerald Coast Energy Solutions), we are excited to announce we have partnered with SunPro products out of Bradenton, Fla., which is a top manufacturer of motorized awnings and screens. I'm not a very excitable person. However; when it comes to increasing comfort, I get excited. At some point, we may have considered expanding our outdoor living spaces, but didn't know where to start. We can help. I personally have gone through several of those big box, 10-foot, hand crank umbrellas in my backyard. They are expensive, take up space and it is hard to find that perfect color.

We have a solution. Our motorized awnings have hundreds of Sunbrella fabrics to match any design and several custom lengths, to fit any lifestyle. We also include built in dimmable LED lights to enhance the outdoor nightlife, integrated cassette housing, I call it the ga-

rage, which protects the awning fabric from weather damage, extending the life of the fabric and looks sleek when retracted. Each awning comes with a wireless remote and built-in wind sensors. Wind sensors are a necessity, because we never know when that gust of wind will appear. Once triggered, the wind sensor retracts the awning automatically, ensuring the awning and your home stay protected. With a touch of a button, you will be enjoying your outdoor space day or night. There are also many add on options available, but most customers simply enjoy the features which are in-

cluded in our packages.

Another option to create an outdoor escape are motorized screens. With a custom, motorized screen, you can increase your comfort and style, indoor and out. Lifestyle options include insect protection which prevents pesky insects from invading your space. Weather protection, creating an attractive defense to the elements, without hindering your view. Privacy protection, increasing privacy when you need it, while maintaining superior ventilation, outward visibility and the ability to retract the screens with the touch of a button. If your home is located on a golf course or close to your neighbor and you want to enjoy relaxing in your pool or backyard without the world watching, just a click of a button, instant privacy. Or, if you wanted to upgrade that garage space with a motorized screen which allows that breeze to come in and creates privacy, just a click of a button. Wouldn't that be incredible? So, if you are looking to create or enhance your outdoor escape with a custom, motorized awning or screen, give us a call and we can explore the options together.

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions, a Smile Provider Company. We provide smiles to our customers after installing our high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save and become energy efficient, schedule an appointment by calling (850) 588-2870, visit www.trusteces.com or email wecare@trusteces.com and Beat the Heat!



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An Attitude of Gratitude Can Save Your Life



BY LISA LEATH TURPIN, HEALTH & WELLNESS COACH

Being grateful or thankful can sometimes be challenging. And, if you know me personally, you know I know. However, the effects our attitudes can have on us physically and mentally are very important. I found a profoundly informative article in PositivePsychology.com that highlights studies from Forbes, Berkley University, Kent State and several psychologists and doctors. It's easy to understand the concept of giving thanks to someone and the benefits they receive. But, have you thought about how showing gratitude to someone that has done something for you or has positively affected your life does for YOU? Research shows that sharing your gratitude can:

- Help you make new friends
- Improve your physical health. People who exhibit gratitude report fewer aches and pains, have a general feeling of health, exercise more regularly, and have better doctor checkups.

- Improve your psychological health. Grateful people enjoy higher well-being and happiness and benefit from reduced symptoms of depression.

- Enhance empathy and reduce aggression.

- Improve your sleep. Studies show you sleep longer and better.

- Enhance your self-esteem.
- Increase in mental strength. Gratitude builds your ability to overcome trauma and gives you enhanced resilience, helping you bounce back from stressful situations

This article contains: Lots of what to do for yourself and others, 13 most popular gratitude exercises and activities, two gratitude quizzes and questionnaires, handy gratitude worksheets, examples and info for adults, kids (broken by ages), plus for teachers, and counselors. It gives access to gratitude apps and podcasts. The way I have always TRIED to practice gratitude is by following Philipians 4:6-7 which sums up exactly what's best for YOU and your mind. And that is to find the things to be grateful/thankful for and focus and dwell on these things. BUT, by sharing your gratitude with others, you will have the benefits displayed above, all over your body and mind.

I found this piece more intriguing and inspiring than I ever thought I would. And, it's way more information than I



can relay here. You can read it here (www.positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/) and invest a little YOU time. The article isn't all that long, but has lots of info for digging deeper into the parts you will benefit from the most. If you have children, show them what true gratitude is and how they can exercise it.

As the writer of this fitness column and a personal trainer, I am thankful for you, my readers and clients. The relationships I have made are more important than I can express and my life is more fulfilled, because I know so many of you and all of my clients. On many days, my clients are my lifeline. They come to me for advice, support and motivation, but they LEAVE so much for me as well! And, thank you to Publisher, Lori Smith and Destin Life for allowing me to deliver information and training tips to our beautiful Destin community and beyond! I am taking new clients and would love to receive a message from you. Happy Thanksgiving!

Lisa Leath Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach and consultant who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the body and mind of others. With over 20 years' experience, Lisa has a B.S. degree in Sports & Fit-

ness Management from the University of Alabama, developed and managed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Health & Wellness Facility and programs in Huntsville, Ala., is board certified by the National Board of Fitness Examiners and possesses certifications from AFAA, Polestar/Balanced Body, Reebok U, SCW Fitness and American Heart Association. She is currently a group exercise leader at Destin Health & Fitness and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, diversely and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation.


Toys for Tots Ride!

On Sunday, Nov. 17, the Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson Owners Group #3605 hosts its 45th annual Toys for Tots Ride at Niceville's Mullet Festival Grounds. The event brings in a considerable number of toys and gift cards for ECCAC's kids and Children in Crisis. ECCAC is actively seeking volunteers to host "mini games" and assist with the raffle drawing. Ride registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson, 788 Beal Pkwy. N.W. in Fort Walton Beach. Bikes, Jeeps, Corvettes, sports bikes and cruisers are invited to join. Bring \$10 per person – along with a new toy or gift card donation – and ride over to the Mullet Festival

Grounds. The fun begins at 11 a.m., with games, a "best decorated bike/auto" contest, car and truck show, 50/50 drawing, entertainment from DJ Anthony, food trucks, and over 100 prizes.



Crop Drop!


Each fall, Crop Drop volunteers gather more than 110,000 pounds of produce to be distributed to food pantries, homeless shelters and churches throughout the Panhandle, feeding 6,000 families. This year's event starts at 7:30 a.m., Saturday, Nov. 23, at Destin Methodist Church. Business and individual sponsors can email croppdropdestin@gmail.com or call 850.586.0585. To volunteer, visit croppdrop.net.



Open Enrollment Starts November 1st

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 Wellness

Meaningful Conversations



By STEPHENIE CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

Do you ever find yourself feeling nervous because you don't know what to say in conversation? Maybe you fear you will say the wrong thing, you don't have anything interesting to say, or you don't know how to keep a conversation going. Maybe you have anxiety because you fear every-

one is looking at you and waiting for you to say something stupid. Maybe you worry that someone will ask you a question you don't know how or don't want to answer.

Social situations can feel intimidating and stressful if you don't have practiced conversation skills. You might assume people are looking for highly intellectual conversation, expert advice, or experienced problem solving. These assumptions can leave you feeling inadequate and anxious. In reality, people mostly want to feel seen and understood. And, surprisingly, you can be excellent at seeing and understand-

ing people without needing all of the answers.

So, how do you approach conversations in ways that feel meaningful and authentic to yourself and others?

8 Ways to Create and Sustain Meaningful Conversation

Remember most people enjoy talking about themselves. Inviting others to talk about their life experience often gets conversation started including questions like: What gets you really excited about your work? What fun plans do you have coming up? What do you love about your favorite hobby? Tell me about how school has been going.

Identify an area of passion and ask follow up questions. What do

you love about aviation? What is your favorite plane? What museums have you visited? What got you started learning golf? Where is your favorite golf course?

Follow up, follow up, follow up questions. Often when we ask a question, the other person answers and then we let the conversation drop. Instead, try asking additional questions about something they said. What trips do you have coming up? We are going to Disney World in a couple of months. What parks are you going to? What are you most looking forward to about Disney? What made you decide to go on the trip?

Ask open ended questions. Instead of asking a yes or no question, try asking questions that begin with words like what

or how. What do you hope will happen in your work meeting? How will you feel if you get the award? How will you handle it if you aren't invited to the party? What would feel supportive to you right now?

Reflect back what you heard including some emotion. It sounds like you studied really hard for that exam and it sounds like you are disappointed with the grade you received.

Validate. Validating is simply letting the other person know their feelings and experience are valid. All people have feelings and their experience is valid even if you don't agree. It sounds like your feelings were hurt when you were left out of the friend gathering. Being left out feels really hard and hurtful. I can see how you would be feeling upset.

Avoid advice giving unless asked directly and it seems helpful. Most people don't take advice from others even when they ask for it. Then, when you give advice and the other person does not take the advice, it introduces awkward dynamics into the relationship. When others ask for advice, try saying, "I'm really not sure what you should do. What are you thinking about doing?" This helps the other person process their own ideas which they are more likely to use.

Engage boundaries directly. As others ask you questions in conversation, answer as you feel comfortable. If someone asks you a question you'd rather not answer, feel free to say so directly and kindly. I'm not comfortable talking about my complicated relationship with my parents, however, I really appreciate you taking an interest in my life. Then continue the conversation in another direction if you wish to stay engaged.

These conversation tools apply to friendships, family members, new and old relationships. Try practicing some as you enter into the holiday season with parties and gatherings. Remember, people most deeply want to feel seen and understood more than they want you to prove you have something important to say. As always, be patient and gracious with yourself as you learn and try new skills until you feel confident in them. Connect with us for counseling and coaching support along your journey at Journeybravely.com.



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Todd Craig
Life & Leadership Coach
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A Race for Wellness: Slow, Steady and Intentional Healing



By DR. KAREN DEVORE

At the Tortoise Clinic, we embrace the philosophy of the tortoise: steady, intentional and focused on the journey. I often reflect on the story of the tortoise and the hare, where the tortoise wins not by speed, but by staying the course with quiet determination. It's a lesson that I've seen echoed time and time again in my patients' wellness journeys. Health isn't something that can be rushed. True, lasting wellness is a marathon, not a sprint.

When I first began practicing medicine, I saw a gap in how

we approached health—one that overlooked the wisdom of ancient healing methods in favor of fast, superficial treatments. But, I also saw the potential in blending the best of both worlds: the deep, holistic roots of Eastern medicine with the advancements of modern Western science. That's how the Tortoise Clinic came to be, an integrative health center where the patient's entire well-being is considered—not just the symptoms they present with, but the root causes beneath.

We offer a wide range of services, from acupuncture to massage therapy and holistic health consultations, each tailored to the individual's unique needs. Our Chinese Herb dispensary, the largest in Northwest Florida, is one of the cornerstones of our practice. We create customized raw herbal prescriptions, combining the wisdom of ancient medicine with medical-grade supplements and formulas designed to support the body's natural healing process.

One of the things I'm most passionate about is empower-



ing our patients to take charge of their own health journeys. I love helping people connect the dots between their lifestyle, environment and diet, and how these factors play into their overall wellness. At the Tortoise

Clinic, it's not about treating a headache or a sore back in isolation. It's about understanding why that pain exists in the first place and working together to create sustainable solutions. That's where the beauty of integration—Eastern and Western medicine—comes into play.

We are also incredibly fortunate to have Dr. Lisa Forsythe on our team, offering Neuro-Acupuncture, a cutting-edge technique that combines traditional Chinese needling with the latest in neurological science. As

the only Neuro-Acupuncture specialist within 300 miles, Lisa provides life-changing care for patients recovering from strokes, managing nerve pain or dealing with other central nervous system disorders. Her work is a powerful reminder of why combining these two worlds of medicine is so essential for holistic healing.

At the Tortoise Clinic, we don't believe in rushing toward a finish line. We believe in walking alongside our patients, step by step, on a path toward lasting vitality. Like the tortoise, we know that the journey to wellness is slow and steady, but ultimately, it's the most rewarding one you can take.

If you're ready to take that journey with us, I invite you to visit our clinic. Whether you're seeking relief from chronic pain, support with your overall health or just a deeper connection to your body's natural healing abilities, we're here to guide you. Because in the race for health, it's not about how fast you go—it's about how well you get there.



WELLNESS IS A MARATHON,

not a sprint.

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 Wellness



By KRISY WHITELEY ANDERSON
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Self-Care Corner: Glowing Skin for the Holidays!

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and oil. Fresh, clean, clear skin is what you'll see when we use the Ultimate Skin Refiner to treat your skin.

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en, minimize pores, promote healthy blood circulation and minimize breakouts. Our clients tell us it has been a game changer throughout the year.

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CHRISTMAS

continued from page 21

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Vuori Crossbody Bags

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Soft, cozy, and moisture-wicking, these socks are perfect for

anyone who loves outdoor adventures, from running to hiking. Also great for anyone who simply enjoys keeping their toes toasty in luxury—like little woolen blankets for your feet.

2Undr Merino Cotton Underwear for Men

The men in your life deserve a touch of comfort and style, too! These merino cotton undies are ultra-soft, breathable, and designed to keep him cool all day. Plus, the designs are just so much fun to look at, he'll probably catch you staring. Merry Christmas, boys.

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SOTF

continued from page 14

and enriched the companies that have welcomed these leaders into their ranks.

The SOTF CEO, Austin Moore, shared these details, "The SOTF transitioned 155 Operators in 2023, at an average starting annual salary of \$140,000. Our differentiator is our commitment to the Operator following the education, training, and business connectivity they receive. We gauge our success based on the quality of the careers our Operators transition into as opposed to the number of Operators that receive our training."

The Importance of Support

The SOTF's work highlights the importance of providing specialized support to the SOF veterans during their transition to civilian life. These individuals have made extraordinary contributions to national security and must be given the tools and opportunities to continue impacting the civilian sector. The SOTF's comprehensive approach serves as a model for successfully bridging the gap be-

tween military service and civilian employment, ensuring that veterans can continue to lead and excel long after their military careers have ended.

You can visit the SOTF's website (www.sotf.org) for more information or to support the foundation. Let us honor our Special Operators for their bravery on the battlefield and resilience in every chapter of life. As they transition from warfighters to leaders in our communities, we owe them more than our gratitude—we owe them the opportunity to continue making a difference. Their legacy should reflect their military service and the impact of their post-service vocations long after the uniform is retired.

You Can Help!

Friday, Nov. 8 | 2:30-6 p.m. | Stronghold Solutions | 150 Warfighter Way, DeFuniak Springs

You're invited to the Emerald Coast is Grateful 2024.

This 6th annual event features guest speaker Master Sergeant (ret.) Earl Plumlee, Medal of Honor Recipient, honored for his heroic actions in Afghanistan on August 28, 2013.

There will also be live music from Ron Adams, food and beverages from local chefs and breweries, military static displays and demos, and a silent auction.

Exclusive Opportunity for the Ladies:

From Noon-2 p.m., there will be a special private shooting experience – "GET YOUR LEAD OUT" – with our nation's most elite Green Berets, Navy SEALs and Marine Raiders. This unique experience includes your own custom-made, limited-edition purse-size pistol. (Guns will be transferred through a licensed gun shop (FFL) in the ticketholder's state of residence. Background checks will be conducted prior to the release of all firearms, and SOTF is not liable for any transfer fees.)

For General Admission or VIP tickets: <https://e.givesmart.com/events/Dw1/>. For questions, contact Bobby Payne, Director of Development & Corporate Engagement, Special Operators Transition Foundation (formerly operating as Your Grateful Nation) at 404.967.2067 or robert@sotf.org. For more information about the SOTF, visit www.sotf.org.

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 Wellness


By KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

Happy Thanksgiving! The season is about to officially start. In lieu of our to do list growing, our calendar filling up with gatherings, or the all too quiet

solitude for those without family, be sure to schedule in a massage or two. Reaping the benefits of a good massage can make this season more fruitful in many ways.

Many consider massage a treat. It helps us to relax and we feel pampered and calm afterward. Recently, however, health professionals are viewing it as an important tool in promoting mental and physical well-being.

Massage consists of pressing, rubbing or manipulating the skin, muscles, tendons and ligaments to produce certain results. There are 12 main types:

Swedish - soft tissue (Research shows less muscle and

point pain as well as lower heart rates, blood pressure and anxiety levels.)

Deep Tissue - deep layers and intense pressure. (I had several of these years ago. He taught me how to scream to release the pain as he worked my shoulder. I was bruised after the treatments but I have not had that specific issue with my shoulder since. It was so worth it.)

Hot Stone - improved blood flow and reduced muscle tension

Sports - focus is on specific muscles used most frequently in one's sport or for those who exercise frequently. Can reduce muscle soreness.

Shiatsu - Japanese massage based on traditional Chinese medicine and involves using acupressure (These are acupuncture points.) Recent studies showed benefits for children and teens with autism spectrum disorders (reduces aggressive behavior; relieves trauma symptoms and improves focus).

Thai Massage - combination of acupressure and yoga. This is an active form of massage with several benefits such as lowering back pain, improving the immune system and flexibility.

Prenatal - focuses on issues related to pregnancy (It's not recommended during the first

trimester.)

Craniosacral Therapy - sacral massage or cranial osteopathy. Aids in neck, back and pelvic issues.

Reflexology - developed in ancient Egypt, China and India. It can also be called regional or zone therapy. It's performed on the feet and hands using acupressure points. (Can reduce symptoms associated with multiple sclerosis.)

Lymphatic Drainage - rhythmic light touch with tapping and circular strokes. The lymph system plays a critical role in immune system processes. Its benefits include lowering lymphedema, one's O2 saturation, lowering your blood pressure and heart rate and promotes wound healing.

Aromatherapy - Use of essential oils with massage

Chakra Balancing - (Reiki Energy) Japanese treatment involving light touch or holding hands just over the body to manipulate energy. (Chakras stem from Ayurvedic medicine in India.) There are 7 body chakras: Crown, 3rd eye, throat, heart, solar plexus, sacral, root.

The physical benefits of massage include improved circulation, decreased muscle stiffness, less joint inflammation, improved quality of sleep, quicker

recovery between workouts, improved flexibility, less pain and soreness, strengthened immune system.

Mental benefits include reduction in stress levels, greater relaxation, improved moods, less anxiety, more energy and an improved sense of wellness.

Many of these benefits can be found in several modalities such as relaxation, improved moods and lower anxiety levels. Be sure to ask questions when looking for a specialist. Are they licensed, certified and/or registered? What is their training and experience? How many sessions are needed to see results for a specific condition? Finding a good therapist is important. I won a massage once so I took advantage of a "free" massage. 3 weeks later I underwent a couple acupuncture treatments to reverse the damage that was done. I've learned over the years that it matters who is working on your body.

From doctors to therapists and other health professionals, what have we taken the time to learn about them before putting our health into their care?

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AI Gone Wrong: The Terrifying Risks of Unchecked Automation

BY JENNIFER HALE

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping how businesses operate by enabling automation, predictive analytics, and even decision-making. From customer service chatbots to advanced data processing, AI is helping companies scale their operations faster than ever before. However, the rapid adoption of AI comes with significant challenges.

Businesses need to be aware of key AI safety concerns as they integrate this powerful technology into their operations.

AI Safety Concerns: The Elephant in the Room

One of the most pressing issues facing businesses today is AI safety concerns. AI systems can process vast amounts of data, but they often lack transparency in how decisions are made.

This lack of transparency leads to several safety issues, such as:

AI Bias: AI systems can unintentionally discriminate based on race, gender, or other factors if trained on biased data (Built In). This can lead to unequal outcomes in hiring processes, financial decisions, and even customer service.

Erroneous Decision-Making: In high-stakes scenarios, relying solely on AI to make critical decisions can be dangerous. Imagine an autonomous vehicle or a healthcare diagnostic tool making the wrong call—errors like this can have severe consequences (Tech.co).

Over-Reliance on AI: While automation can save time and reduce human error, over-reliance on AI can lead to complacency. Businesses may assume AI will make the “right” decision without realizing the need for constant human oversight (MIT Sloan Review).

AI Security Risks: Keeping Data Safe

AI has transformed cybersecurity, helping businesses identify potential vulnerabilities faster. But paradoxically, AI security risks have also emerged as a growing concern. AI systems are vulnerable to attacks such as:

Data Poisoning: Cybercriminals can introduce malicious data into AI training sets, leading to flawed outputs and compromising the system’s in-



businesses face a range of AI-related business challenges as they strive to implement AI effectively. Some include:

Skill Gaps: Many businesses lack the internal expertise required to manage AI technologies. Hiring or training talent to handle AI infrastructure can be both time-consuming and costly (MIT CSAIL).

Ethical Dilemmas: For instance, should an AI system prioritize efficiency over fairness? These ethical decisions are increasingly falling on business leaders who may not have the background to address them appropriately (World Economic Forum).

Integration Issues: Implementing AI isn’t as simple as flipping a switch. Legacy systems and existing infrastructure often require significant updates to integrate with AI solutions, creating operational challenges (MIT Sloan Review).

Fun Twist: How AI Helped Develop This Article

Part of this very article was crafted with the assistance of AI! AI was used to analyze and pull together relevant data on AI risks in business and AI safety concerns, research keywords, source statistics and categorize

tegrity (World Economic Forum).

Model Hacking: Hackers can manipulate AI algorithms to behave in unintended ways, which can cause AI-driven systems to malfunction, potentially exposing sensitive business data (MIT Sloan Review).

Automation Exploits: As businesses automate processes, cybercriminals can exploit AI systems to carry out large-scale attacks, targeting everything from customer data to financial records (Built In).

Addressing these risks requires companies to invest in robust cybersecurity measures tailored to AI-driven systems. This includes regular audits, secure data-handling practices, and a focus on protecting the algorithms themselves from external threats.

AI-Related Business Challenges

Beyond safety and security,



data. While it certainly sped up the research process, I (an actual human!) reviewed and fine-tuned every word to ensure it was accurate, comprehensive and aligned with the latest industry insights. It’s an example of how AI can enhance, not replace, human creativity and oversight.

Mitigating AI Risks in Your Business

While AI offers countless benefits, at the end of the day,

AI is a tool—and like all tools, it needs to be handled with care. By maintaining human oversight and ensuring rigorous risk management practices, businesses can unlock the full potential of AI while safeguarding their operations.

Ready to take control of your AI integration? Visit www.snhtech.com/AI to learn about employing AI securely.




Say Goodbye to Toxicity: Building Healthy Teams with Confidence - Part 1 of 6



BY BILL MASON,
ROCKET FUEL COACH

Backstory:

In a buzzing marketing firm, Sarah and Mike, two team members, found themselves clashing over a big project. As deadlines loomed, Sarah grew

frustrated with Mike's reluctance to share his ideas during meetings. She felt he was holding back valuable input and suspected betrayal. With a mix of confusion and annoyance, she confronted Mike one afternoon, accusing him of slacking. Mike, feeling cornered, fired back, insisting he was trying to contribute but felt Sarah often brushed off his ideas. Their exchange quickly turned into a heated argument, leaving both feeling unheard and unsupported, creating a tense team atmosphere.

The tension affected not just Sarah and Mike but the whole team. Ideas were stifled, collaboration faded, and the once-exciting project was on the

brink of failure. Luckily, their manager noticed the growing rift and introduced the Clifton Strengths Deep Dive Program, aka the Ignite Course, along with some team-building sessions. Through these, Sarah and Mike engaged in guided conversations and trust-building exercises, allowing them to express their feelings without fear of judgment. They realized that a lack of trust led them to misinterpret each other's actions. Rebuilding that trust not only improved their working relationship but also reignited the team's collaborative spirit, proving that healthy conflict can lead to amazing breakthroughs!

In this 6-part series, we are

going to talk about six ways to improve Building Healthy Teams with Confidence.

Lack of Trust is the first level of dysfunction in a team, as Patrick Lencioni's book, Five Dysfunctions of a Team, explains. We know that a lack of trust can cripple a team's effectiveness. This issue often shows up as grudges, hiding weaknesses and mistakes, dreading meetings, and avoiding team interactions. To tackle these problems, we use a comprehensive approach with our Ignite Course, emotional intelligence, and a strengths-based methodology to build a functional, trusting team environment.

To learn how the Ignite

Course can transform your team, visit Rocket Fuel Coach. Let's create teams that foster trust, embrace constructive conflict, and achieve remarkable success!

Book a free 30 minute discovery call at our website, www.rocketfuelcoach.com, or contact me Bill Mason, PCC, 850-855-3403 or bill@rocketfuelcoach.com.

Life is too short to waste on unnecessary conflict when it's avoidable. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."

Stay tuned to learn other ways to improve Building Healthy Teams with Confidence.

Now We Have Party by Joce!

Have you ever had the experience of walking through the doors of an event and just hav-

ing your mind blown away by the extraordinary decorations laying before your eyes? Like an

actual, "WOW" involuntarily crosses your lips as you enter the room?! No? How sad. What if it

actually did happen?

Joce of Party by Joce produces that "WOW" factor for her clients throughout the Emerald Coast.

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"When I tell people I am an event decorator, not an event planner (event planners call ME for decorating), the usual response is, "Oh, that's nice," said Joiceley Durette, owner. But once they have a chance to see what I actually do, the response is always, "Wow, this is unbelievable—now I get it! It's not like anything I've ever seen before!"

Arriving in America over 20 years ago from Brazil where her passion and flair for event decoration began, she has embraced the gift of growing a wonderful family and the beauty of what the Emerald Coast community represents. "It truly is a blessing



to be here in what is accurately dubbed, paradise."

When asked what she would say to anyone considering enlisting her services: "Just let your mind run free with ideas and possibilities. That will be the spark to ignite the creativity needed to make your event something people will remember for years to come—maybe for a lifetime. Imagine what you can't yet imagine, and then, watch your impossible become reality!"

Joce (pronounced Josie) can be reached at, www.PartybyJoce.com, Joce@PartybyJoce.com or (850) 353-5500.



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BY SEAN DIETRICH

It was late. I pulled into the campus after seven o'clock to attend my last class of the semester. My last college class. Ever. It was a night class.

In America, most self-respecting people my age were finishing supper, settling down to watch "Wheel of Fortune." But I was in school.

I had been attending community college for 11 years. I

jobs. I hung gutter. I worked as an ice-cream-scoop. I was a telemarketer. I was a nobody. I was white trash.

Until I enrolled in community college.

I enrolled as an adult, and my life changed. I became alumni at Okaloosa-Walton Community College.

I completed high-school equivalency courses. I finished the collegiate coursework. It took me eleven years. I worked hard. And I count every year I spent at OWCC as a blessing.

I don't care what you've heard, community college is the beating heart of America. Your big, fancy schools are well and good. But show me a community college, and I'll show you the



had been taking a lot of night courses. Which meant that I had perfected the art of eating supper in my truck, on the way to class. I drove with my knees, ate with my hands, and controlled the radio with my big toe.

Supper often consisted of foil-wrapped tamales, purchased from Carmela, a middle-aged Mexican woman who visited our construction jobsites. Carmela traveled in a battered '84 Nissan Maxima that looked like a roving salvage yard.

Every time I'd buy a tamale, Carmela would pat my cheek and say, "Joo are very sweet boy, but joo need a bath, joo smell like goat butt."

So parked my truck. I rushed into class, smelling like the fundamentals of a horned barnyard animal.

Eleven years it had taken me to finish school. Me. A middle-school dropout. My formal education ended in seventh grade, after my father took his own life with a hunting rifle. I simply quit going to school. I was a rural child. It wasn't a big deal. Nobody seemed to care what rural dropouts did.

I got my first job hanging drywall at age 14. I started working in bars, playing music shortly thereafter. I had a lot of

vascular system of this nation.

America is not built on the shoulders of Harvard or Yale graduates. America's internal organs are made up of men and women who know the difference between good and bad tamales.

That night, our classroom consisted of a commercial plumber, an electrician's assistant, a few GIs, and a Hooters waitress who looked as though she had come directly from work. And me, a degenerate bar musician/tile-layer.

Our literature teacher arrived. Soon, we were discussing what was known to our class as "TKAM." "To Kill a Mockingbird." And everyone in our classroom had something to say about TKAM.

Namely, because this book was not just literature to us. It was a taste of home. The book took place in Monroe County, Alabama. We were one-point-five counties away from Monroe County.

We all talked about deeper meanings within the book. We spoke of metaphors and hyperboles and allegories and a bunch of other five-dollar words nobody understood except the Hooters waitress. And it was a great night.

And when class was finished,

our teacher got this tear-stained look in her eyes and said, "I'm going to miss you all."

She said, "A few of you are going to graduate this year, and I wanted to do something special for you to mark this occasion."

She invited the graduates to the front of the room. We all shyly walked forward. She gave us tiny potted begonias and greeting cards. She kissed our foreheads.

They don't kiss your foreheads at Yale.

The Hooters waitress and I stood shoulder to shoulder. The teacher made a big deal about how we were all such important people. She told the Hooters waitress that she was going to be a big-time nurse someday. The waitress blushed.

Then the professor told the classroom that she believed I would become a writer one day. I wanted to bury my face from

embarrassment.

But the old woman touched my cheek and said, "You are so beautiful, Sean. I know God is going to use your past to make a marvelous future." Then she kissed my forehead again.

If there was a dry eye in the classroom it belonged to a sewing needle.

And anyway, this goat butt will forever be a proud community college graduate.

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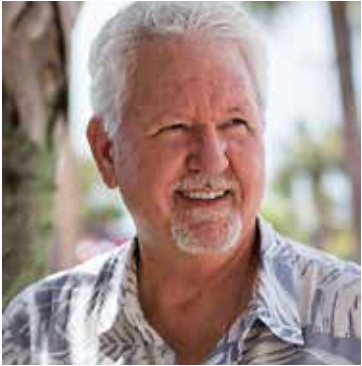
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A Pastor's Ponderings: Jesus and Butterflies

BY PASTOR DAVE HOLLAND

Drive a hundred miles straight south from Buffalo, N.Y., and 100 miles east of Lake Erie, and you will land in Bradford, Pa., the snow capital of America. When I left Bible College in Los Angeles in 1979, I arrived in this town to serve

as their minister. The locals informed me they experienced two seasons in Bradford—Winter and the Fourth of July.

It was a blessing to be called to a thriving church. Because their old colonial church building was constantly crowded, they bought land on the out-

skirts of town to build new. Lacking the money to build a new facility, we prayed fervently and often. Not polite, orderly prayers, but the crying, shouting kind that shakes heaven.

The blowing snow outside discouraged some people. So, only a small crowd of the faithful came out for a Sunday night prayer meeting. As we prayed, one lady stood to give a prophetic word. She encouraged the people to bring an offering for the building fund and lay it on the altar.

Only 60 folks attended that night and 56 one-dollar bills were placed on the altar. The lady who had given the word picked up the money while kneeling and crying, "Oh people, you should have given more, you should have given more. The Lord is going to shake cookie jars all over this valley and multiply this offering a thousand-fold."

We went home wondering about the strange things said that night.

Meanwhile, I was called to visit a lady at the hospital, Suzie Gleason. I arrived and met a beautiful young wife and mother afflicted with a rare lung disease. She exuded joy and faith in Christ that left me speechless. Suzie overflowed with a love for Jesus.

She shared a dream she had as a little girl. She and Jesus would chase butterflies in a beautiful meadow. Once, He caught a huge orange and black one. It paused on His hand as He said to Suzie, "This is you."

I marveled at Suzie's faith.

Soon, her husband Bobby came and told me the story of their love. He had been the big high school football star and she was the petite, energetic cheerleader. They married while in college and not long after, the first of their little boys arrived. They were the all-American

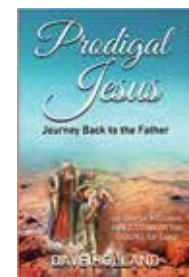
family until her disease slowly choked her life away. She didn't make it to her 30th birthday.

People came from all over the Allegheny mountains and valleys to Suzie's funeral. Oddly, there was not a flower to be found. Before she passed, she asked people to give to our church building fund instead of flowers. In those days, women often set money aside by storing change and dollar bills in a cookie jar in the kitchen. People emptied their jars all over that area to honor Suzie's memory. They gave thousands of dollars.

We built the new church a year later. But, I still grieve the loss of that sweet butterfly, Suzie Gleason. God's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ? It is the promise of a new life. It is Jesus taking you in His hand and calling you His butterfly.

But, that new life comes at a price. As surely as a caterpillar sheds its old life to transform into a butterfly, Christ died to be resurrected. And you, my friend, must die to your old self to become everything God created you to be, for you are destined to be a butterfly in Jesus' hand.



Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring in Destin. He recently released his new devotional-Bible study based on the Gospel

of Luke titled "Prodigal Jesus, Journey Back to the Father" You can get a copy of this book from his website, DaveHolland.org, or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach at churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidvHolland54@gmail.com.



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Thankful for Change: Honoring Legacy Through Life's Unfamiliar Moments

INSPIRED BY ROY WARNER;
WRITTEN BY SHANTELE
DEDICKE

This past August, my life shifted irreversibly with the passing of my grandfather, Roy Warner. To my family, he was Papaw—a steady presence and a man with the world's best smile. He was also the Roy in Frances Roy, the namesake of our agency and the bedrock of the values that guide our work. As I recorded the latest episode of Hello Frances, I confronted a truth that had quietly taken hold in my heart: there is no going back. Life, as it once was, had changed.

In the episode, "Let it Change You: The Fight Against Normal," I discuss the resistance we often feel toward change, our instinct to cling to the familiar, and the discomfort accompanying transformation. But what I was truly grappling with was the profound personal change that loss brings. My Papaw's passing made me realize that change is not merely something to be

managed—it shapes us, often in ways we cannot anticipate.

Papaw's legacy, however, has always been about more than just family memories. His values live on in the very core of Frances Roy, embedded in every decision we make, every story we tell, and every relationship we cultivate. He taught me that doing what is right, even when difficult, is non-negotiable. Authenticity is not just a value but a way of life. And that there is no shortcut to true success—only hard work, honesty, and integrity. These are the principles that Frances Roy stands on, and they are the principles that will continue to guide us, now more than ever.

The episode became a space for me to explore the necessity of embracing change and the personal reckoning that comes when life pulls you in a direction you didn't choose. In business, as in life, we tend to resist anything that disrupts our rhythm. We seek normalcy as a form of stability, something to hold onto



in uncertain times. But I have come to realize that normal is not the goal. Change, and how we navigate it, is where growth happens. In the unfamiliar—where we are tested—we discover new strengths, new capacities for resilience, and new ways of being.

Papaw understood this intuitively. He lived a life built on the courage to embrace the unknown, to work through the challenges, and to let change guide him to something greater. His hands, which once built homes and created beautiful things, also built a life founded on anything but ordinary values. His legacy is woven into every fiber of Frances Roy, into how we serve our clients, honor our commitments, and continuously strive to do the right thing, even when it is the hardest thing.

Reflecting on his life and recording this episode, I realized that the fight against average is not a struggle against change but a call to embrace it. The notion of "normal" is often a construct of comfort, something we hold onto when the future seems uncertain. But Papaw's

passing reminded me that there is strength in stepping away from what is familiar, in allowing ourselves to be reshaped by the moments that challenge us the most. In business and in life, it is this openness to change that leads to real transformation.

I hope listeners will take away the same lessons that Papaw imparted to me: that there is no shortcut to authenticity, that change is not to be feared but embraced, and that we honor those we've lost by carrying forward the values they instilled in us. This is how we keep their legacies alive—by living and working with the same principles, continuing to strive for something better, and never settling for what is simply "normal."

You can listen to the full episode on our website or through your favorite podcast platform. I hope it offers you the same clarity and strength it brought me and that you, too, will find the courage to embrace change and let it transform you.



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Arts & Music

SINFONIA

continued from page 1

staged “candlelight” concerts

over 10 seasons ago when we were performing in Rosemary Beach Town Hall. We had the opportunity to perform in the

charming Seaside Chapel and the only thing that could illuminate the musicianship and pedigree of Grammy Award-winning Catalyst Quartet is candles. It is the perfect back drop to do this type of presentation in a proper space. It is always important to present this type of concert with the highest caliber of musicians and venue. This sets Sinfonia apart from more recent concerts of others touting the same experience.

Often musicians and vocalists taking the Sinfonia stage are not just performers, they are longtime friends of yours. Singer/songwriter Morgan James returns for Big Band Holiday Toast ‘n Jam on December 8. Tell us why she’s so special to you and why this concert will get us in the spirit.

Isn’t that great? I have been so fortunate to meet and forge friendships with so many incredible people over the last 25 years! It makes it more fun when you have that connection and almost always, even if I am working with an artist for the first time, we leave the concert experience as friends. Morgan, I can write



a novel on Morgan James. A really good one. We met by mistake. She was a last-minute replacement for a vocalist for our holiday pops in 2012. She blew the roof off that evening, and we never looked back. She has become one of my best friends, sounding board and collaborator. There is not another voice on this planet that can match Morgan James. It is a very special instrument that is so versatile from coloratura opera to Broadway to pop to soul to jazz to R&B and I can go on. She is presenting her

holiday themed big band concert that she debuted at Joe’s Pub in NYC last year. It is FUN!

Two words. The Grinch. Your innovative Film in Concert series has become one of the most popular offerings with families. Why should we not miss this December 14 concert?

Two Words: The Grinch. Three words: Sinfonia Gulf Coast. Three more words: Live in Concert. Aside from being a classic holiday movie, and with all due respect to Jim Carrey, Sinfonia’s orchestra steals the show in these films in concert, but I may be slightly biased. Sinfonia’s Film in Concert series is a great way for families and everyone really, to enjoy live music paired with iconic films. Nostalgia, excitement, joy—all of the emotions can be described as part of the experience.

Bette, Babs & Beyond sounds like a siren call for everyone who loves the music of legends like Bette Midler, Barbra Streisand, Dolly Parton, Adele and Cher. Sounds like January 17 is a party in the making. Tell us more.

We honored Music of the Knights last year with the tribute to Sirs Paul McCartney, Elton John and Andrew Lloyd Webber. So, it was appropriate to flip the switch and pay tribute to the amazing female voices of our time and this set list is non-stop hit after hit that will feature amazing vocalists, including the return of Jessica Hendy from Music of the Knights and the full orchestra.

February is the season of love and with Crescendo! 2025 Vintner Dinners kicking off February 28 and the Main Event on March 2, we understand Sinfonia will be Painting the Town Red starting with the January 30 Kick Off event. What can we expect this year?

Crescendo! is Sinfonia’s most important event each season because it raises the funds to keep all of our educational outreach

Continued on next page

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SINFONIA

continued from page 42

and community engagement initiatives free to the school districts that we serve. This includes our Link Up partnership with Carnegie Hall, guest artists in schools, ensembles in residence that provide services throughout our community and our annual Paint the Music program in partnership with Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation. That aside, it is a blast and sets the social scene for the spring and summer. What not to like about incredible vintners paired with celebrity chefs and a big blowout main event all to raise funds for these important initiatives?

Sinfonia's commitment to music is seen in its support of new works. You have commissioned Howard Levy to create a new concerto for harmonica and piano, which will be a U.S. Southeast premier. Why is it important to support new music and what can you tell us about your Classical Connections collaboration set for April 4?

Talk about friends in the biz. I first worked with Howard in 2003 in Cincinnati where he and pianist Anthony Molinaro were guests on a series that I curated for the Cincinnati Contem-

porary Art Museum. Sinfonia performed the Southeast U.S. premiere of his first concerto for harmonica and when he asked if I was interested in being involved with his newest offering, I could not refuse. Howard is one of those rare musicians that come along too infrequently, whose skills on harmonica are unparalleled in this universe, but to add piano, for which he is also scarily gifted on, it was a no brainer. Sinfonia will perform the world premiere of this new work for harmonica and piano with Howard performing.

New music and commissions and orchestrations of other existing works is critical to the survival of the orchestra art form. Sinfonia has always been on the forefront of this. While I would love to participate more in this realm, we are limited to the number of concerts we do each season; however, it is always important to support new artists, new works and collaboration is key!

Sinfonia has a history of surprising and delighting its audience with bold, innovative offerings. Composer Steve Hackman is known for his unexpected music pairings. Tell us how you plan to cap the Main Event season on May 18?

Relevance. That is a big word being tossed around these days. Why do orchestras who only offer classical music suffer from declining ticket sales ... they are not relevant. Sinfonia has always been one-stop shopping for the entire genre of orchestral offerings to include masterworks, pops, chamber orchestra, chamber music and unique events incorporating other musical and art forms.

Sinfonia's season concludes with Tchaikovsky X Drake. Whether you are familiar with either name, it is a concert that you can attend and thoroughly enjoy from the sheer vantage point that it is an incredible concert experience. Steve Hackman is an impresario of the mash up. Like his presentation of Beethoven X Coldplay that Sinfonia performed several seasons back, this takes Tchaikovsky's epic 5th symphony and weaves elements of Drake's music and lyrics in an ingenious manner. You have to experience it to understand how brilliant it is from the pure orchestral joy that radiates from Tchaikovsky to the vocalists and rap artist that correspond to Drake's offerings, it is like nothing else you have witnessed.

You have expanded Sinfonia's Music Education program this year by offering even more string programs, which are not offered in schools. As a musician, why should parents consider Sinfonia's programs for their kids?

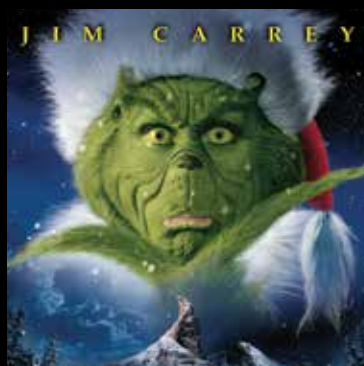
Sinfonia continues to fill a void by providing incredible and much-needed education offerings to our community, primarily in our Okaloosa and Walton County school districts. Our expanded beginning strings programs and youth orchestra programs have hit record enrollment numbers this school year and it is a program that is not offered by either district. In some cases, our Link Up curriculum is the only arts education several schools have. It is important to continue to develop these programs and the support of our patrons enables this. In fact, we have hired two additional instructors for the strings and youth orchestra programs and will need several more if the trajectory of expansion continues. It is very rewarding to know that your organization is making an important difference in the community and enlightening young minds.

This year, the state of Florida cut \$32 million from the cultural arts budget impacting organizations statewide.

What can music lovers do to support Sinfonia Gulf Coast?

To be clear: the state of Florida did not cut these funds, Gov. Ron DeSantis singlehandedly vetoed this line item from the state budget, directly going against the work of his state colleagues who, for months, diligently collaborated to approve funding for all of the arts organizations in Florida. Politics aside, this was a very short-sighted endeavor that has impacted 600 organizations and Florida's economy considering cultural tourism provides nearly \$6 billion to the economy each year.

There are many ways to play your part. Beyond donating funds, you can show support by attending our concerts and events, or by sponsoring a single event or the entire season, whether as an individual or business owner. We also welcome volunteers and inquiries about joining our music education social group, the Treble Makers, or exploring leadership opportunities on our Board of Directors. Visit our website (SinfoniaGulfCoast.org) and follow us on Facebook and Instagram to get to know us and learn more.



FILM IN CONCERT
The Grinch in Concert
 Saturday, Dec. 14 | 7:30 PM
 Destin-FWB Convention Center
 TICKETS: FROM \$40 PER PERSON

Bring the whole family to experience *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* live with Sinfonia Gulf Coast performing the film score as the movie unfolds on screen. Relive this beloved holiday classic about The Mean One and rediscover the true spirit of the season.



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feat. Morgan James
 Sunday, Dec. 8 | 10:30 AM
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 Arts & Music

Co-Creating with ECTC: From Casting to Curtain Call

BY NATHANAEL AND ANNA FISHER

After shows like *Jersey Boys*, *Million Dollar Quartet* and *The Marvelous Wonderettes*, we often receive questions such as, “How long has this cast toured together?” and “Where are they going next?” Anna and I always smile when we get these questions, because it speaks to the quality of the show. But, the reality is that all the mainstage shows at Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) are auditioned, produced and directed by ECTC staff. It’s a year-long process that begins right after we settle on a season.

After a season is chosen and we procure the production rights from the publishing companies, the work begins. Take *Season 12 Shows: Jersey Boys*, *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery*, *All is Calm*, *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Always a Bridesmaid* and *Legally Blonde the Musical*—to produce all of those shows plus our Family Theatre production of *Go Dog Go*, we have to find and hire more than 60 actors to fill those character roles.

Our first step as a casting team (Anna, Emily, Trenton and Nathanael) is to consider our local actors and then start compiling a list of roles for actors that we know we will have

to audition and cast from out of town. Take *Jersey Boys* for example: We were pretty sure we didn’t have any local young men who could sing falsetto like Keenan Lyons, the actor who plays Frankie Valli. Once we have a clear idea of what roles we need to cast for, we begin the auditioning process.

Each February, the Unified Professional Theatre Auditions, otherwise known as “UPTAs,” takes place in Memphis, Tenn. This is where over 100 theatre representatives and more than 800 actors come together for four days of auditions. In sports terms, this is where we “scout” for talent. We’ll keep our list of prospects until we are ready to start casting later in the year. For *Jersey Boys*, we brought in six guys from all over the country. Each actor was hired for his specific look and skill set, including vocal range, dance experience, character choice and believability.

Over the summer, the incredible production team begins working on the first few shows of the season. This includes production design meetings with the director to discuss the overall vision of the show and how each designer will execute their part of it. Beca drafts the set design; Taylor begins researching and building costumes; Emily

starts choreographing the dances; and Ora engineers props. This all takes place simultaneously while our summer EDU programs are in full swing!

In July, we will hold our first round of local auditions for the season. Then, later in the year, we focus on casting the other shows. Our focus in casting *Jersey Boys*, for example, was to find a group of four young men who looked the part, could sing the part and could act well—four guys that looked like best friends and would cohesively tell the story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

A huge thanks is due to partners like the Howard Group (with the Grand Boulevard Hotels), Ocean Reef Resorts, and a few generous patrons, who provide accommodations for our out of town actors during rehearsals and performances. This partnership allows us to specifically cast each role with the right actor, no matter where they are from.

Now comes the work! We have 15 rehearsal days to bring our entire cast of *Jersey Boys* together to create a cohesive, well-executed show. Keep in mind that many of the cast



members have never met each other before. The six actors brought in from out of town are not a traveling troupe like many assume. They meet on the first day of rehearsal along with the rest of the cast. The next 15 days are packed! Prior to rehearsals, the cast receives the script and music, so they can essentially have lines and music memorized at the beginning of the rehearsal process—what we call “off book.” On the first day of rehearsals Tom Baroco, our Music Director extraordinaire, starts working with the cast on all of the music, including those beautiful harmonies. Emily Bainbridge, our top-notch choreographer, starts teaching the choreography that she has created and worked on for hours ahead of time in preparation for rehearsals. At the second rehearsal, Trenton (Assistant Director) shares with the cast how they can expect to collaborate with us and our expectations of them, then I share my vision of the show from a storytelling perspective.

Anna and I have recently been discussing the idea of “Co-Creation.” It is amazing that we can take a formless idea of a show that has no set, no props, no costumes, no actors, and no choreography, to a collaboration with our production team and cast that creates an unforgettable live experience. Along the way, the director and the production team are answering questions like: How is the cast interacting with the set and props? Are the costumes cohesive to the storytelling of the show? Where does the cast need more work in learning music or choreography? Are we remaining authentic in our storytelling throughout the show? The last four or five days before opening are simply called “tech week”

where we are focused on technical elements like lights, sound, costumes and scene transitions. The polishing touches are put on the show during this time and everything comes together in a seamless final product—a “co-creation” that every cast member along with the production and tech crew has contributed to and brought to life.

All of this work culminates in *OPENING NIGHT!* We had a stellar, sold out opening night performance of *Jersey Boys*. It was a live phenomenon that happened in real time and will never happen the same way again—truly unique and truly epic!

Recently, a gentleman came up to me after the show and started to speak, but couldn’t get the words out as he became emotional. I could see in his eyes the memories, the joy, the special experience he had watching our show. He wanted to say more, but all he could manage as he grabbed my hand with his two hands and held it securely was, “Thank you, just thank you!” I’ve been really digging into Hebrew text recently and discovered the word “Tohu wa-bohu,” meaning “without form and void.” It’s very gratifying to think about how *Jersey Boys* was “without form and void.” It was a piece of paper, a thought, a dream. Over the course of the months of preparation and planning, the weeks of rehearsals with our staff, creative team and many incredible performers, we co-created a work of art that left a man speechless. I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the most important part of that co-creation—you. We don’t exist without you, without our audience. That’s truly why we always say “The heart of ECTC is you.”



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2025 30A Songwriter's Festival Initial Lineup Announced

30A Songwriters Festival will celebrate its 16th year with performances on the main stage at Grand Boulevard's Town Center in Miramar Beach with headline performances by renowned artists Melissa Etheridge, Amos Lee, The Jayhawks, The Devon Allman Project, Maggie Rose and Secret Sisters.

The festival welcomes for the first time to 30A: Charlie Starr & Benji Shanks (Blackberry Smoke), Natalie Hemby, Brandy Clark, Chuck Prophet & His Cumbia Shoes, Lindsay Lou (Band), Brett Dennen, The Stews, Langhorne Slim, Chris Knight, Josh Joplin Group, Willi Carlisle, Bee Taylor (Band), Jonathan Willis, Josh Rouse, Paul McDonald & The Mourning Doves, Tyler Ramsey, Andrea Von Kampen, Jill Sobule, Burris, Kyle Davis, Jada Cato, Beth Bombara, Mallory Johnson, Jessica Sharman, David Borné and Anna Grace.

Returning to perform two shows each throughout the weekend are songwriting leg-



ends Darrell Scott, Livingston Taylor, Will Kimbrough, Ellis Paul, Shawn Mullins, Vicki Peterson & John Cowsill, John Paul White, Tommy Prine, Ruthie Foster, Hayes Carll, Holly Williams, John Fullbright, Black Opry Revue, Lilly Hiatt, Susan Werner, Chuck Cannon, Jeff Black, Dan Bern, Griffin House, Charlie Mars, Randall Bramblett, Jeffrey Steele, Steve Poltz, Kelly Willis, Bob Schneider, Mary Gauthier, Certainly So, David Ryan Harris, Chris Stills, Emerson Hart, John Driskell Hopkins, Adam Hood, Abe Partridge, Chastity Brown, Cousin Curtis, Will Hoge, Ry-

anhood, with more to come.

The following additional artists are also confirmed: Sarah Clanton, Jack Barksdale, Eliot Bronson, Mike Kinnebrew, Liz Longley, Grayson Capps, Cat Ridgeway, Lilly Winwood, Caitlin

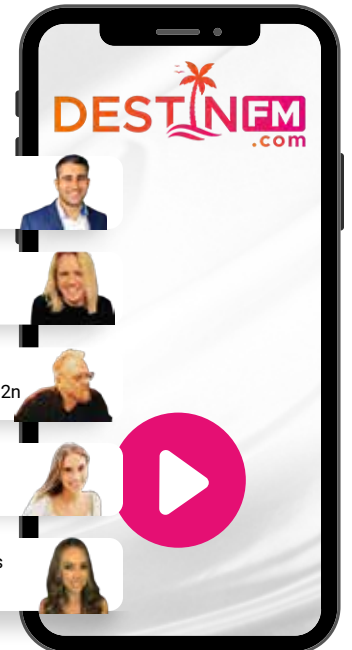
Cannon, Bradley Cole Smith & Nelson Nolan, Jennifer Lynn Simpson, Sara Hells, The Sand Ole Opry With Mike Whitty and many more.

Many more artists will be announced over the next few weeks—Stay Tuned! Visit www.30asongwritersfestival.com to stay up to date and to purchase tickets.

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



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Around Town

Ask Destinities: Explaining Destin Fire Control District



By PATRICIA LEE, OWNER
DESTINITIES.COM

In our Destinities Facebook group (www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinities) this past month, the question below was raised by a member. Destin has many new residents and not everyone might be aware of how the Destin Fire Department

is managed. I still find it interesting that Kelly Plantation is not part of the city of Destin. However, I do know they are welcome to incorporate, should they decide to do so.

Member Question:

“A good amount of fire departments are part of the city they’re located in. Ours is a separate entity called the Destin Fire Control District. Just curious what the benefits/logic is to having it not governed by the city.”

Below are the responses by other members, including one of our Fire Commissioners. 1. Private Funding. 2. They still receive funding from the county and state, but they have a lot more private funding. 3. I think



it’s because the Fire Department’s area of responsibility includes all of Destin plus other communities not in the city of Destin (such as Kelly Plantation). Funding still is from Property Tax (1 mil) for all properties

in the Fire District. 4. The fire district is actually much older than the city and covers the entire peninsula. 5. Less government involvement is always a plus!

6. Normally, I would strongly

ly agree with you, but I’m not so sure about this when it comes to the fire department.

7. As one of your Fire Commissioners, we are a Special District, because the city doesn’t encompass the lower end of the county area. I have attached a map of what is actually the city boundaries and what is the remainder of Okaloosa County. We cover from Marler Bridge to the county line North and South. We actually cover the famous Crab Island as well where the city doesn’t have jurisdiction. I hope this answers your question.

Publisher note: For more information on Destin Fire Control District, visit destinfire.com or [Facebook.com/DestinFireRescue](https://www.facebook.com/DestinFireRescue).

Alaqua Animal Refuge Seeks Support for Animals Displaced by Hurricane

Alaqua Animal Refuge is urgently seeking public support to continue providing life-saving care for animals displaced by

Hurricane Milton. While national animal welfare organizations have stepped in with emergency grants, food and bedding, Alaqua remains in critical need of monetary donations, volunteers, fosters and adopters to sustain the ongoing care for these animals.

As the designated emergency shelter for Hurricane Milton, Alaqua quickly mobilized to meet the needs of displaced animals, even before state supplies could arrive. The refuge

sourced kennels, food and medical supplies from a three-hour radius, ensuring every incoming animal had the shelter and care they needed.

Thanks to the generosity of national and local organizations, Alaqua received emergency grants and supplies. However, the sheer volume of animals—many of them



in dire condition—has placed an enormous strain on the refuge’s resources. The animals are currently housed in two large emergency arenas, and many are suffering from severe health conditions, including heartworm disease, malnutrition, untreated injuries, broken bones and behavioral trauma from the storm.

You can help with monetary donations by visiting www.alaqua.org; volunteer with animal care, feeding and support; foster or adopt to relieve the overcrowding and give animals a loving environment to recover; and share Alaqua’s story on social media encouraging others to get involved. For more information, donate or volunteer, visit www.alaqua.org or call 850-880-6399.

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