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Embrace Florida Kids Tees Up for Second Golf Soiree

By Christopher Manson

Embrace Florida Kids is an offshoot of Embrace Alabama Kids, a faith-based organization that has been helping children and families since 1890. Director of Development and Community Relations Ramsey Lawrence has been speaking to churches and civic organizations and spreading the word about the nonprofit's Florida arm since

Embrace Florida Kids has four programs. "First, we teach people how to parent," says Lawrence. "People who are dealing with addiction and communication problems. It's one-on-one intense parenting intervention. We have a 96 percent success rate."

The nonprofit also licenses adults that wish to become foster parents. They offer residential homes, including one located in Milton for girls ages 12 to 18 "who have been in the foster care program, but have had too much trauma in their lives," says Law-



care or alternative living situations (with grandparents or other relatives, for example) and wishes to attend college. "We'll coach and tutor them and assist with tuition."

Lawrence says these programs benefit local children throughout Bay, Okaloosa, Walton, Santa Rosa and Escambia counties.

terColor Lakehouse in Santa Rosa Beach. The golf-themed soiree will feature a tournament-themed menu, signature cocktails, live music from local favorite Jacob Mohr and a live Calcutta, during which tournament participants are "auctioned off" and money is collected in a prize fund. Dress is golf attire and smart On Monday, April 7, join casual; attendees are encour-

aged to don golf's royal colors of green and yellow. Purchase tickets at walkdownmagnolialane.org.

Doors open for cocktails at 5 p.m., followed by golf activities at 6 and the live Calcutta at 7:15. This year's

> **EMBRACE** continued on page 2



SSUS Begins Journey to Our Area to Become the World's Largest **Artificial Reef!**

America's Flagship, the SS United States (SSUS), has now begun her journey from Philadelphia, Pa., to our own Emerald Coast!

After Okaloosa County's Tour-Development Department,

> **SSUS** continued on page 2



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EMBRACE

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event sponsors include Good News Church, Shoreline Title, Peaceful Family Oklahoma, Hill Coleman LLC, Liufau McCall, Hancock Whitney and Review Harvest. Sponsorship opportunities are still available, and participants will receive badges to attend the event, recognition on promotional materials, and a number of additional benefits. If interested, email Lawrence at ramsey.lawrence@embrace-flkids.org or call 850.533.9968.



According to Vie Magazine, 2024's inaugural event, held at Regatta Bay Golf & Yacht Club in Destin, raised over \$78,000. Musician Mohr, who returns following a successful appear-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF EMBRACE FLORIDA KIDS

ance at last year's soiree, says, "I'm excited and proud to be a part of another Embrace Florida Kids event. This organization literally stands in the gap for children and families in crisis. It's easy for us to go about our lives with relatively few

problems and forget there are young people bravely dealing with all sorts of trauma. I love that they focus on keeping families together. More and more, we see the disintegration of a family unit being the harbinger for multitudes of trouble."

He adds that last year's A Walk Down Magnolia Lane was "a veritable Who's Who of Destin and South Walton business people and philanthropists. The entertainment is decent, and the opportunity to help a great organization that does such important work will just make you

feel good. I hope to see some old friends and make some new ones."

Embrace Florida Kids' Program Center is located at 5414 U.S. 90 in Pace, Florida. The nonprofit provides comfort and safety to abused, neglected and traumatized children, young mothers and struggling families through group homes, foster care programs and family preservation services throughout Northwest Florida and Alabama. Call 800.239.3575 or visit embracekids.org to learn more.

SSUS

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Destin-Fort Walton Beach completed the necessary safety requirements by local, state and federal agencies, the journey began to move the SSUS from her current docking area in south Philadelphia to a docking area in Mobile, Ala., where preparations to ready the ship to become the World's Largest Artificial Reef will continue.

The SSUS departed Philadelphia after 30 years, and, at the time of this printing, she was almost to Mobile Bay after being chaperoned by multiple tug boats while making her way down the Delaware River and into the Atlantic Ocean. As with any project of this magnitude, the schedule is tentative with dates, times and other logistics subject to change, due to many factors.

The SSUS' amazing journey to Mobile took about two weeks. In Mobile, the vessel will continue its rebirth into an artificial reef as contractors remove hazardous material, including non-metal parts and fuel to ensure this deployment is clean and not harmful to the environment it aims to benefit. Modifications will also be made to ensure that when the vessel is deployed, it will land upright underwater. The preparation process will take about 12 months.

The exact location along the Gulf Coast for the vessel's deployment has not been set, but it is expected to be about 20



nautical miles south of the Destin-Fort Walton Beach area.

As the World's Largest Artificial Reef, the story of the SSUS will be told to thousands of divers from around the world as they explore her unique design and features. She will also benefit her surrounding ecosystem and be-

come home to countless marine species that will thrive from the presence of her structure. Due to the size and the depth, she will be home to a wide variety of marine life from iconic reef fish such as red snapper to pelagic species of fish like wahoo. This new artificial reef will provide bountiful fishing and diving opportunities for the local, visiting and charter industries.

Okaloosa County will continue to partner with the SSUS Conservancy as it pivots to develop a land-based museum in Destin-Fort Walton Beach that will celebrate and commemorate the nation's flagship. The County will provide the Conservancy with regular project updates and will support the museum planning process which will incorporate iconic features from the ship, including the funnels, radar mast, and other signature components, as well as the Conservancy's extensive curatorial and archival collection. This will preserve the ship's storied history and the memories that she has created for so many people over the years.

To follow the SSUS' journey via GPS tracking, visit // www.destinfwb.com/explore/eco-tourism/ssus.

Fun Facts About the SSUS:

• The design of the SSUS

was so innovative that the details of her construction were kept top-secret. She was the first passenger liner to be built almost entirely in a graving dock – safely out of the public eye.

- The SSUS was designed to be just wide enough (101 feet) so it could pass through the locks of the Panama Canal with two feet of clearance on either side.
- Five days before her maiden voyage in July 1952, the SSUS was opened to the public at her

Continued on page 25



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Scouting America Gulf Coast Council Celebrates 115 Years

Scouting America, formerly Boy Scouts of America, is the nation's foremost youth program, providing young people with unique opportunities focused on character development, leadership, fun and outdoor exploration. The non-profit's mission is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. The Scout Law states that a Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. The Scout Oath states, "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

Our own Gulf Coast Council serves more than 2,500 youth throughout eight counties in the Florida panhandle and three counties in Alabama.

On February 8, the orga-

nization celebrated its 115th birthday, marking a pivotal moment in its journey as it officially adopts its new name, Scouting America. The organization continues to adapt to meet the evolving needs of young people, ensuring that future generations will have the opportunity to benefit from this transformative program.

For more than a century, Scouting America's mission has remained the same: to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law. Whether it's a camping trip, a pinewood derby car race, or a trail hike, every adventure encourages personal growth by teaching youth how to set goals and achieve them with determination. As we look to the future, Scouting America is dedicated to providing young people with the values, skills, and experiences they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

"Scouting America ha



helped instill timeless values for multiple generations of Americans," said Roger Krone, Scouting America president and CEO. "In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the values and skills instilled by Scouting are more critical than ever, and the need for strong character, ethical decision-making, and effective leadership remains paramount. As we celebrate 115 years of service to our nation, we are reaffirming our commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment where young people can develop these essential qualities, empowering them to reach their full potential and preparing them to become responsible and engaged citizens."

Scouting America has remained committed to providing youth with a safe environment where they can learn meaningful life skills, create lifelong memories, and grow into tomorrow's leaders. In fact, more than 130 million Americans have been through Scouting America programs since our founding in 1910. Currently, more than 1 million youth are served by 477,000 dedicated adult volunteers in local councils throughout the country.

"Scouting programs for young men and women ages 5-20 provide an exceptional opportunity for quality time for the families of the Emerald Coast," says Steve Williams, Gulf Coast Council Scout Executive and CEO. "Scouting allows families to experience the outdoors in a safe environment, where they can strengthen bonds and build lifelong memories. These programs provide the unique ability for families to grow togeth-

(850) 650-2262

er. Through Scouting, young people learn leadership skills, communication skills, civility, self-reliance, and teamwork. No other program can provide more well-rounded programming to improve schools, communities, and lives."

Scouting America invites families, individuals, and communities nationwide to join its mission. In our area, the Choctawhatchee District, part of the Gulf Coast Council, serves Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Meetings are held at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in Niceville. For more information, visit https://gulfcoastcouncil.org/council-information/lakesands-district-2/ or contact district chairman Drew Bowman at drew.bowman@bit-wizards.com.

Perhaps you come from a family with a Scouting tradition or are considering Scouting for the first time. To learn more, visit www.BeAScout.org.

Continued on next page







Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

Tamara L. Young, PhD, Public Information Director

"The Millennial Mayor" Bobby Wagner and Public Information Director "Dr. T" sat down and reflected on his State of the City Address, which he delivered on February 18th. It was a chance for him to speak before those in attendance as well as the people who joined in online to listen. For those who missed Mayor Wagner's speech and would like to watch, you can view it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLpanjc-nySA&t=9s

TY: You had a packed house for your SOCA (State of the City Address) this year, and I think that's more than just the fact we were serving crab cakes for dinner. You have a strong following of people who have grown to trust you and your word. How hard is it to not be able to do everything you want to do for all the people who are sharing valid suggestions for improvement?

BW: t's one of the hardest

"Reel Talk" from the City of Destin

Priorities and Progress:

2025 State of the City Address

parts of leadership—hearing great ideas from passionate people and knowing we can't make them all happen overnight. But I remind myself that real progress takes time, and the best changes happen when the community is involved. The good news is that Destin has never been more engaged, and that means we're building momentum. Even when we can't implement every idea immediately, we're setting the stage for future improvements by ensuring that voices are heard and that we have a clear roadmap for where we're

TY: 2025 is your halfway mark through your term, having served two of four years. What were some of the more prominent priorities you heard about when you were knocking on doors campaigning?

BW: Destin residents have spoken—traffic, public safety, and preserving our quality of life are top priorities. People want safer roads, improved intersections, and smarter infrastructure to support our community and families without sacrificing the

charm that makes our city special. There's a strong push for walkability, green space, and thoughtful development—enhancing our community rather than overwhelming it. The message is clear: progress should make

Destin better, not busier.

TY: What are some specificities and deliverables of progress?

BW: We've made big strides, but there's more to do. On public safety, we've secured funding for critical intersection improvements on Highway 98 and are working closely with FDOT on long-term solutions like our future bridge and pedestrian underpasses along the harbor. For infrastructure, we're prioritizing underground utilities, storm water upgrades, and mobility plans to make getting around town easier and safer. Walkability remains a top focus, with the SUN Trail project and multi-use paths moving forward. Beyond that,



we're tackling quality-of-life concerns head-on—from revitalizing our parks and playgrounds to supporting local businesses, shaping our city center vision, and ensuring sustainable growth that puts Destin families first.

TY: Your SOCA was inspirational, and you elicited some laughs when you joked about local government sometimes moving more slowly than you'd like. Can you envision being part of changing that?

BW: Absolutely. Government's pace is often frustrating, but that doesn't mean we have to accept it as the status quo. We're already finding ways to streamline decision-making, cut



red tape, and make city processes more efficient. The key is balancing urgency with doing things right. I'll keep pushing for smart, proactive solutions that prevent us from being stuck in reactive mode. If we want Destin to remain the incredible place it is, we can't afford to just maintain—we have to evolve, and that means constantly improving how we operate.



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SCOUTING

 $continued\ from\ previous\ page$

Register for the Gulf Coast Council's 5th Annual Shooting for Scouts Series

Whether you're a clay-shooting ace or a big fan of supporting youth in the area, this event brings together shooters and community members to benefit the Gulf Coast Council's efforts.

This year's series takes place on two separate days: one in Holt and another in Panama City Beach. Each event will include team-versus-team clay shooting competitions, with the top three places earning commemorative plaques. Youth competitors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian, and all participants must bring their own guns and ammo. Food will be prepared and served to attendees by Scouts from Troop 78 based in Milton.

Individuals and teams are

welcome to register, and those who want to attend both days can select the "Complete Series" to save 15% on registration costs. Businesses and local organizations are also invited to support the Gulf Coast Council through various sponsorship opportunities for each event.

When:

Event 1 - April 5, 2025 Event 2 - April 26, 2025

Where:

Event 1 - The Element Training Complex, 4418 Cooper Lane, Holt, FL 32564

Event 2 - Bay County Shooting Range, 10900 Steel Field Road, Panama City Beach, FL 32413

To Register:

Event 1 - https://donations. scouting.org/#/council/773/ event/627/register

Event 2 - https://donations. scouting.org/#/council/773/ event/634/register

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12th Annual Tequila & Taco Fest - May 8-11

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on the Emerald Coast with a \$2,500 grand prize.

Enjoy Tequila and Margarita tastings, live music, DJ and face painting.

Event Highlights:

Tequila Dinner - May 8, 6:30-9 p.m. at Cantina Laredo (\$79.99). Call 850-654-5649 for reservations.





Kickoff Party – May 9, 6-9 p.m. at Baytowne Wharf. Live music, unlimited appetizers, tequila & margarita samplings (\$75).

Festival Main Event May 10, 1-4 p.m. (VIP noon-4 p.m.) Unlimited taco tastings & tequila samplings (\$40-\$175). VIP at Jimmy Buffett's 5 O'Clock Somewhere.

BYE BYE Brunch – May 11, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Sunset Bay Cafe at Sandestin. \$50 includes two Margaritas or Bloody Marys (limited seating).

New Yacht Charters that include Tequila, Latin Small Plates, Boating and one VIP Ticket per person.

Get your tickets NOW at EfestEvents.com. Part of the proceeds benefit Fisher House and A Bed For Me Foundation. Don't miss this Emerald Coast favorite!

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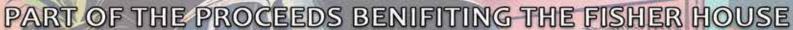
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Special Performances from DJ Zoran

Join DJ Zoran for a performance at Hotel Effie's Rooftop Lounge, Saturday, March 8 and Friday, March 21 from 7-11 p.m.

© Community









Get Tickets at EfestEvents.com

The Village of Baytowne Wharf







Event Highlights Around Town

5th Annual CAMO Committee BBQ Cook-Off - March 8

Join the 5th Annual CAMO Committee BBQ Cook-Off on Saturday, March 8, at 11 a.m. at Third Planet Brewing, Niceville!

Enjoy great food, fun, and beer while supporting Twin Cities Pavilion & Crestview Manor. Think you've got the best BBQ? Enter for free or upgrade to a larger table for \$20. Attendees can taste and vote with a \$35 ticket (includes two drink tickets). Kids under 12 can judge for \$12. Don't miss this local favorite—grab your tickets and bring your appetite!

NFB's Cinderella Takes the Stage - March 8 & 9

The Northwest Florida Bal-



let wraps up its 55th season with Cinderella at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center on Saturday, March 8, at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, March 9, at 2:30 p.m..

Featuring live music by the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, this classic ballet showcases choreography by Todd Eric Allen and music by Sergei Prokofiev. Expect stunning dancing, dazzling costumes, and magical scenery in this three-act production.

Tickets are \$48 for adults and \$22 for children 12 and under. Purchase at nfballet.org/ cinderella or call 850-729-6000.

ECCAC Gala & Golf Event - March 8-9

Support the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center at their Signature Gala & Golf Event, presented by Peggy and Jerry Swanson.

Gala - March 8 | Hilton Sandestin

Cocktail Hour: 5:30 p.m. Dinner: 6:30 p.m.

Enjoy live entertainment, a guest speaker and a live auction.

Golf Tournament – March 9 | Kelly Plantation

Registration & Cookout: 10:30-11:45 a.m. | Shotgun Start: Noon

Awards Ceremony to follow. Tickets: \$250 per person | \$500 per couple | Golf Teams: \$1,000 (4 players)

Register at eccac.org.

The Diary of Anne Frank -March 14-23

Step into history and witness the powerful true story of hope, courage and resilience. Stage Crafters presents, "The Diary of Anne Frank," March 14-23. Experience an unforgettable performance that brings Anne's words to life on stage. Don't miss this moving production that will stay with you long after the final curtain. Tickets:

www.StageCraftersFWB.com or www.ticketor.com/stagecrafters.

Strength in Unity Conference & Business Expo - March 30

Celebrate Women's History Month at Conexion Media Group's Strength in Unity Conference & Business Expo on Sunday, March 30, from 11 AM - 7 PM at The Island Resort, Okaloosa Island (Maui & Capri Rooms). For more information, contact David at 850-368-3505 or conexionflorida@gmail.com.

Sixth Annual Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo

March 28-29 | Freeport **Regional Sports Complex**

Dust off your boots and get ready to rodeo! The 6th Annual Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo presented by Builders FirstSource returns to the City of Freeport Sports Complex March 28th -29th, 2025. Come watch some of the nation's top cowgirls and cowboys competing in the Professional Cowboy Association Circuit (PCA) bring the family and friends for a fun-packed weekend!

Contestants will compete in events including Bareback Riding, Calf Roping, Saddle Bronc Riding, Ranch Bronc Riding, Steer Wrestling, Breakaway Roping, Barrel Racing, Team Roping, and Bull Riding at the professionally sanctioned rodeo. Rodeo gates open at 6 p.m. with rodeo start at 7:30 p.m. each night. Spectators are encouraged to come early to enjoy pre-rodeo excitement including the kids' gold rush, food vendors, children's inflatable play area and more!

Westonwood Ranch is an organization whose mission and programs serve teens and young adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). "We are so thankful for the partnership with Walton County Sheriff's Office, the City of Freeport, our community sponsors that make it possible to raise funds that help support our programs. So many youths with developmental disabilities miss irreplaceable opportunities to gain critical life skills and job skills needed to lead an in-

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Cali's To Do In Destin! MARCH 2025

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island Music Match Game Night | 5pm | The

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery WLF Kickball Kick Off Party | 6pm | North Beach Socia

Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboy's

Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Palm Folly Wednesday Night Concert Series 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community

Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Café Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup | 7pm |

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Emerald Coast Quilt Show | 9am | NWFL

Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm |

Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co Free Beer: Locals On The Harbor | 5pm |

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Plant Bingo | 5pm | Paradise Plants &

La Vie En Rouge | 6pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co | Grand Blvd | Miramar Beach

A Night at the Museum | 6pm | Destin History & Fishing Museum **Karaoke** I 6pm | Kluges Rucken Fidiculous BBQ (1310 Lewis Turner Blvd)

Brooks Street Pub Crawl | 6pm | Downtown FWB

Karaoke | 7pm | American Legion Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm |

Latin Party | 10pm-Close | Pedros Destin

Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bay-

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Farmers Market | 9am | Niceville

Emerald Coast Quilt Show | 9am | NWFL Big Rig Bonanza | 10am | Bass Pro Shop /

Women United Brunch & Bubbly

10:30am | Home 2 Suites | FWB Motors In March | 11am | Vilage of Bayowne Wharf I Sandestin

CAMO Committee Barbecue Cook-Off 11am | Third Planet Brewing **The Secret Sip** | 4pm | Linkside at

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Goat Yoga | 6pm | Palm Folly ECCAC Gala | 7:30pm | Hilton Sandestin Cinderella | 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Center

Beach Church Service | 7:30am | Crab

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

la Vie En Rouge

Destin Community Farmers Market | 10am-2pm | Beall's Parking Lot in Destin

ECCAC Golf Tournament | 10:30pm |

Goat Yoga | 10:30am | 3rd Planet Brewing Dog Adoption Event | 11am | Pet

Self Defense Course | 12pm | Destin

Health & Fitness

11th Annual Tea Fore Her | 12pm | Hilton

Marvs, Melodies & Mimosas | 2pm | Harborwalk Village **Sealights Festival** | 5pm | Seascape

Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850

Trivia Night | 4pm-7pm | Beachview Breakfast & Grill

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

Mindful Meditation | 9am | Destin Library Run Club | 4:30pm | Idyll Hounds Brewery Karaoke | 6pm | AJs on the Bayou Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB **Karaoke** I 6pm-9pm I Fatboy's Destin

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island

Music Match Game Night | 5pm | The Island Resort

Music Bingo | 5pm | Pedro's Destin Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery Impact 100 Recruit Event | 5:30pm | 3rd

Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboy's

Trivia Night | 6pm | Idyll Hounds Brewery Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Palm Folly Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm I Village of Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Under The Sea | 3pm | Harborwalk Village Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Bubbly Baytowne | 5pm | Baytowne

Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community

Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup | 7pm |

Downtown Music Hall
Sea Themed Movie on the Lawn 7:30pm | Harborwalk Village Fireworks & Fire Spinning | 9pm | Har-

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co Free Beer: Locals On The Harbor | 5pm | Boathouse Oyster Bar

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Soiree on the Bay | 5pm | 38 W Hodge Rd, Santa Rosa Beach Coastal Country Concert | 7pm | Harbor-

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm |

Latin Party | 10pm-Close | Pedros Destin

Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bayowne Wharf

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand

St Patricks Day Darty (Day Party) | 2pm I M&P Restauran

Soiree on the Bay | 2pm | 38 W Hodge Rd, Santa Rosa Be

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape Golden Hour Movie | 7:30pm | Harbor-

walk Village **Destin Community Farmers Market** 10am-2pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk Leprechaun Brunch | 10am | Boathouse

Mac & Cheese Festival | 12pm | Destin

Marys, Melodies & Mimosas | 2pm |

Harborwalk Village Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850 Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill Trivia Night | 4pm-7pm | Beachview

Breakfast & Grill Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Royal Palm Grille St. Paddys Day Delight | 6pm | Village of

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Karaoke | 6pm | AJs on the Bayou Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboy's Destin

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island Music Match Game Night | 5pm | The

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboy's

Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Palm Folly Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf **Karaoke** | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Under The Sea | 3pm | Harborwalk Village Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9.30nm | Marina Cafe Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup | 7pm |

Downtown Music Hall

Thursdaze Lights Show | 9pm | Village of

Sea Themed Movie on the Lawn Fireworks & Fire Spinning | 9pm | Har-

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm |

Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Karaoke | 6pm | Kluges Rucken Fidiculous

BBQ (1310 Lewis Turner Blvd) Coastal Country Concert | 7pm | Harbor-

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm |

Latin Party | 10pm-Close | Pedros Destin

Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bay-

Farmers Market | 8am | The Landing FWB Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Resort Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850 Golden Hour Movie | 7:30pm | Harborwalk Village

Destin Community Farmers Market | 10am-2pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Destin Commons Farmers Market | 11am | Destin Commons Spring Fashion Show Benefitting Caring & Sharing | 12:30pm | Hilton Sandestin

Marys, Melodies & Mimosas | 2pm | Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

Trivia Night | 4pm-7pm | Beachview Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Royal Palm Grille Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJs on the Bayou Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboy's Destin

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Music Match Game Night | 5pm | The

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island Music Match Game Night | 5pm | The Island Resort

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboy's

Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Palm Folly Silent Disco | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Wednesday Night Concert Series 17pm l Village of Baytowne Wharf Trivia Night | 7pm | Boardroom Pub FWB Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Under The Sea | 3pm | Harborwalk Village

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Cafe Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup | 7pm |

Karaoke with Mary-aoke | 7pm | Soundside FWB

Sea Themed Movie on the Lawn 7:30pm | Harborwalk Village Fireworks & Fire Spinning | 9pm | Har-

borwalk Village

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin

Beasley Park Beach Clean Up | 3pm |

Beasley Park Okaloosa Island Fire Pit Friday | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm

Reagan Dinner | 6pm | The Island Resort Karaoke I 6pm I Kluges Rucken Fidiculous BBQ (1310 Lewis Turner Blvd)

Coastal Country Concert | 7pm | Harborwalk Village Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm |

Latin Party | 10pm-Close | Pedros Destin Farmers Market | 8am | Village of Bay-

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand

Boulevard Invasion on the Bayou | 9:30am | FWB Yacht Club

Dog Adoption Event | 10am | Pet

Harbor in Bloom | 10am | Harborwalk Destin Seafood Festival Artwork Party

3pm | Harborwalk Village FWBHS Cheer 4th Annual Food Truck Festival & Car Show | 11am | FWB High

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape

Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850 Almost Abba | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts

Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo 7:30pm | Freeport **Golden Hour Movie** | 7:30pm | Harbor-

walk Village

30 **Destin Community Farmers Market** 10am-2pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin **DJ Brunch** | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Destin Commons Farmers Market | 11am | Destin Commons Marys, Melodies & Mimosas | 2pm |

Sealights Festival | 5pm | Seascape Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

Trivia Night | 4pm-7pm | Beachview Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery





EVENTS · LIVE MUSIC · FOOD

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Make Your Way to the Area's Pioneer Wine Festival! 38 Years of the Sandestin Wine Festival!

Thursday, April 10th – Sunday, April 13th | Friday 5-8 p.m. and Saturday 1-4 p.m. | The Village of Baytowne Wharf

The 38th year of being THE BEST, the Annual Sandestin Wine Festival, voted "Best Event" by Visit South Walton and known as the "Kentucky Derby of Wine Festivals," will run Thursday, April 10, through Sunday, April 13th at The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin.

A pioneer among Emerald Coast festivals, the Sandestin Wine Festival has been drawing like-minded wine-enthusiasts looking to discover more about the culture and vibe of the Northwest Florida Gulf Coast with a fun filled, come-as-you-are ambiance for more than three decades. Whether you're a wine aficionado or a grape novice looking to learn more, there's something for everyone with 100's of featured wines!

Topping area polls as a must-experience event, this be-



loved festival offers FOUR full days of unique events including wine dinners with celebrity chefs, yoga, live music, interactive experiences, culinary tents, and of course wine tastings.

On Friday, April 11, from 12–2:30 p.m., set sail into Sandestin Wine Festival weekend in style! Introducing the Solaris Sip & Sail – a brand-new event to kick off the festivities! Join us aboard the luxurious Solaris Yacht at The Baytowne Marina. Enjoy a welcome cocktail to start your cruise, a chef-prepared plated lunch with expertly curated wine pairings and

breathtaking views as you sip and sail into the weekend. Space is limited—secure your spot now at sunquestcruises.com or call 850.650.2519!

On Friday, 5-8 p.m. and Saturday 1-4 p.m., the main events shine with 100's of featured wines and gourmet bites! Enjoy two days of discovery with hundreds of domestic and international wines represented from premier vineyards throughout the globe! Speak with vintner representatives in a rare, intimate setting to learn more about your favorites. Tastings are complemented by gourmet experiences from featured chefs along the Emerald Coast with tents offering delectable bitesized appetizers perfect for pairing. Local and regional music also set the vibe for fun days of discovery. Rain or Shine, there will be wine! Tickets on sale now starting at \$90!

Presented by Hotel Effie and Spa Lilliana, a featured event, Seas The Day on Saturday, April 12 from 9-11 a.m., will rejuvenate your body and mind with a special beachside yoga session, followed by mimosas to get in the spirit for a day of discovery at the Grand Tasting.

Purchase tickets for all events at SandestinWineFestival.com.

Spring has Sprung in The Village of Baytowne Wharf!

March Wednesday Night Concerts

Wednesdays, March 5-26, 7-9 p.m.

This free concert series features both local and regional talent from a variety of genres. Concerts are held on the Events Plaza Stage each Wednesday. *March 5:* Forrest Williams Band *March 12:* Modern Eldorados



March 19: Almost Famous March 26: Clinch 46

Fun, Sun & Cars! Motors In March

Saturday, March 8 | 11 a.m.-3 p.m. FREE to attend!

Emerald Coast Customs and 3M Window Tinting Presents the 6th Annual Auto Show on Saturday, March 8, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. at The Village of Baytowne Wharf to benefit Children In Crisis.

Calling all Muscle Cars, Euros, Jeeps, Trucks, Corvettes, Imports, Hot Rods, Classics & Exotics! Join in for a day of fun, sun, and cars! Awards and trophies will be awarded in nine classes and a Best of Show award.

There will be two separate raffles—one is for auto-entry participants and one for all others in attendance. Prizes include car stereos and electronics, 3M window tinting and more!

Limit is 100 pre-entry vehicles—first come, first serve. Registration and vehicle load-in is from 7:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. on event day. With every auto entry, receive a FREE ECC t-shirt and swag bag.

Free admission to the public. Pre Entry Fee to register a car is \$30 per vehicle and a \$50 VIP. pre-registration at Instagram. com/emeraldcoastcustoms/or Facebook.com/eccdestin. Email ECCDESTINSALES@GMAIL.COM for more information.

Bubbly Baytowne Thursday, March 13 | 5-7 p.m.

Join The Village of Baytowne Wharf for an evening full of free champagne and shopping during Bubbly Baytowne. Sip and Shop through the village streets and stop in various retail merchants as you enjoy a selection of premium champagnes.

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

Scallywag Sunday Sundays, March 16-March 30 | 7-9 p.m.

Watch as featured pirate Captain Davy takes you on an adventure with two magic shows on stage at 7 and 8 p.m.

St. Paddy's Day Delight-Paint the Village Green Monday, March 17 | 6-9 p.m.

Baytowne Wharf is painting The Village GREEN from the lagoon to the lights! Celebrate the Luck of the Irish on Wednesday, March 17, 6-9 p.m., featuring Carpenter Academy of Irish Dance and Live Music.

Boomin' Tuesday Tuesdays, March 18-April 1 | 6:30-8:30 p.m.

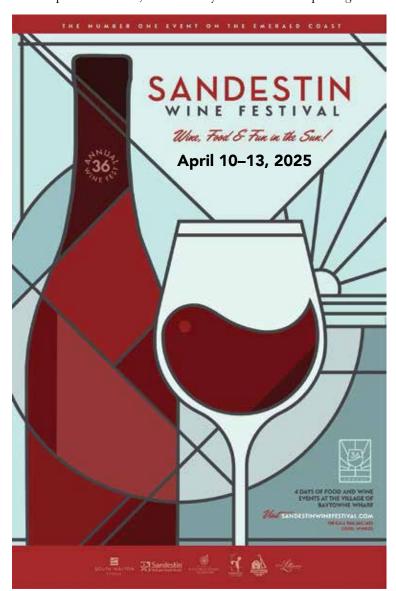
Enjoy singing and dancing with DJ Mike Whitty in the Events Plaza from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Then watch a breathtaking fireworks show over the Lagoon at 8:30 p.m.

Thursdays, March 20-April 3 | 9 p.m.

Join us every Thursday at 9 p.m. as we light up the sky with drones that will form images of our favorite beach scenes!

All March Baytowne Wharf events are FREE to attend.

Don't forget to tune in on Beach TV to watch all that's going on in The Village of Baytowne Wharf LIVE!





Ode to Joy—A Grand Symphony of Unity and Joy!

Beethoven's Ninth Featuring World-Class Opera Stars April 12, 2025 | 7 p.m. | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Tickets: \$35

Join Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra (NFSO) and Todd Craven Music Director and Conductor for the Season Finale: "Ode to Joy" – April 12 at 7 p.m. at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center in Niceville. "Ode to Joy" is more than music—it is a resounding anthem of brotherhood, hope and the unbreakable bond of humanity. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony calls us together in a powerful celebration of unity, and now, this timeless masterpiece comes to life in an unforgettable performance at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center!

The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra (NFSO), the NFSO Chorale and the Niceville High School Chorus join forces to present this monumental work, featuring internationally renowned opera soloists:



Kather- ine Henry,soprano – A
Metropolitan
Opera rising
star, American soprano Kathryn
Henry is acclaimed for

her "clean coloratura and silvery voice." A native of Sheboygan, Wis., she earned her Master of Music from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Henry has performed notable roles such as Lucy Harker in the world premiere of The Lord of Cries at The Santa Fe Opera, the title role in Janáček's Jenůfa at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Arminda in Mozart's La finta giardiniera at Juilliard. She was a finalist in the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council



Cierra
Byrd, mezzo-soprano

A powerhouse artist
fresh from
her acclaimed
performances at the Met
and Houston

Grand Opera, American mezzo-soprano Cierra Byrd is a recent graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Op-

era. In the 2024/25 season, she joined Chicago Opera Theater for the world premiere of She Who Dared and Opera Theater of St. Louis for their New Works Collective. She has performed at the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Boston Lyric Opera, including roles in Fire Shut Up in My Bones, Madama Butterfly, Omar and Dialogues des Carmélites. A winner of the Duncan Williams Voice Competition, she holds degrees from Ohio State University and Peabody Conservatory.



Christopher Bozeka, tenor - A dynamic and expressive performer, lighting up opera houses across the country, Ten-

or Christopher Bozeka is gaining recognition for his "expressively captivating" performances and "beautiful, piercing tone" (San Francisco Chronicle). Recent highlights include Alfredo Germont (La traviata, Opera Las Vegas), Rodrigo (Otello, Central City Opera), and soloist appearances with the New Mexico Gay Men's Chorus. He has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Opera Southwest, covering roles in Nabucco, Le comte Ory, The Magic Flute, and Salome. A Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions winner, he holds a master's degree from University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.



William
Guanbo Su,
bass-baritone - A
commanding presence
on the world
stage and a
Grand Finals
Winner of the

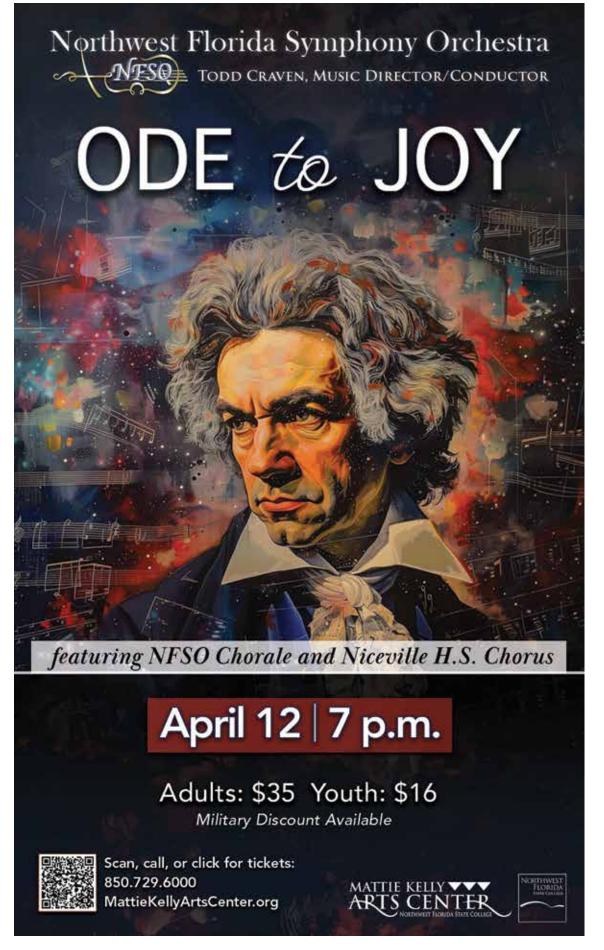
Met Opera National Council Auditions, Chinese bass William Guanbo Su is acclaimed for his "musical taste" and "solid voice" (The New York Times). A 2019 Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, he has performed with Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Boston Lyric Opera, portraying roles such as Zuniga in Carmen, Olin Blitch in Susannah and Colline in La bohème. Su holds degrees from The Juilliard School and the Manhattan School of Music. In the 2024 season, he is set to debut as Masetto in Don Giovanni with The Santa Fe Opera.

Tickets: Call 850.729.6000 or visit MattieKellyArtsCenter.

org. Adults: \$35; Youth: \$16. Military discount available.

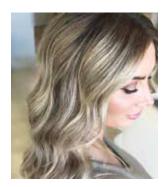








Trends & Treasures!













Spring Feels Purely Pampered Pure & Couture Salon

Want to brighten up for spring? Let Pure & Couture pamper YOU. From being greeted with a beverage to a scalp massage during your shampoo, Pure & Couture will try to make your experience the best. When you walk out of a salon, your hair says it all. Sashaying out with a blond sparkle, brunette curls or a gorgeous blond blend + extensions will give you gorgeous texture for the outdoor spring weather. Warm up the color for warmer weather. Add styling, makeup, color, a pampering facial, kinesiology or even a therapeutic massage and you will adore your mighty spring makeover you are spring beautiful with a spring vibe. Pure and Couture Salon's team of stylists listen to what YOU want your hair to look and feel like and work with your skin tone, face shape, lifestyle and budget. You were made to do beautiful things! Feel beautiful doing them-PURE-LY BEAUTIFUL!! Offering curbside pick-ups and online ordering, too. Pure and Couture wants a relationship with you and to help you sashay through Spring feeling fab!

Second location: Pure Collective Salon, 600 Grand Blvd., Suite 102.

(850) 424-3935 | facebook. com/PureandCouture pureandcouture.com

Hippity, Hoppity, Easter's on its Way! Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

Warmer weather is here—the Easter bunny's arrival is near! Yippee, Easter is Sunday, April 20, and the Frill Seekers Gifts creative team invites you to HOP into the shop for personalized treats and treasures from Easter baskets and bags to spring-themed custom gifts

for parents, grandparents and teachers. Festive options include basket name tags in the shape of bunnies or chicks, to monograms or names, to make the ones you love smile. Surprise your friends and family members with a special personalized gift that they can use to enjoy the holiday and as they entertain all year long, such as a charcuterie board with the family name or monogram engraved on it or a set of custom engraved wine glasses with the family name. If vou celebrate Easter at a friend or family's home, it's a Southern tradition to bring along a "hostess gift," a small token of appreciation. What about a tea towel, blessing beads, a set of stationery or monogrammed tote bag? For hostesses, Frill Seekers can create a menu and letter place cards for your guests. Personalize and customize! Hop to

Shop now at FrillSeekers-Gifts.com or stop by the motherland of all things monogrammed!

Open Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

(850) 460-2700 | Facebook. com/FrillSeekersGifts frillseekersgifts.com

Newness of Spring Brings New Designs Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Let's design something for you this spring! With so much colorful variety like the colors of spring, your only challenge is choosing. Whether you are shopping for an engagement ring or are on the golf course and remember it's your anniversary, Beyond Measure is here for you.

Stop by the shop and try to decide which shape suits you best. Owner Ashleigh Woolly specializes in diamond, gemstone and precious metal jewelry pieces, and the Beyond Measure Jewelers' showroom at City

Market is full of diamond and gemstone bracelets, rings, necklaces and earrings. Ashleigh is passionate about exquisite and custom-designed jewelry and selling it. She especially has a heart for selling engagement rings, wedding bands and working with couples, because "it is truly special to help people celebrate one of the biggest moments of their lives. Beyond Measure designs hundreds of custom projects. Whether it's an engagement, wedding or special occasion, you can trust your custom project to Beyond Measure. No matter what your taste, plan to be amazed. At Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry, a one-on-one exquisite jewelry experience is waiting.

(850) 424-7011 | Facebook. com/beyondmeasurejewelers beyondmeasurejewelry.com

Spring Has Sprung in a Variety of Flavors! Smallcakes Destin

USA TODAY listed Smallcakes as one of the "Top Ten Cupcake Places to Try" in the country! Smallcakes at City Market not only creates award-winning cupcakes that wow judges and find their way to celebrities, it's like spring cupcake heaven on earth with flavorful frostings and a variety of new cupcake flavors for March! Fit your flavor fancy and request a custom order for, well, just about any creation you can think of! Then personalize with custom edible logos and images on gourmet cupcakes, custom cakes, mini cupcakes, birthday cakes, wedding cakes and tempting treats baked fresh daily. There's even gluten-free options! Specializing in custom, holiday, gourmet cupcakes, housemade ice cream wedding cakes and birthday cakes—even "pup" cakes for your furry friend—every day Smallcakes offers 13 signature flavors, 4 specialty flavors, 12 ice cream flavors, jumbo cookies, gourmet popcorn, gourmet

cupcakes, cookie cakes, brownies, cupcakes-in-a-jar and more. Choose from an array of frostings in colors of the spring season. Sample all flavors with a 12-pack of assorted minis!

Call ahead for pre-orders, DoorDash or curbside pickup! Hours: Mon. through Sat., 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.; Sun. 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

(850) 842-9002 SmallcakesDestin.com Follow @SmallCakesofDestin

Rejuvenate For Spring CRYO850 Performance and Recovery Center

What better way to celebrate the newness of the season than rejuvenating damaged cells? Red Light Therapy, a.k.a. Photobiomodulation (PBM), is changing the health game due to its ability to renew your body at the cellular level, rejuvenating damaged cells from the inside out, healing both on the surface and at the cellular level. The Mito Red Light Therapy system offers three wavelengths of light that offer full-body exposure. CRYO850's Near Infrared Lighting boosts ATP (energy) and balances hormones.

Find a long list of drug-free services beyond the cold also, such as the Wellness Circuit access to six therapies including: Infrared Sauna, Red Light Therapy, Whole Body Cryotherapy, Localized Spot Treatment Cryo, Vibration Plates and Compression Therapy. Membership offers access to the Circuit on a consistent basis. Visitors and first-time guests can enjoy the same services via a day, week or two-week pass. Beyond the Circuit, Pagani Muscle Recovery Therapy is a favorite for sore and strained muscles. Alternating hot and cold application creates the same healing as hours with heat and cold packs. For additional pain management and relief, the Cocoon Fitness POD takes recovery to a higher level with combined

heat, light and full body vibration. Visit CRYO850 and make March a time to focus on you. Membership options start as low as \$99 a month with military discounts of 10%, spousal discounts of 15% and students always get 25% off! Pre-register online.

(850) 279-4145 | facebook. com/CRYO850 www.cryo850.com

Sell Your Home for Top Dollar! Brian Locicero, REALTOR®

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

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

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

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







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Two locations to Shop, Dine & Enjoy!





EVENTS

continued from page 8

dependent life. These special individuals want the same thing as we do — to be fully participating members of society," shared Lindy Wood, Founder of Westonwood Ranch.

Westonwood Ranch is located in Freeport and provides therapeutic programs designed to fill the transition gap from high school into adulthood by incorporating functional learning opportunities in a therapeutic farm environment. All net proceeds from the event go to support Westonwood Ranch programs.

Tickets at the gate for the Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo are \$20 for adults and \$15 for children 12 years and younger. Free admission for children ages 2 and under. There will be



no presale of tickets, so spectators are encouraged to arrive early. Westonwood Ranch is actively seeking additional local business sponsorships for this event. For more information about how to support the rodeo and Westonwood Ranch, email admin@westonwood.org or visit www.westonwood.org.

Pull for a Cause! Charity Fire Truck Pull - April 12

The Rotary Clubs of Destin, Midbay, Niceville/Valparaiso, and Crestview are hosting the Charity Fire Truck Pull on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at noon at 3rd Planet Brewery, Niceville.

Teams of 10 can register for \$250 to compete in pulling a fire truck, with proceeds benefiting Twin Cities Pavilion & Crestview Manor Assisted Living.

The event also features a

50/50 raffle, silent auction, kids' fun pull and face painting. Check-in starts at 10:30 a.m.; first pull at noon.

Register online: form.jot-form.com/240494111268150.

Pull together. Lift lives.

SeaLight Festival Is Here!

Thursdays to Sundays, Now – April 13, 2025. Kaleido Entertainment presents a dazzling wonderland of light and Chinese culture, running January 30 through April 13, 5:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m., with last entrance at 8:30 p.m. at Seascape Golf, Beach & Tennis Resort in Miramar Beach. Tickets start at

\$24.99 for adults and \$17.99 for children ages 12 and under. Purchase at sealightfestival.com. For more information, visit www. sealightfestival.com/destin.

DCWAF Celebrates 20 Years of Giving - April 25-26

The Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) marks 20 years of fundraising with the 2025 Destin Charity Wine Auction, presented by the Jumonville Family, on April 25-26. Proceeds benefit 17 children's charities in Northwest Florida.

Patron packages are on sale now at dcwaf.org/tickets. Sponsorships available—contact info@dcwaf.org.

Event Highlights:

April 25 – Patron Dinners: Exclusive vintner and chef pairings at private homes, supporting DCWAF charities.

April 26 – Charity Wine Auction: A Reserve Tasting & Live Auction at Grand Boulevard Sandestin Town Center featuring world-class wines, gourmet cuisine, and high-energy bidding on rare wines, trips, and more.

The auction coincides with the South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival, offering hundreds of premium wines and culinary delights. Auction attendees receive access to the festival's Grand Tasting on April 27 at 1 p.m. Learn more at dcwaf.org/ auction.

Construction Industry Networking Event Draws Professionals

Contractors Connect, held on Thursday, February 6, 2025, at AJ's Grayton Beach, brought

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A Celebration of Women's History Month

STRENGTH in UNITY

CONFERENCE AND BUSINESS EXPO!

DYNAMIC SPEAKERS • BREAKOUT SEMINARS & WORKSHOPS VENDORS • CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT AND MORE!

Sunday, 30 March 2025 - 11AM - 7PM

THE ISLAND RESORT AT FORT WALTON BEACH
(MAUI AND CAPRI ROOMS)
1500 MIRACLE STRIP PKWY SE, FWB



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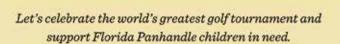






For more information call David at 850-368-3505 or e-mail us at: conexionflorida@gmail.com

conexionflorida.com



Save the Date

A Walk Down Magnolia Lane

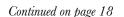
An unforgettable evening benefitting Embrace Florida Kids

The LakeHouse, Watercolor, FL Cocktails at 5 PM I Activities at 6 PM

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

walkdownmagnolialane.org







The State of Real Estate:

Tariffs, Immigration and the New Gold Rush



By Paul Domeneche

Before diving into this article, I want to make it clear that I am A-political—this is simply my perspective on the policies set to take effect in the near future. As things evolve, so will the land-scape of real estate. Enjoy the read, and I appreciate your support of my contribution to this publication.

How Will the New Immigration Policy Affect Real Estate?

One word: Labor. In states like Texas, a significant percent-

age of construction labor comes from immigrants who are not U.S. citizens. If this workforce is removed, new home construction will slow down, and labor costs will rise.

Is this good or bad?

For sellers of existing homes, this could initially be a positive, as reduced new construction may increase demand and drive up home prices.

For buyers, it's a different story—higher home prices and limited inventory could make affordability even more challenging, especially if interest rates remain high.

For builders, higher labor costs will make new construction projects more expensive, potentially leading to delays, reduced supply, and further price increases.

If mortgage rates stay elevated, affordability will remain a concern, and the market could slow more abruptly than the gradual price declines and ex-

tended days on market we're currently seeing.

Tariffs: The Cost of Doing Business

Tariffs on imported goods will increase prices across multiple industries, including construction. Building materials will become more expensive—at least temporarily—driving up the cost of new homes.

But here's the real question: Are we going to focus on shortterm price hikes, or will we seize the opportunity to rebuild domestic manufacturing?

This is where I see the new Gold Rush. Instead of complaining about the cost of goods, Americans have the chance to innovate, create and manufacture right here in the U.S., making foreign products less competitive. That's the conversation we need to be having.

What Does This Mean for Real Estate?

With both labor and mate-

rial costs rising, homebuilders will struggle, while owners of existing homes might benefit—at least at first. But by 2026, if we fail to boost domestic production and in-

terest rates remain high, the real estate market could face significant challenges.

Forget the outdated mantra of "date the rate, marry the house." The real question is:

Can you afford the cost of homeownership today, regardless of where interest rates go? If rates drop, great—you refinance and save. But never bank on a future rate cut to justify a purchase.

Final Thoughts

We're entering a pivotal moment in the real estate market. Immigration policies may squeeze labor supply, tariffs

could drive up costs and uncertainty looms. But history shows that periods of disruption breed opportunity.

Yes, there will be some shortterm pain. But for those willing to roll up their sleeves and fill in the gaps, this could be a defining moment. After the storm settles, what follows is usually strength.

So, let's stop waiting and start building. 2025 will be strong. Beyond that? The future is what we make it.

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— Pauly ItsPauly.com

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Small Ways to Make Your Insurance Work for You



By Julie A. Martin Dear Gentle Readers,

The mere mention of insurance is liable to put red spots in your cheeks and in your eyes, but have no fear, I am about to share some insider secrets on what you can do to your policies that make them more cost effective for you.

Are you ready?

Property Damage Liability in auto insurance is typically chosen with bodily injury liability in split limit increments such as 10/20//10 with the second 10K being the property damage liability limit. Most carriers offer other choices, such as 20K, 25K, or even 50K property damage liability with the 10/20 split limits. With 25/50 BI you may have options of 25K, 50K or even 100K liability.

The price difference between limits in Property Damage Lia-

bility can be less than a case of soda, on a six month or annual basis. It is generally best to opt for the highest property damage limit you can get with your chosen liability limits, as it creates an extra buffer for you, and it is only slightly more expensive than you would have paid for your insurance anyway.

Comprehensive coverage is another area where you may opt to save yourself some money in case of a flood, hurricane, fire, vandalism or other event where your car might be damaged by an incident not involving collision. Most folks have \$500 deductibles on Comprehensive and Collision coverage, and that is what many would consider standard. But, I will share a secret with you.

Most of the time, you can decrease your Comprehensive deductible from \$500 to \$250, that's right, cut it right in half, for less than a double-blended Venti Frappuccino at Starbucks with extra drizzle.

Insurance is for you, so that you can be made whole again in the event something happens. To make it easier for you to be indemnified, making small adjustments to your existing coverage will help you feel better about the coverage you have.

Now let's talk about Unin-



sured Motorist Coverage. First, let me say that we do not have a requirement to carry Bodily Injury Liability in the State of Florida. The minimum required coverage in order to be "street legal" for most people, is 10K Property Damage Liability and 10K Personal Injury Protection.

Now, you're going to ask me, what if they hit someone?

THAT'S why we have uninsured motorist coverage, in case you get hurt in an accident that is not your fault.

Here's how this works in Florida. First, you go through your 10K in Personal Injury Protection (PIP), which pays 80/20 medical expenses minus your deductible—say you have a \$500 deductible on PIP.

10K in medical expenses

minus \$500 deductible (80/20) would equal \$7,500 in medical expenses.

What if you have \$30,000 in medical bills?

You have several choices when it comes to Uninsured Motorist (UM) coverage. Stacked and Unstacked equal to your current Bodily Injury Liability, or Stacked or Unstacked lower than your Bodily Injury Coverage.

Stacked UM means that you multiply the number of vehicles on the policy by the limits. Stacked 100/300 X three vehicles would be 300K per person/900K per accident.



So, in the accident shown above, your Personal Injury Protection goes first, and then if you have medical payments coverage, that comes next, and then the at fault party's Bodily Injury Liability, and only then would it go to your Uninsured Motorist coverage, which is excess over all these other coverages.

If you do not have UM on your auto policy now, you might want to have your friendly licensed insurance agent offer a quote to find out how much it would cost to add to your policy.

It's important to know the different ways to make your insurance work for you, and help you gain peace of mind knowing you have the right coverage in the event something happens.







Spring Style Refresh

By Liesel Schmidt

Spring is in the air—or at least, it's on the way. While the official start of the season isn't until March 20th, this is the perfect time to refresh your wardrobe with pieces that blend comfort, style, and a little bit of that springtime magic we've all been craving after the unexpected Florida blizzard that left us all wondering who broke the thermostat. This year, we're loving fluttery dresses, flowy tops, versatile casual wear and thoughtfully chosen accessories that will take you from cool mornings to sunsoaked afternoons with easeand Blue Bay Lifestyle Co. has everything you need to hit the reset button on your spring wardrobe.

Ladies in Bloom: Breezy, Beautiful, and Effortless

Spring is the season of renewal and rebirth, so what better time to break out the soft silhouettes, easy layering, and lighter fabrics? This year's casual wear hits all the right notes, and Vuori's ultra-comfortable Sunday joggers, luscious tank tops



and lightweight performance hoodies make transitioning from your morning coffee run to an afternoon walk a snap. If you're looking for classically chic yet relaxed staples, Flag & Anthem and Liverpool's denim jackets, breezy tees and blouses, and stretch denim bottoms offer just the right balance of casual and put-together that will make your

friends ask where you got that outfit. *At Blue Bay Lifestyle, of course!*

This new season also means the return of dresses, we're so excited about the romantic, fluttery dresses and flowy tops from Lost + Wander that are giving us all the feels right now. Think soft pastels, earthy neutrals, and playful floral prints that give off some

serious spring vibes. Whether you're reaching for a relaxed boho-inspired maxi or a breezy blouse to pair with your favorite jeans, spring fashion celebrates movement, comfort, whimsy, and—of course—breaking free from all the heaviness of winter.

Of course, no look is complete without the perfect accessories to tie everything together. To quote the inimitable Madame Chanel, "Accessories are what makes or marks a woman," and we at Blue Bay have just the right pieces for your spring restyle. Fran & Bel's handcrafted jewelry offers timeless, delicate pieces that wear beautifully, while Ellesee Women's polymer clay earrings add a fun pop of color and texture. If you love mixing metals and layering jewelry, Lizou's versatile stackable necklaces and bracelets will be your new go-to for nights out or get-togethers with your besties. When it comes to handbags, Hobo's soft, high-quality leather bags bring an effortlessly chic touch to any outfit, from crossbodies and clutches to satchels that hold it all.

Male Call: Polished, Rugged, and Adventure-Ready

Men's spring fashion is all about relaxed-yet-refined layering—with a hint of adventure that might have been buried under all the winter sweats. Vuori's moisture-wicking, endlessly versatile Sunday joggers and hoodies keep you comfortable whether you're on the move or taking it easy. Flag & Anthem's lightweight button-downs, soft henleys and structured yet relaxed chinos are perfect for work-fromhome days or weekend outings with your favorite person.

If you're planning on hiking, road-tripping, or just channeling that rugged, outdoorsy aesthetic, Rhythm and Roark have your back. Think lightweight jackets, breathable tees and quality-made shorts that transition effortless from wandering around town to full-on outdoor adventuring.

As the days grow longer (thank God) and the air starts to warm up, it's time to kick off the winter blues and embrace everything that spring fashion has to offer. Whether you're stocking up on fluttery dresses, relaxed casual wear or thoughtfully chosen accessories, this season is all about comfort, versatility, and effortless style. March 20th will be here before you know it, so get ready to greet spring with outfits that show off your style. We look forward to seeing you at Blue Bay Lifestyle Co.!



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How to Create Your Very Own Coffee/Tea Bar at Home



By Kim Schneider, COASTAL DESIGN BY KIM

Ever wake up and wish you could teleport your favorite cup of morning joe to your house? Do you dream of having one of those beautiful coffee/tea bars you see while surfing social media? Most think they don't have enough space for a dedicated coffee/tea bar. But, I'm here to tell you we can make your caffeine dreams come true. Let's get started!

First, let's choose the location for your new coffee/tea bar. HINT: It's doesn't have to be in the kitchen. Many are electing to set up a small coffee bar in their master suite. In the kitchen, you can use a portion of your countertop, an armoire, a dedicated cabinet, a dresser, table or bar cart. Some people have opted to share their builtin bar with their java beans. If you have an unused nook with a minimum of 2 feet wide by 16 inches deep, you have enough space to create your personalized coffee/tea bar. Thrift stores are great places to look for the perfect piece of furniture for your coffee bar, if you don't already have one. Adding a stone top to a dresser or table will help make your furniture piece more substantial and it'll be heat resistant. It'll also help make cleaning a breeze. You can shop for a remnant at your local stone

Select a coffee maker, espresso machine, French press or Smeg tea kettle that will fit your space without overcrowding it. You'll need to ensure you have an ample outlet to accommodate your new coffee



maker or tea kettle, especially if you'll be sharing the space with other appliances. Bonus points if you've got room for a milk frother/steamer!

If your space is open, adding **shelves** above your coffee/ tea bar is next. Shelving is perfect to help balance your coffee bar, and they provide additional space for your canisters, supplies and personal touches.

Speaking of canisters, select some decorative canisters that compliment your surroundings. These canisters will display your coffee/tea essentials (coffee, pods, sugar, tea bags, hot chocolate, granola bars, tea biscuits (everybody needs a snack),

etc.). Style your canisters on a shelf or a tray to help group and layer your pieces. Various sizes help to create visual interest.

Time to **show off** those pretty teacups and saucers, mismatched sentimental mugs, coasters, teaspoons, syrup, honey dispensers, etc. Style some of your teaspoons, syrups and honey straws in pretty jars and vases for easy access. Don't forget to display some tall glasses and an ice bucket for those refreshing glasses of iced tea during the

Add a small **lamp** with a soft bulb for ambiance. Artwork, a vase/pitcher with flowers or some greenery will add an elegant touch and viola, you've created and styled a stunning coffee/tea bar that's uniquely

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EVENTS

continued from page 14

together over 100 industry professionals, including notable attendees Sarah White of Be-Spoke Consultants, and ensemble members Erin Bakker, Lindsay Lord and Margaret Short.

The event provided networking opportunities for contractors, subcontractors, designers, realtors, bankers and insurance agents.

2025 Thursdays Contractors Connect Upcoming Schedule:

April 3: Harrison Kitchen Bar,

May 1: AJ's Grayton Beach June 5: Escambia County August 14: AJ's Grayton Beach September 4: Escambia County October 2: Harrison Kitchen Bar, PC

November 6: AJ's Grayton Beach

December 4: Escambia County Join for live music and a relaxed backdrop for professional networking.

The newly launched Destin Touchdown Club, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, held its first public meeting to rally community support for Destin football ath-

Destin Touchdown Club

Hosts First Open Meeting

letes of all ages. Since its November board meeting, the club has swiftly established tax-exempt status, launched a website and social media, hosted a luncheon with city leaders, executed a kickoff fundraiser, and planned an am-

bitious 2025 season agenda.

"Our goal is to unify Destin's football community—from Dolphins to Marlins to Sharksbuilding a championship program that keeps young athletes in Destin throughout their careers," said Club President Britt Greenwood.

For more info: DestinTouchdownClub.com, tintouchdownclub.com. Greenwood: 850-585-3297



Experience the Best of Destin's Hidden Gem:

Henderson Park Inn, Beach Walk Café & Tiki Bar

Nestled along the sugar-white sands of Destin's Emerald Coast, Henderson Park Inn has long been a beloved retreat for visitors seeking an intimate, gulf front escape. But locals, take note—this stunning haven isn't just for travelers. With its award-winning Beach Walk Café and the laid-back Tiki Bar, there are plenty of reasons to make Henderson Park Inn your go-to destination for exceptional dining and beachfront relaxation right in your own backyard.

Beach Walk Café: A Dining Experience Like No Other

Imagine an evening where the waves provide the perfect soundtrack to an unforgettable meal. At Beach Walk Café, Destin's most romantic waterfront restaurant, locals can savor the finest coastal cuisine while basking in panoramic Gulf views.

From fresh seafood to expertly prepared steaks, the menu at Beach Walk Café is designed to delight the most discerning palates. Standout dishes like the Grouper Vince, encrusted with toasted macadamia nuts and drizzled with Frangelico butter sauce, or the melt-in-yourmouth Filet Mignon, seared to perfection, offer a truly indulgent dining experience. Complement your meal with a selection from the extensive wine list, featuring both local and international vintages curated to elevate your evening.

For those seeking an intimate and unforgettable experience, the Toes in the Sand dining option allows you to enjoy a private table directly on the beach. As the sun sets over the Gulf, let Beach Walk Café transport you to a world of culinary excellence and romance—without ever leaving Destin.

Locals can also enjoy brunch at Beach Walk Café, the first Sunday of each month, featuring an indulgent spread of breakfast favorites, as well as





Wine Down Wednesdays, where guests can unwind with curated wine selections paired with amazing dishes.

Tiki Bar: Your New Favorite Local Hangout

Whether you're winding down after work or looking for the perfect weekend spot to gather with friends, the Tiki Bar at Henderson Park Inn offers a



relaxed, beachside vibe that's impossible to resist. This openair hideaway serves up refreshing cocktails, ice-cold beers and light bites, all with breathtaking views of the Gulf.

Kick back with a handcrafted mojito, a classic piña colada or one of the bar's signature frozen drinks, perfect for cooling off on a warm Florida day. The friendly bartenders and welcoming atmosphere make the Tiki Bar an ideal spot for locals to escape the crowds and enjoy a little slice of paradise, just minutes from home.

Visit Today and Experience Destin's Best Kept Secret

For those who call the Emerald Coast home, there's no need to travel far for an unforgettable escape. Whether you're indulging in a fine dining experience at Beach Walk Café, unwinding with a cocktail at the Tiki Bar or planning a special staycation at Henderson Park Inn, the best of Destin is right at your doorstep.

Make plans to visit today and discover why locals are falling in love with this hidden gem all over again. Reservations at Beach Walk Café are highly recommended, and the Tiki Bar is open daily for walk-ins.

Come experience the coastal elegance and relaxed charm of Henderson Park Inn—where the best of Destin awaits you.



Experience Coastal Elegance

Open Daily for Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner 2700 Scenic Highway 98, Destin, FL 32541 | 850.650.7100



Destin Diving, Entertainment, Specials

850 Froyo

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Hours: Mon-Thu 1-9 p.m., Fri-Sun 1-10 p.m. Dine-in, takeout, delivery

(850) 353-2093 985 U.S. 98 E, Unit E, Destin

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

For over 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 seafood, live music and exciting water activities in the Destin area. Attention all die hard football fans, AI'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 March madness, there's no bad seat in the house. So, come by and watch the games all season long. Happy Hour Specials from Mon.-Fri., 2-5 p.m., \$2 off all bar drinks and Monday-Friday from 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. \$3 off a dozen raw oysters. Bucket Specials All day every day. Auston's on 98 is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and features



its own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce." View full menu at austonson98.com. Check out February's amazing live music line-up at Facebook.com/austonson98.

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

Boathouse Oyster Bar

Oysters, live music and a local vibe, the Boathouse is where the locals go with live music every night all month long. Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, the Boathouse specializes in making oysters a delicacy. Boathouse's gumbo recipe was written by Mama Gumbo herself. And, of course, the oysters are raw, steamed or

baked, just the way you like 'em. The first Friday of each month, The Boathouse hosts locals on the Destin Harbor from 5-7 p.m. Listen and move with live entertainment daily. See ad for bands and times. Music schedule subject to change. Follow on Facebook for updates.

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

Café Destin

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

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

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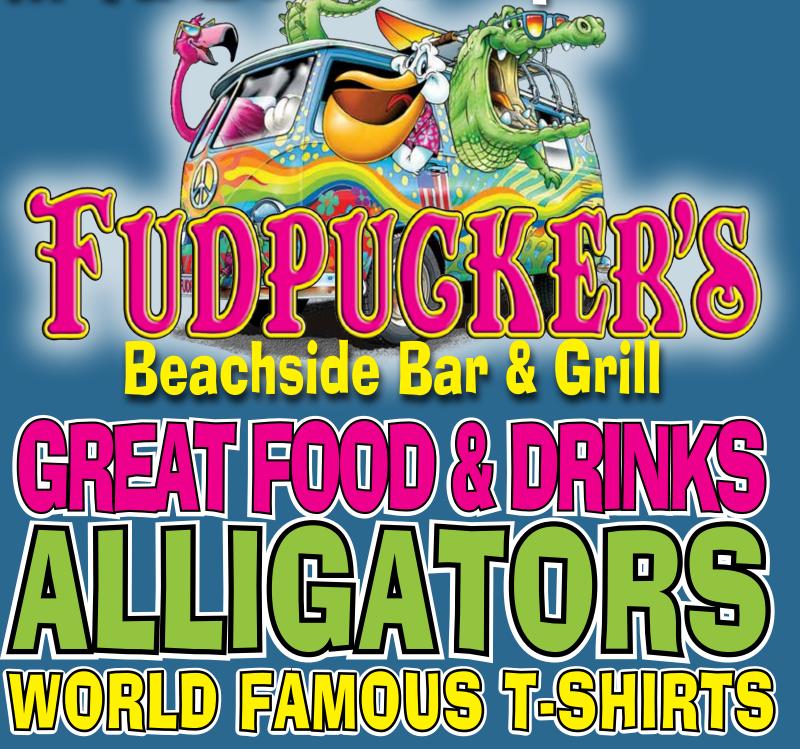
12pm: Rotating Spot 4pm: Shane Curle 8pm: Rotating Spot

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288 Harbor Blvd, Destin (850) 837-3645

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Destin Dining, Entertainment, Specials

DINING

continued from page 20

Island. Locally owned and family friendly, Fubar is known for its almost-famous pizza and wings and carries all sports games and live entertainment, along with impeccable service. You can enjoy all that while enjoying the waterfront view.

FUBAR has plenty of games for the kids along with pool tables, corn hole, dart boards and more. When out on the water all day, come dock your boat on one of FUBAR'S boat slips and enjoy the incredible view. Feel free to bring along your furry friends to join you on the patio.

Need the perfect space to host a party or event? FUBAR is equipped with numerous private sections with the option of having a private bar as well. The outside deck can hold up to 300 people comfortably and can be sectioned off to fit your needs. In addition to the pizza and wings, FUBAR can customize a menu from Italian food to Prime Rib and everything in between. Open 7 days from 11 a.m.-2 a.m.

850-226-7084 114 Amberjack Dr., Okaloosa Island fubarfiwb.com

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

"Ya Ain't Been Pucked Til Ya Been Fudpucked!" Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill in Destin has been locally owned and operated since its inception in 1982. Fudpucker's restaurant stands out by being dedicated







to its owners' three favorite "F" words: Food, Fun and Family. Fudpucker's is not just a restaurant, it's not just a bar, it's a one-of-a-kind entertainment experience, and one that can be enjoyed by locals, kids and families of all ages and all occasions with plenty of fun included!. Bring your family and come for the food! Come for the fun! Get your Birthday shopping done with a Fudpucker's gift card or shop the Fudpucker's gift shop for unique gifts and merchandise all year long!

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

Kwench Destin

Fuel your body, elevate your health, savor the goodness! Welcome to Kwench Juice Café, Destin's go-to spot for fresh-pressed juices, smoothies, and nourishing acai and pita-ya bowls. Since 2023, Kwench Destin has been blending up pure, raw goodness to energize your wellness journey.

"At Kwench, we believe in quality ingredients, bold flavors, innovative recipes and fresh nutrition—because your body

deserves the best." Every sip is a boost of vitality, every bite a step toward better health.

Craving something fresh? Stop by today and taste the difference!

(850) 842-2802 985 US-98, Unit E, Destin kwenchjuicecafedestin.com

Melting Pot Destin

Melting Pot Destin is offering amazing, spring specials in March!

Weekend Lunch starts this month! Beginning March 1st, Melting Pot is open at Noon every Saturday and Sunday for lunch! Plan a fun midday treat during your spring break or just add some excitement to your weekend with tasty fondue from the lunch menu for just \$30 per person!

Fondue Cravings Menu: Saturdays and Sundays from 12 - 4 p.m. \$30 per person

Choice of Cheese Fondue, Fresh Salad and Chocolate Fondue. Sharing is not permitted.

Also in March, receive \$20 off \$100 all month at Melting Pot! Enjoy all your fondue favorites and get \$20 off all food

Continued on page 25









MARCH MADNESS IS BACK...

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- 1285 Eglin Pkwy.
- 290 NE Eglin Pkwy.

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www.850liquors.com

Food, Fireworks and Family Fun on Okaloosa Island's Boardwalk

By Christopher Manson with Shantelle Dedicke

Few attractions along the Emerald Coast offer a more striking view of the Gulf than The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island. Located right on the beach, The Boardwalk (Newman C. Brackin Wayside Park) is a vibrant community hub

for locals and visitors alike, offering must-attend events for the entire family and nationally recognized restaurants. For a real-time glimpse of the

stunning shoreline, visit theboardwalkoi.com for the live "Beach Cam."

The Boardwalk features free parking, pavilions, picnic tables, public restrooms, and outdoor showers for returning beachgoers. Recurring events include weekly fireworks, coastal beach cleanups, the Kitty Hawk Kite Festival, the New Year's Day Pelican Plunge, and two popular volleyball tournaments—Emerald Coast Volleyball Week in the spring and the Emerald Coast Fall Classic.

Beginning May 28, seasonal fireworks will light up the night sky over the Gulf., blasting off from the pier every Wednesday at 9 p.m. through Aug. 6. Additional fireworks spectaculars are scheduled for Sunday, May 25 (Memorial Day weekend), Labor Day weekend), Labor Day weekend, and New Year's Eve. Other family-friendly events include tropical-themed luaus, outdoor movie screenings, and performances by award-winning local bands on the Al's Beach Club stage.

The Boardwalk is part of the Saltwater Restaurants family, a group known for delivering exceptional dining experiences with a commitment to quality, fresh ingredients, and "memorable coastal cuisine." In recent years, the company has built a vibrant dining scene on The Boardwalk and beyond while voicing support for beach safety efforts and organizations that protect and fight for the environment. Learn more at saltwaterrestaurants.com.

Dining Highlights

Floyd's Shrimp and Steak House: A longtime favorite along The Boardwalk, Floyd's specializes in fresh Gulf seafood, hand-cut steaks, and their famous "shrimptizers." Don't miss their "notorious all-you-can-eat fish and shrimp platters," as highlighted at floydsshrimphouse.com. Whether you crave surf, turf, or both, Floyd's offers unforgettable dining with spectacular sunset views.

Rockin' Tacos Grill & Tequila Bar: Located on The Boardwalk's upper level, Rockin' Tacos is bursting with atmo-



sphere and colorful beachside décor. Savor coastal-inspired tacos, over 75 tequilas and house-infused craft margaritas while enjoying live DJ music. The restaurant rolls out 1,000 made-from-scratch tortillas a day, and their footlong blackened shrimp burrito was featured on the Travel Channel. Discover more at rockintacos. com.

The Crab Trap: With its family-friendly, beachy vibe, The Crab Trap offers a menu full of fresh fish like grouper, snapper, mahi-mahi, cobia, wahoo, and amberjack, alongside crab, shrimp, and a variety of specialty drinks. For authentic Gulf flavor and atmosphere, look no further. The Crab Trap also has locations in Miramar Beach and Pensacola. Visit crabtrapflorida.com for details.

Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar: Reopened for the season on March 1, Al's offers build-your-own burgers, specialty sandwiches (including the popular Island Chicken Sandwich, a tuna burger, and a "Beyond" vegan burger), and a full bar. Family-friendly by day and lively at night, Al's is beloved for its custard shakes, handcrafted cocktails, and beachfront vibes. More at alsbeachclub.com.

The Boardwalk is a choice spot for dining, entertainment, and breathtaking views. Locals can enjoy a casual night out while visitors experience authentic coastal experience. Whether you're flying solo, out for a date night, or enjoying time with family, there's something for everyone.





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Destin Diving, Entertainment, Specials

DINING

continued from page 22

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Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Hey sports fans, Tailfins Waterfront Grill is calling YOU! That's right y'all, Destin is a sports-loving town and Tailfins is a must-be place in Destin to come and watch your team play. There's plenty of sports watch-

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. upstairs, perfect for Super Bowl watching and upcoming March Madness!

DAILY CRUISES: Introducing Tailfins Island Adventure! Departures seven days a week aboard "Always Workin'," Tailfins' 45-foot-long cruiser, and "Talk of Town" Tikis, Tailfins' newest, one-of-a-kind tiki boat. Both feature on-board restrooms and certified cap-

Grill is a local favorite, with 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. "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 favor-

ites 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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ing coming up with March Madness! Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than 70 big screen TVs showing all college games and Sunday Ticket.

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast before the game? Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast from 8-11 a.m., seven days a week. Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mimosas and bloody marys. Watch Tailfins' sushi chef create right in front of your eyes. Enjoy some of your favorite food

tains. Talk of the Town tikis are the only Coast Guard certified Tiki boats in the United States! Enjoy the Destin Harbor and Crab Island like never before. Choose between the three-hour tour, sunset cruise or Thursday night's spectacular fireworks cruise. Book online: tailfinsislandadventure.com.

(850) 842-3333 On the Harbor in Destin, 172 Harbor Blvd. tailfinsdestin.com

Tequila's Mexican Restaurant

Did someone say Margaritas? Tequila's Sports Bar and





TailfinsDestin.com

Mon.-Fri. 4-6 pm

Off the Hook

SSUS

continued from page 2

berth in New York. Some 70,000 people turned out to see the dazzling new ship that day - more than a sellout crowd at Yankee Stadium! The line to go aboard stretched for 14 blocks.

- How fast was the SSUS? During her speed trials, she sliced through the waves at an astonishing 38.32 knots - 44 miles per hour!
- Four U.S. presidents sailed aboard the SSUS: Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy and Bill Clinton. (The youthful Clinton, fresh out of Georgetown, was on his way to study at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar.
- For her maiden voyage, the SSUS stocked 7,935 quarts of ice cream and a whopping 500 pounds of caviar.
- The SSUS carried an impressive roster of luminaries on nearly every voyage. Famous

passengers included Marlon Brando, Coco Chanel, Sean Connery, Gary Cooper, Walter Cronkite, Salvador Dali, Walt Disney, Duke Ellington, Judy Garland, Cary Grant, Charlton Heston, Bob Hope, Marilyn Monroe, Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor, John Wayne, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

- · A famous passenger of a different sort sailed aboard the SSUS in 1963: the Mona Lisa. Leonardo Da Vinci 's masterpiece was traveling to the U.S. for special exhibitions in Washington and New York. (She made it back to the Louvre in remarkably good shape for a 460-year-old woman.)
- The SSUS is 990 feet long - about five city blocks! If you stood her on end, she'd rise nearly as high as New York's Chrysler Building or Philadelphia's Comcast Center.
- You think the Titanic was huge? The SSUS is over 100



feet longer.

- The SS United States' designer, William Francis Gibbs, wanted his ship to be fireproof, so he insisted that no wood be used in her construction or fittings. One exception: the ship's grand pianos were made from fire-resistant mahogany. Steinway piano was tested in advance by dousing it with gasoline and lighting a match. (It didn't burn.)
- More aluminum was used in the SSUS than for any previous construction project in

history. Why? To reduce her weight and make her the fastest ocean liner of all time.

- Thanks to her reduced weight and powerful engines, the SSUS could go almost as fast in reverse as the Titanic could go forward.
- On her maiden voyage, the SSUS shattered the trans-Atlantic speed record in both directions. She was the first American ship in 100 years to capture the coveted Blue Riband (awarded to the fastest trans-Atlantic ocean liner). Amazingly, she still holds the record more than 60 years later.
- Built to be converted from luxury liner to troop transport in the event of war, the SSUS was able to carry 14,000 troops

10,000 miles without refueling.

- · The galleys aboard the SSUS could turn out up to 9,000 individual meals a day!
- The SSUS was retired from active service in 1969. The age of the great ocean liners had come to a close, doomed by increasingly fast and affordable trans-Atlantic airline flights.
- From 1996 to 2025, the SSUS was docked on the Delaware River in Philadelphia.

Source: ssusc.org

Learn more about Okaloosa County's artificial reef program at https://www.destinfwb.com/ explore/eco-tourism/artificial-reefs/.









Off the Hook

A Celebration of Marine Life: Join Us for Gulfarium's 2nd Annual CARE on the Coast Fundraiser!

Get ready for an unforgettable evening of conservation, celebration, and coastal fun at Gulfarium's CARE on the Coast on April 26, 2025, at 3:30 PM! This annual festival brings together delicious food, refreshing drinks, live entertainment, and marine animal encounters for a one-of-a-kind event benefiting the Gulfarium CARE Center's mission to rescue and rehabilitate sea turtles.

As soon as you arrive, you'll be swept up in the excitement of this vibrant, festival-style event, complete with mouthwatering cuisine, cocktails, and lively music to set the mood. Whether you're mingling with fellow ocean enthusiasts, bidding on exclusive experiences in the silent auction, or enjoying a frontrow seat at the dolphin presentation, there's no shortage of things to see and do.

For those eager to dive into marine conservation, CARE on the Coast offers a rare chance to go behind the scenes and learn





how Gulfarium's dedicated animal care team works to rehabilitate sick and injured sea turtles.



Hear inspiring success stories, get up close with some of our current patients, and discover how you can play a role in protecting these incredible creatures.

Kids and adults alike will love the interactive activities and hands-on experiences scattered throughout the park, including conservation-themed games, crafts, and fun challenges designed to inspire the next generation of ocean advocates. Whether you're exploring these activities, sipping a cool drink under the Florida sunset, or dancing to live music, the night promises to be a true celebration of marine life.

Tickets are on sale now, and they're going fast! General admission grants access to all activities, entertainment, and be-



hind-the-scenes insights, while VIP packages offer exclusive perks like early entry, premium seating, and a special meet-andgreet with Gulfarium's animal care experts.

Don't miss out on this incredible evening of food, fun, and conservation for a cause. Visit our official event page at gulfarium.com/cotc to purchase your tickets today, and get ready for an unforgettable night at CARE on the Coast!





Help us save our local sea turtles at this exciting, family-friendly event!

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Dolphin presentation

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www.gulfarium.com/cotc



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Let's Get Growing!

By Sheila Dunning, Commercial Horticulture Agent, University of Florida Extension Service, Okaloosa County

Palms Can Suffer in the Cold

While palms may survive, or even thrive, for years in climates cooler than those to which they are native, eventually they might experience temperatures cold enough to cause injury. The January 21st snow and wind chill is likely to take a toll on many of

the palms in Northwest Florida. We have experience with this since it also happened in January 2014 and December of 2022. Unfortunately, much of the damage in 2014 was not evident for 18-24 months and we are not out of the window for 2022. Healthy palms can hold on with stored food reserves, but repeated events can continue to weaken them.

When cold damage is severe, plant tissues are destroyed and water uptake into the plant may be reduced for years. Many times, it is only the protect-



ed bud that will remain alive. These palms can still be saved if the bud remains alive.

Winter is not over, even though the temperatures are now creeping higher and higher. So, evaluate what damage you might already have and prepare for any additional, yet to come. Here's a reminder of what to do. One of the most common problems associated with freezes is that the freeze-killed lower portion of the spear leaf is degraded by secondary fungi and

bacteria that are always present in our natural environment. Palm owners are often anxious to trim off the damaged leaves following a cold weather event. Avoid the temptation to remove these fronds until danger of additional freezes has passed. Even dead leaves provide insulation

to the critical bud.

As the weather warms, the dead fronds Palm trunk decay appeared two years after 2014 freeze need to be removed from around the bud so that the spear can begin to dry out. Drenching the bud area with a copper fungicide will reduce the secondary microbes. Repeat applications will need to continue as the palm leaves develop. Copper fungicides, unlike other fungicides, are active against bacteria and fungi. Be cautious to not use

a copper nutrient spray rather than a fungicide.

Delay fertilizer application until new fronds have developed. The best analysis for palms is 8-2 12 + 4Mg. Utilization of proper palm fertilization can improve cold hardiness of palms.

Crape Myrtle Pruning (Not Murder)

February is a good time to prune your crape myrtles. Pruning is necessary to correct errant growth from previous years. This means water sprouts, crossed and damaged branches and deadheading. Thin out twiggy growth for good air circulation. Cut the tips of branches to encourage more blooms. This is NOT crape myrtle murder that has been adopted by so many. When all growth is removed from crape myrtles, it only produces one very large sulky flowerhead on a very thin branch. Pruning correctly will produce more flowers that last the entire summer through fall.

Crape myrtles have a year-round look. In the spring you

get fresh green growth, usually with new bird's nests, and, in the summer, you get the beautiful flowers. Some varieties give us beautiful fall leaf color — colors we crave in the panhandle. Once the tree grows to maturity, stunning bare trunks with a variety of shades of gray and copper will appear in the winter. If your crape myrtle has been topped, nurture the strongest sprouts or cut it back to 1-2 inches to restore its health.

One more thing – the name. As an arborist I was taught to call it Crape Myrtle (Lagerstroemia indica), but I have been seeing it called Crepe Myrtle for the last few years. "Crape" came from the look of the flowers, which look like crepe paper. So, it makes more sense to call it Crepe Myrtle. But old habits die hard and I shall always refer to it as Crape Myrtle. Both names are acceptable.

It is acceptable to do nothing to your trees. However, proper pruning gets you plentiful flowers all summer. Wouldn't you love to see plenty of these flowers rather than just a few?





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Golf Series: Golf Courses Support Local Charities Harbor Docks' 38th Annual Caddy Shack Classic Golf Tournament



By Barbara Palmgren

On February 16 at the beautiful Emerald Bay Golf Course in Destin, golfers enjoyed a four-person golf scramble to benefit local charity events in the community.

Eddie Morgan, owner of Harbor Docks restaurant, and Rachael Sharp, co-tournament director, organized the event for the 38th time! Delicious crawfish and sandwiches fueled



the players before the shot-gun start. The winners were announced and prizes awarded in the mid-afternoon. First place winners (Gross) included: Owen Kueny, Garrett Burgess, Steve Kueny and Payton Osborn. First place winners (Net) included: Luke Bilger, Jared Dunn, Jacob Castle and Jeff Shoults.

Proceeds from the tournament support two important community events. The first



happens usually on the first Sunday in November, "Take A Kid Fishing Day." Those children who might not have had the opportunity or been able to afford a day on a fishing boat, get to experience catching a fish in the Gulf. Local boat captains volunteer their boat, time and services and children get to fish, take their catch to the docks, clean the fish and cook the fish as well. What a fantastic experi-



ence for children!

The next charity benefiting from the golf tournament is the Destin Harvest, the free Thanksgiving event for the community held at Harbor Docks each

Thanksgiving. No one pays for a seat at the Thanksgiving tables at Harbor Docks on Thanksgiving. A special day for a special community. Thank you Harbor Docks for this legacy!

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Life-Saving Rescue Tubes Installed on Destin Beaches

By Lori Leath Smith

Destin's beaches just got a little safer, thanks to a new initiative from the Rotary Club of Destin and the City of Destin. On February 15, eight Public Rescue Tubes (PRTs) were installed at key beach access points—just in time for spring break. These bright yellow flotation devices are designed to assist in water rescues, helping save lives while helping to protect Good Samaritans from becoming victims themselves.

A Community Effort to Prevent Drownings

The idea took shape in September 2024, when Destin Rotarians Dion Moniz and Wayne Bernheisel proposed the project to the Destin City Council. Inspired by a similar effort in Navarre Beach, they partnered with the Rescue Tube Foundation, a global organization dedicated to preventing drowning deaths. The City Council unanimously approved the installation, setting the project into motion.

Thanks to overwhelming community support, sponsorship slots—priced at \$500 each-sold out within hours.

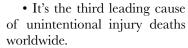


Each sponsor's name is proudly displayed at the tube stations, reinforcing the local commitment to beach safety.

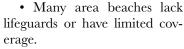
Why These Tubes Matter

Drowning is a silent killer and a global crisis:

• 236,000 drowning deaths occur worldwide every year.



- It's the #1 cause of death for children aged 1-4.
- In Florida alone, 464 accidental drownings occurred in



• Rescuing someone without proper equipment is dangerous, often resulting in double trage-

The Impact of Public **Rescue Tubes:**



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By bringing rescue tubes to Destin, the Rotary Club is joining a life-saving movement already in place throughout the U.S. and Canada. Their mission? Fewer drownings, safer beaches and a stronger commu-

Want to see more installation in action? Check out the City of Destin's official Facebook page: Facebook.com/cityofdestin.





Aging Gracefully: A Guide to Longevity and Vitality



By Dr. Karen DeVore

Aging is a privilege, but how we age is largely within our control. While genetics play a role, lifestyle choices and proactive health management significantly impact our vitality, mobility and overall well-being. The good news? You don't have to accept aches, fatigue and chronic diseases as inevitable. You can age on your own terms by implementing a few key strategies.

1. Annual Check-Ins & Lab Work: Stay Ahead of the Game

Prevention is the cornerstone of longevity. Annual health check-ups allow you to track

changes, address concerns and monitor key health markers before minor issues become major problems. Many conditionssuch as metabolic disorders, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis—develop silently over time, making regular lab work essential for early detection and intervention.

Too many people avoid these appointments due to frustration with dismissive healthcare providers. If your practitioner isn't listening to you or supporting your health goals, find a team that will. Healthcare should be a partnership, not a battle.

Key Lab Markers to Monitor:

- Inflammation & Metabolic Health: CRP, fasting insulin,
- Hormonal Balance: Thyroid panel, testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, DHEA
- Nutrient Status: Vitamin D, B12, ferritin, magnesium
- Cardiovascular Health: Lipid panel, homocysteine, ApoB

2. Listen to Your Body: **Symptoms Matter**

Your body is always commu-

nicating with you. Fatigue, brain fog, unexplained weight changes and joint pain aren't just random annoyances—they're signals. Ignoring them doesn't make them disappear; it only allows problems to worsen over

Being proactive about your health doesn't mean dismissing symptoms in the name of "natural" healing. It means staying in tune with your body, recognizing patterns and addressing imbalances early. You know your body better than any textbook or algorithm—if something feels off, advocate for yourself.

3. Know Your Family's **Aging Patterns**

While lifestyle choices have the greatest impact on longevity, understanding your genetic predispositions can help you make informed decisions. Look at how your parents and siblings are aging. Are they dealing with cognitive decline, cardiovascular issues or bone loss?

Genetics don't determine your fate, but they do provide insight into potential vulnerabilities. By identifying patterns, you can take proactive steps to mitigate risks through targeted lifestyle and medical interventions.

4. The Fundamentals **Never Get Old**

Some health advice remains timeless because it works. If you want to age gracefully, these fundamentals are non-negotiable:

- Movement is medicine. If you don't use it, you lose it. Regular exercise supports mobility, cardiovascular health and cognitive function.
- Hydration matters. Dehydration contributes to fatigue, joint pain and poor circulation.
- Sleep is the ultimate reset. Quality sleep is essential for hormone balance, brain function and immune resilience.
- Laughter truly is the best medicine. Joy and social connection improve mental and emotional health while reducing stress and inflammation.
- You are what you eat. A nutrient-dense, whole-food diet fuels longevity and vitality.

5. Muscle Mass: The Fountain of Youth

One of the most powerful

predictors of longevity? Muscle mass. Research consistently links muscle maintenance with reduced mortality risk, improved metabolic health and greater resilience against age-related diseases such as osteoporosis, diabetes and cardiovascular

Why Muscle Matters:

- Improves metabolism and helps regulate blood sugar
- Reduces fall risk by supporting balance and coordination
- Strengthens bones through mechanical stress, helping prevent osteoporosis
- Supports cognitive health by enhancing blood flow and reducing inflammation

The takeaway? It's never too late to build muscle. Resistance training—even starting in your 70s or 80s-can lead to significant improvements in strength, mobility and longevity.

Aging on Your Own

Aging gracefully isn't about avoiding every wrinkle or pretending time isn't passing. It's

Continued on page 36



no a sprin Scan to learn more and book today!





The Only Person You Can Change Is You

By Stephenie Craig, Journey Bravely

Do you ever find yourself exhausted, irritated and resentful when a person in your life won't start or stop certain behavior? Maybe they don't take care of themselves as you think they should or they won't stop a habit you think is negative. Maybe you want them to study more, drink less, exercise more, be happier, be more punctual, focus better, work less, be less angry, be less critical, parent differently or relax more. Behavior of others that is not aligned with your life approach can create significant discomfort and can feel annoying or even infuriating.

How do you respond to difficult behavior? Common approaches include passive aggressive remarks, nagging, withdrawing or saying mean things. While these strategies give a momentary sense of "taking action," none produce meaningful change. Often, your desire for change comes from a positive desire for the person to have a good life. Other times, the desire for change is motivated by you believing your way is the right way and everyone else should just get on board. Regardless of the motivation, you can't change other people. Period. Science and years of experience reveal humans change when the discomfort of their current behavior outweighs the inherent discomfort of change.

Change is an internal job. People change when they decide they are willing to do the uncomfortable and unfamiliar work of trying something new even when it is difficult. No amount of external pressure from you has the power to motivate change in another. While hard to accept, it is incredibly freeing to realize it has never been and will never be your job to get someone else to change. You can invest the energy you've been putting into changing others into your internal work of change and growth. So, how do you shift from trying to change others to engaging personal growth?

12 Ways to Engage Personal Growth and Stop Trying to Change Others

Notice. Notice frustrated, irritated, annoyed, angry, resentful energy you are feeling toward someone. Notice where you feel it in your body. Try being curious about the origin of the feelings. Notice patterns of irritated feelings and how they relate to a pattern of behavior in the other person.

Admit. Ask yourself if you are trying to control or change someone else's behavior. Am I trying to get someone to start or stop a behavior? If the answer

is yes, admit to yourself you are trying to control something you can't control.

Remind. Remind yourself despite your best desires and efforts, you have never and will never have the power to change another person.

Rest. Rest into the reality and freedom of not being responsible for changing others.

Decide. Decide how you will respond to difficult behavior. You are in charge of your response despite the behavior of someone else.

Discover. Look inside yourself to discover the deeper reasons the behavior is bothering you. Do you have historical wounds around the behavior? Is the behavior a barrier to connection in your relationship? Does the behavior scare you? Does feeling out of control create feelings of insecurity for you? Do you hold a belief that bad things will happen if others don't do things the way you do?

Sort. Sort whether the difficult behavior is something you can let go. Every behavior does not need to change. Sometimes making space for the other person to be different than you without judgment is most helpful. If you determine the behavior is truly causing problems, reach for directness rather than nagging.

Communicate. If you've identified the behavior as a true problem, calmly and directly communicate your concerns. Try going light on judgment and asking curious questions to understand the other person's perspective about the behavior.

Boundaries. Decide what you will do or not do if the behavior continues long-term. Follow through on boundaries over time.

Model. Model healthy behavior in your interactions with the other person. If you are asking them to relax more, prioritize relaxing. Try modeling with a joyful attitude rather than one of judgment.

Encourage. Verbally acknowledge positive change the other person makes regarding the difficult behavior.

Accept. If the other person chooses not to change the behavior, accept their choice. You can't make them choose differently. Instead, focus on how you will interact in the relationship.

Accepting you can't change anyone but yourself is uncomfortable, but freeing. Lean into the freedom and be gracious with yourself and others as you navigate letting go of trying to change others. Connect with us for counseling and coaching along your journey at Journeybravely.com.





To apply for the study with Dr. Sikora at our Destin office, visit **allervieresearch.com** or call **850.304.0658**

Wellness

Blood Sugar: How's Yours?



By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, HealthyDay HealthyLife

I don't know of anyone who doesn't know someone who is either pre-diabetic or diagnosed with type II diabetes. I decided to write about it in hopes of equipping people to take charge of their health and be equipped to support those they know.

We have insulin receptors throughout the body. Insulin, which is released by the pancreas, stimulates these cell receptors which allows glucose to leave the bloodstream and enter the cell. The receptors can be damaged by free radicals. These free radicals steel electrons from molecules of cells and tissues and this includes the receptors. When this happens, it causes oxidative stress which results in inflammation.

Oxidative stress and inflammation are the underlying pathologies to nearly every chronic degenerative disease.

The lifestyle choices that can contribute to this cycle are smoking, lack of vitamin and mineral intake, environmental toxins, excessive sugar consumption and sedentary lifestyles.

Glucose is used as fuel by the mitochondria of the cells to give us energy. When we eat and/or drink, insulin is released in response to rising sugar levels. Think of insulin as the key and the receptors as the lock. Once this process happens the glucose is metabolized in the mitochondria and converted to ATP (adenosine triphosphate-energy currency molecule).

As inflammation grows and persists due to an overabundance of sugar intake the lock becomes deformed and can no longer hold its molecular shape. This prevents the key from being able to open the lock (receptor).

And it's not only the recep-

tors which are damaged but the arterial walls and the LDL cholesterol. This cycle leads not only to type II diabetes but loss of kidney function, loss of circulation to extremities, stroke or heart attack are also of concern.

Type I diabetes happens when the beta cells are not producing enough insulin; the keys are missing. Type II diabetes occurs when the receptors become 'rusty'; they no longer have the correct molecular shape to receive insulin. This is insulin resistance.

To overcome this cycle, drugs are used to reduce blood sugar levels or insulin is given to overwhelm the receptors and force the glucose into the cells. However, any rapid rise of insulin, either artificially or naturally, occurring from eating high glycemic foods causes even more oxidative damage!

The cell continually makes new insulin receptors and IF the new ones are correctly shaped, they can be protected by a constant source of antioxidants so insulin sensitivity can prevail.

Here are the lifestyle choices to get and keep this important cycle in shape:

- Exercise 30-60 minutes daily
- Consume 30-40 grams of soluble and insoluble fiber daily
- Avoid trans fats
- Eat low glycemic foods
- Reduce stress
- Quality sleep -7-9 hours

• Supplementation

If you have compromised kidney function, you must be careful regarding mineral intake. It should be decreased, but can still offer benefits.

If you would like to view the supplemental protocol pre-

scribed by a doctor you can reach out to me via email. Please put DIABETES in the subject line.

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Book Review: Brain Energy by Dr. Chris Palmer



REVIEWED BY MICHAEL MCMA-NUS, LCSW

Dr. Chris Palmer's "Brain Energy" is a groundbreaking exploration of the intricate relationship between brain health and energy metabolism, presenting a fresh perspective on mental well-being that is both enlightening and empowering.

Palmer, a psychiatrist with extensive experience in the field, delves into how our brain's functioning is deeply intertwined with the food we eat, the energy we consume, and the lifestyle choices we make. I've always believed in a holistic approach to mental health and in 1984 at Louisiana State University I did my master's thesis on "The positive effects of exercise on mental health". In this book, Dr. Palmer has done a skillful job of describing a holistic approach.

The book is structured in a way that makes complex scientific concepts accessible to the layperson. Palmer explains how the brain requires a significant amount of energy to operate effectively and how fluctuations in energy levels can impact mental health. He introduces readers to the concept of "brain energy," emphasizing that mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and even schizophrenia can be viewed through the lens of energy deficits and imbalances.

One of the standout features of "Brain Energy" is Palmer's use of real-life case studies to illustrate his points. He shares stories of patients who have experienced profound transformations by implementing dietary changes, particularly a ketogenic diet, which focuses on healthy fats and minimizes carbohydrates. These accounts provide compelling evidence of how adjusting our diet can lead to noticeable improvements in mood, clarity, and overall brain function

Palmer's writing is engaging and relatable, making it easy for

6 Ways Exercise Helps Your Body Stay

readers to connect with the material. He blends personal anecdotes with scientific research, creating a narrative that is both informative and motivating. His passion for the subject shines through, encouraging readers to consider the role that nutrition and lifestyle play in their mental health.

Moreover, "Brain Energy" challenges traditional views on mental health treatment by advocating for a more holistic approach. Palmer emphasizes that while medication can be beneficial, it should be complemented by lifestyle changes that address the root causes of mental health issues. This perspective is refreshing and offers hope to those who may feel stuck in conventional treatment paradigms.

In conclusion, Dr. Chris

Palmer's "Brain Energy" is a thought-provoking and practical guide that empowers readers to take charge of their mental health through a better understanding of brain energy. It's a must-read for anyone interested in enhancing their cognitive function and overall well-being. Palmer's compassionate approach and clear explanations make this book not only a valuable resource for those struggling with mental health issues but also for anyone looking to optimize their brain health and lead a more fulfilling life.

Michael McManus LCSW is a psychotherapist in private practice in Santa Rosa Beach Florida and can be reached for an appointment by text or phone at (850) 837-0123 or Psychotherapy30A.com.



By Kassia Garfield, Owner, MaxStrength Fitness, NICEVILLE

Thermoregulation is the body's ability to maintain a stable internal temperature, which

at The Right Temperature As You Age is crucial for overall health and comfort. As we age, the body's natural ability to regulate temperature becomes less efficient, putting older adults at higher risk for heat-related illnesses or hypothermia. Factors such as reduced sweat production, changes in blood circulation and diminished skin sensitivity contribute to these challenges. Fortunately, regular exercise

can play a vital role in helping

older adults improve thermo-

regulation and reduce these risks. Here's how exercise can enhance the body's ability to manage temperature changes and improve comfort for older

1. Improving Circulation and Blood Flow

As people age, circulation can slow down, making it harder for the body to dissipate heat efficiently or retain warmth when needed. Regular physical activity, particularly cardiovascular exercise like walking, strength training, or cycling, helps stimulate blood flow and improves vascular health. With better circulation, the body can more effectively deliver oxygen and nutrients to tissues, as well as regulate body temperature by redirecting blood flow to the skin to release heat or shunting it to the core to conserve warmth.

For older adults, improving circulation through exercise can help reduce the risk of heat exhaustion in hot weather and improve comfort during colder temperatures. It also helps maintain a healthier cardiovascular system, supporting the body's ability to adapt to temperature fluctuations.

2. Enhancing Sweat Production

Sweating is the body's prima-

ry mechanism for cooling down when temperatures rise. However, as we age, the sweat glands become less efficient, reducing the body's ability to cool itself in hot conditions. This leaves older adults more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses like heat

Regular exercise can help increase the body's ability to sweat by stimulating the sweat glands. When older adults engage in consistent physical activity, their bodies become better at activating the cooling process when needed. Over time, the body becomes more responsive to changes in temperature, which can help older individuals feel more comfortable in warmer environments and reduce the risk of overheating.

3. Increasing Heat Acclimatization

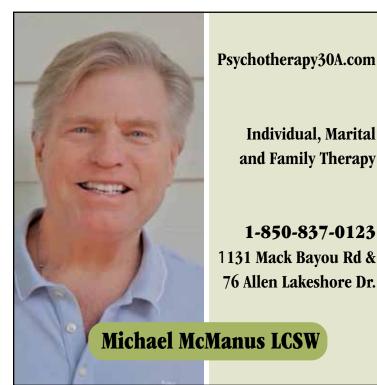
Heat acclimatization refers to the body's gradual adaptation to warmer temperatures. Through exercise, the body becomes better at adjusting to hot environments. Older adults who regularly engage in outdoor exercise or aerobic activities can gradually increase their tolerance to heat and cold, making it easier for them to handle changes in temperatures and avoid heat-related issues.

This process works by allowing the body to increase blood volume and sweat rate while enhancing the cardiovascular system's ability to regulate heat. Exercise helps the body adapt more quickly to changes in temperature, reducing the chances of heat exhaustion or heat stroke when the weather gets hot. When we exercise this 'stresses' the body, which then reacts to improving thermoregulation. Our body will only make changes when it is put under stress, or overloaded.

4. Supporting Metabolic Health and Weight Management

Being overweight or obese can make thermoregulation more difficult, as excess body fat can interfere with the body's ability to regulate heat and cold. Regular exercise helps with weight management, reducing the strain on the body's ability to maintain a stable internal temperature. By engaging in both aerobic and strength training exercises, older adults can improve muscle mass, reduce fat, and enhance metabolism. With less body fat, the body is better able to regulate temperature in both warm and cold conditions.

Continued on next page





Self-Care Corner: Spring Into Action with Self-Care!



By Krisy Anderson, Owner, Beverly Hills Day Spa

Self-care is sacred—not self-indulgent—a way of taking care of your physical, mental and emotional well-being with the newness of Spring. It can help recharge your energy, boost your mood and feel joyful. Self-

care activities include:

- Get skin-ready and feel beautiful and glowing with a spa facial that cleanses, exfoliates and hydrates your skin. Remove impurities, stimulate collagen production and brighten your complexion for a healthy, new glow.
- Enjoy a massage or other spa treatment. A massage can reduce stress and tension in your muscles and joints. It can improve your blood circulation and lymphatic drainage. A massage can also release endorphins, the natural painkillers and mood enhancers of your body.
- Get outside and enjoy spring time in nature. Enjoy our miles of sugar, white sand beaches, perfect for walking and

talking with friends or family—a great place to relax and unwind. Take a walk along the coastal dune lakes or walking trails or hang out at one of Destin's newly-designed parks. Enjoy an afternoon on a Pontoon boat in the Destin Harbor.

- Do something that makes you laugh, smile, relax or feel inspired such as an afternoon listening to live music at one of Destin's many venues.
- Practice gratitude and positivity. Write down what inspires you or things you are grateful for every day, or say them out loud. Or perform a random act of kindness.
 - Exercise—just move!

Remember that self-care is not a luxury—it's a necessity.

And Spring is the time to get ready for the budding, outdoor season.

So, let's get going with these valuable Beverly Hills Day Spa spring specials:

Springtime Glow: Chemical Peel – \$85

Soothing Nutrient Facial: Nourishing Mask with Dermaplaning—\$110

Boost Collagen Treatment: Microneedling with Red-light LED Therapy – \$160

Body Scrub: Brown Sugar or Champagne & Rose – \$95

Detoxifying 90-Minute Massage: with Cellulite Treatment – \$125

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-\$125

Osmo Pro Bright White Teeth Whitening: 3-Treatment Package with Complimentary Home-Care Teeth Whitening Pen – \$325

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All are valid through April 30, 2025.

Located right in the heart of Destin, we're here to help with a customized massage, facial and more tailored to your needs this Spring and Easter. Visit beverlyhillsdayspa.com or call (850) 654-8544.

6 WAYS

continued from previous page

5. Improving Core Temperature Regulation

Strength training and aerobic exercise can help improve core temperature regulation by increasing the efficiency of the body's internal systems. During exercise, the body naturally heats up, and the hypothalamus (the part of the brain that controls body temperature) works to bring the temperature back to normal. Regular physical activity can help optimize the efficiency of this process, allowing the body to respond more effectively to changes in external temperature.

Moreover, exercising in both warm and cool environments can help the body become more adaptable, improving its overall ability to maintain a balanced internal temperature regardless of external conditions.

6. Boosting Comfort in Cold Environments

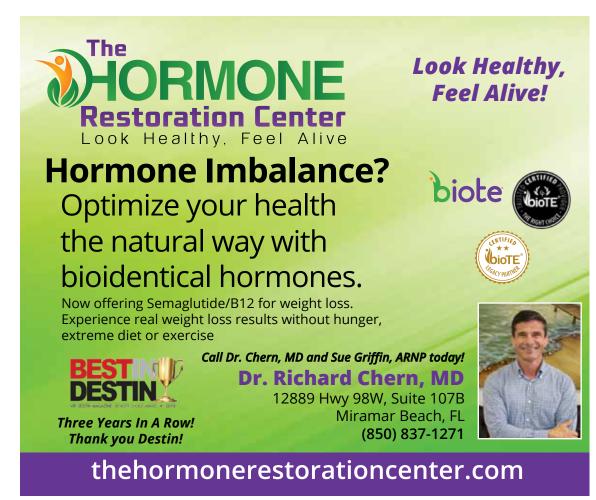
While much focus is given to thermoregulation in hot conditions, cold environments also pose risks, particularly for older adults. As we age, the body's ability to generate heat by shivering diminishes. Regular exercise, particularly strength training, can help maintain muscle mass, which is important for generating heat and retaining warmth. The increased muscle

mass also helps the body stay warmer in cooler temperatures by increasing metabolic rate.

Conclusion

Thermoregulation is a crucial function that supports overall health and well-being, especially for older adults. Regular exercise plays an essential role in helping the body manage temperature fluctuations. By improving circulation, enhancing sweat production, supporting metabolic health, and boosting

the body's adaptation to heat and cold, physical activity helps older adults stay comfortable and safe in varying environmental conditions. Incorporating regular exercise into daily routines not only supports thermoregulation but also contributes to overall health, making it a valuable tool for older adults looking to improve their quality of life and reduce the risks associated with temperature extremes.







Beyond the Base:

Security Forces Prep for Emerging Threats

By 1st Special Operations WING, PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

In the dense brush covering the Florida forest landscape, Security Forces Airmen navigate their way through challenges and obstacles, every step a testament to their readiness.

Through rigorous Field Training Exercises, or FTX, these Airmen confront realistic threats that test their endurance, hone their skills and fortify their preparation for actual combat situations.

"We put them in the middle of a field under realistic conditions, which gives them re-

al-world applications," said the security forces training NCOIC assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing. "It puts them in that warrior ethos mindset to keep their heads on a swivel and stay prepared for anything that could happen."

The FTX is an essential part of the unit's ongoing efforts to strengthen combat-ready forces. Airmen immerse themselves in realistic scenarios that build their warrior ethos and sharpen their skills for success at home and in deployed operations.

This quarter focused on land navigation, open-area crossings,

key leader engagements and securing high-value targets.

One participant described the exercises as physically and mentally demanding, requiring participants to

understand each team member's role, apply rules of engagement and make quick decisions under pressure. "Staying on the same page is crucial," said the FTX participant. "We have to keep the squad together and ensure everyone knows what's happening."

The training NCOIC said the curriculum is constantly refined based on after-action reports, lessons learned from past events and real-world incidents.

"We adjust based on what's happening in modern-day operations to keep our Airmen as prepared as possible," the NCOIC said.

The consistent training leads to better performance and more comprehensive skill development than occasional exercises, the NCOIC added.

"This training reinforced my confidence, especially since I'll be deploying in the near future," said the FTX

participant. "When I get downrange, if I'm called upon to do anything, I have complete



confidence in myself that I can

These ongoing exercises play a vital role in Hurlburt Field's commitment to mission readiness, strengthening the 1st SOW's ability to deter adversar-

"I've seen vast improvement in both the younger Airmen



and even some of the noncommissioned officers and senior NCOs," said the training NCO-

Any questions can be directed to the 1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs office at 850-884-7906 or 1sow.wpa1@us.af.mil.

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AGING GRACEFULLY

continued from page 31

get the job done."

about maintaining independence, vitality and quality of life for as long as possible. It's about making informed choices, staying proactive with your health and surrounding yourself with a supportive healthcare team.

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and it will take care of you in the decades to come.

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Say Goodbye to Toxicity:

Building Healthy Teams with Confidence - Part 5 of 6



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 talking about six ways to improve Building Healthy Teams with Confidence. The fifth way

Strengths-Based Focus is key to transforming dysfunction into high performance. Instead of dwelling on weaknesses, we emphasize leveraging individual and collective strengths. The Ignite Course helps team members see how their unique talents can complement those of others. For example, if one member excels in strategic planning, but struggles with execution, they can collaborate with someone strong in implementation. This synergy ensures that each person's strengths cover for another's weaknesses, fostering a balanced and effective team dynamic.

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.

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.



Publisher's Note: To catch up on Parts 1-4 of "Say Goodbye to Toxicity," visit MyDestinLife.com and view November and December 2024 and January and February 2025 issues.

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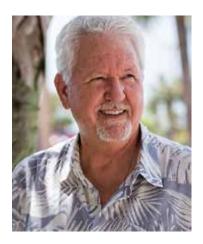
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A Pastor's Ponderings: A Righteous Man



By Pastor Dave Holland

"Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, 'Surely this was a righteous man." Luke 23: 46-47

Jeff was a regular guy. He always sat quietly in church. I re-

member his wife and daughter sitting beside him, smiling for no apparent reason. They came regularly to worship and slipped away quickly afterward. One Sunday, Jeff stayed after church and asked to speak with me. He was retiring from the Navy, and they were holding a brief ceremony for him on base. Jeff asked if I would come and say a prayer during the proceeding. He gave me the time and date, saying little else.

On the appointed day we drove together to the Groton Connecticut Naval Yard, affectionately called "The Submarine Capital of the World." We arrived at the base where I expected to go into an office with a few of Jeff's friends and family. Instead, the Commander escorted Jeff and me directly to the stage of a large auditorium filled with hundreds of sailors

whooping and hollering.

The Commander quieted the crowd and began commending Jeff at length for his integrity and character, shining through many stressful situations. Eventually, they asked me to pray. The moment I said "Amen," the crowd stomped, clapped, and cried out, "Chief!"

For more than 20 years, Jeff assigned work tasks, handed out discipline, and gave commands. He did so based not only on rank, but also by his commitment to the men and women that served under him. Officers serve on a different level. As chief-petty officer, Jeff functioned as the leader among the enlisted sailors.

The centurion in our passage today served in the Roman Army and was esteemed in the same way throughout the Roman Empire

We have now seen how Luke was writing to the people of the Greco-Roman world, people outside of the faith and Jewish traditions. Centurions were roughly equivalent to a Master Seargeant or Chief Petty Officer in today's military. They led rank-and-file soldiers in both their daily tasks and in battle. Revered by those under their command, respected by their senior officers, these "Jeffs" were the backbone of the Roman Army, the greatest fighting force in the ancient world.

Our centurion's task was carrying out the harshest punishments daily. He knew criminals. He witnessed the death of scoundrels, rebels and murderers often. And he knew Jesus wasn't one of them. Darkness, earthquakes and heavenly voices rarely attended his executions. His summary of the event, "Surely this was a righteous man," stood in stark contrast to the crowd's cry to "Crucify Him!"

Christ endured the worst humanity could heap upon him, yet he evoked a righteous commendation from a hardened soldier. The Centurion recognized Christ's righteousness; do we? Only a righteous man could atone for our unholiness. Will we put our faith in the purity of Christ's sacrifice?

It was the morning of Good Friday several years ago when I sat in the church sanctuary quietly praying. In my heart, I saw Christ hanging on a cruel, rugged cross, dying-for me. I began to weep. Uncontrollably. Snotty, slobbering, sorrowful weeping. Yes, I know He died for the sins of the world, but that day I realized He died for me. Surely, He was a righteous

Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring in Destin. This devotional is from his book, "Extraordinary Jesus." You can get a copy of his books from his website, DaveHolland.org, or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach at churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidvHolland54@ gmail.com.



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By Sean Dietrich

"I started choking," said Jennifer Yakubesan.

It was a typical evening, some years ago. The family was eating supper before church, somewhere in the wilds of Michigan. It was spaghetti. The flagship food of happy families.

"I looked at my husband and my son, and I started to make this kind of patting on my chest."

Enter her son, Andrew. He was 13. A Scout.

Jennifer was about to lose consciousness when she felt her son's arms wrap around her. He wedged his fist below her sternum. He squeezed.

The Heimlich maneuver is not simple. It requires strength. The Heimlich didn't work. So Andrew slapped his mother's back. Someone taught him to do that.

Andrew was given the National Merit Award by the Scouts.

Which leads me to my next story, approximately six states away. Scout Troop 1299, of Allen, Texas, was on a bus trip to Wyoming.

They had a few days to kill in Yellowstone National Park.

"We were on our way to lunch," said Brian, an adult volunteer. "We were passing by these falls, and we were like, 'Let's just stop real quick and let the adults take some pictures,""

They parked. Deboarded. Everyone's dad stretched his respective lumbar region. A stranger ran up to the group and frantically asked if there

Sean of the South: Scouts

was a doctor on the bus.

A doctor, no. Scouts, yes.

In moments, scouters found a woman having an emergency on the trail. She was lying in the dirt. It was cardiac arrest. An off-duty nurse was already performing chest compressions.



The Scouts fetched the automated external defibrillator (AED) from the bus.

Why did a bunch of average kids from Texas have a piece of expensive portable medical equipment on their bus? The answer is: Because they were Scouts.

Today, the woman is alive and well.

Here's another. In Claiborne County, Tennessee, Crystal Thacker took meds and had an allergic reaction. One minute she was fine; the next, she was on the floor, dying.

"It almost felt like when your foot's asleep," she remembers, "...it was very hard to breathe."

Crystal's 16-year-old son, Stewart, knew his mother was in anaphylactic shock. He also knew what to do while first responders were en route. This is because Stewart was a Scout and had over 200 hours of medical training.

"I took an old blanket," said Stewart, "...and made sort of a sunroof shelter, and reapplied ice packs. And then the ambulance showed up."

Stewart was presented with the National Certificate of Merit

When I was a kid, there were roughly 5 million Boy Scouts on the planet. I was one. Twenty U.S. presidents were Scouts. John Wayne was a Scout. Neil Armstrong. Sam Walton. Hank Aaron. Martin Luther King Jr.

Today, however, there are approximately 1 millions Scouts left in the U.S. The reason for this sharp decline isn't important. I'm not here to raise issues.

I do, however, want to deliver a message to any kids who are thinking about joining the

Scouts but are unsure about it since their friends think Scouting is nerdy. Scouting is a lot more than building birdhouses and making wallets.

The Boy Scouts of America save lives.





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Part 3 of a Series on Homicide Investigations

By Michael Yoder, Retired FBI CRIMINAL PROFILER

Last month, I talked about murder as the result of extreme emotions such as anger, hatred, revenge, jealousy or even love. Or, it could be due to a desire to conceal a different crime (self-preservation) or to gain something (greed). Understanding Victimology helps investigators uncover possible suspects and motives. But, what happens when there does not appear to be a motive? In addition to extreme emotions, there are two notable exceptions — an offender with psychopathic traits and an offender that has an altered perception of reality. These killers have an internal motive that are not apparent to an outsider.

Psychopathy is a personality disorder that involves manipulation, antisocial behavior and a lack of empathy. Many serial killers and serial rapists possess traits of psychopathy and can hurt and kill others with no rational reason or motive. They murder due to an internal desire to kill and can choose their victims indiscriminately and ran-

domly. They are predators. Just as a lion may track and kill a gazelle to feed, a person psychowith pathic traits can

kill another person to "feed" their internal wants and needs. They do not think beyond the immediate need, just as a lion doesn't dwell on the life of the gazelle.

The other type of offender has an altered perception of reality. This can be due to mental illness, drug use/alcohol abuse or brainwashing by gangs, terrorist groups, or dominating personalities. Mental illnesses that might result in extreme behaviors include people diagnosed (or not yet diagnosed) with paranoia, schizoital/ schizotypal personality disorders, and antisocial personality disorders. People with mental illness may take in normal stimuli and re-interpret the information as potentially harmful or dangerous to themselves or to others. They then act on this skewed information, sometimes



Seeking Justice

Destin True Crime Club

with deadly results.

People who use psychotropic drugs or who abuse alcohol may temporarily or permanently damage their cognitive abilities and become violent as a result. Most people have a natural ability to protect themselves and to protect others. But, the violent drug user has diminished cognitive abilities to make the right choices. They may be in a situation (real or imagined) where they feel threatened or sense danger around them, and in a panicked or heightened state, commit murder.

Joining a gang or terrorist group ties the follower to a dominant force. Recruits willingly adopt the principles of the higher group and will do anything to maintain their membership. For terrorists, it is ideological or political and the members do the bidding of the leaders. For

gangs, the culture of the gang and the peer pressure to conform adds an extra incentive to obey. If the order from the leader is to kill, they will kill. If the order is to strap on a suicide vest and go to a crowded area and set off the bomb, they will do so with full conviction that they are fulfilling a higher purpose. Many mass killers are indoctrinated by other forces to kill. The size of the group does not matter. The 2002 DC Sniper case in Virginia comes to mind with the older, dominant John Mohammed planning the kills and the younger, submissive Lee Malvo pulling the trigger as they randomly killed people they never met. In all, 17 people were killed and 10 wounded in the 10-month spree.

It is a critical step in solving both active and cold cases that the investigator consider both

the **victimology** as well as the internal motives of the killer. When there does not appear to be an obvious motive in a horrendous crime such as murder, savvy investigators look for the exceptions to move the investigation along.

If you have an interest in true crime and want to know how to become a sleuth, please join our Facebook page at Destin True Crime Club. We meet once a month to discuss our ongoing research of an actual cold case we chose and brainstorm ways to continue our research. This is a serious, but fun, group of people who have the passion to solve cases. You can always email me at myoder0361@gmail.com for questions about our club or to request I speak to a group on a variety of violent crime issues.



















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Our Hometown Hero: Shirley Simpson

A REFLECTION BY
NATHANAEL FISHER

Shirley Simpson was a great friend and generous supporter of Emerald Coast Theatre Company. It is my joy to honor her with a small tribute to the incredible life she lived. I shared this reflection at her Celebration of Life recently, and wanted to share it again here for her loyal Emerald Coast Theatre Company fans and readers.

I have no doubt that on the night of February 8th, there was thunderous applause and a standing ovation from the angels and elders in heaven when the Angel Gabriel called Shirley Simpson to "places" in heaven and the curtain came down on earth, in peace, on a life well lived.

When Shirley's daughters honored me by asking me to present Act One, Scene One of her celebration of life, my heart and mind was flooded with scene by scene of wonderful memories. You see, Shirley and I had lunch together on Tuesdays, practically every Tuesday since 2018. I always found it a little amusing that there is a book that was adapted into a play called "Tuesdays with Morrie." I had my Tuesdays with Shirley, and even my wife and staff knew that on Tuesdays I had a very important appointment with a very special person.

During our lunches, three themes rose to the surface as the most important to Shirley, and we connected on all of them. She loved and adored her husband and her girls, her faith was important to her, and, of course, we connect on our love for the life changing art, wonder and magic of theatre and the stage.

Our first lunches back in 2018 were filled with stories of her life with Chuck who had passed earlier that year. I walked with her through the pain and immense grief of losing a friend and partner of 65 years. That grief was conquered through the sharing of beautiful stories

of Chuck. She shared how he would patiently wait for her to greet her fans after productions at New Stage Theatre in Jackson, Mississippi or her one woman shows. Chuck's support of her theatrical adventures was clearly one of the ways he loved her and she reveled in that love.

Shirley's faith and family were topics at lunch quite often. She shared some stories of working with the Billy Graham Organization. I would hear about the preparation for a sermon and the evaluation of how that sermon was presented and received. I was honored to hear stories of how proud she was of her girls: Taylor, Cathy,

Christine and Caren – she was so proud of each of them and knew how much they loved her.

Shirley told me stories of her dear sister Bonnie. As children, Shirley would say, "Let's Pike"... that's "play like" - (pretend play). "Pike," where she was clearly the director in the performances Bonnie and Shirley would do as children. I heard so many stories of stage, radio and

Continued on next page

NFB Auditions!

The Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) Académie is now taking audition appointment reservations for the 2025-2026 academic year. Auditions for incoming third-grade students will be on April 26 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and April 27 from 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Incoming fourth-grade students will audition on April 26 from 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Appointment reservations are required and must be made by April 24 at 2 p.m.

Celebrating more than 20 years of excellence, the NFB Académie is a free, integrated arts and academic program for third through eighth-grade boys and girls who demonstrate the potential to excel in dance. The NFB Académie is a nationally acclaimed program recognized as an A+ school since its inception. Register or learn more at NFBallet. org/Auditions.







2025-2026 Academic Year Auditions



Incoming 3rd Grade Student Auditions: April 26- 10am to 2pm April 27 - 2:30pm to 4:30pm

Incoming 4th Grade Student Auditions: *April 26 - 2:30 pm to 4:30pm*

A+ School Since Inception
In Partnership with the Okaloosa County School District

NFBallet.org/Auditions
All auditions are by appointment only.



Go, Dog. Go! March 11-16



Comedy on the Boulevard March 7



More Info and Tickets: www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org



SHIRLEY SIMPSON

continued from previous page

TV during our lunches. Stories of being an Actress, Director, Product Spokesperson, Radio Host and more. We connected so well because she personally knew every challenge I faced in theatre. Often, I would remind her that, outside of my wife, she was the only other person in my life that could truly understand the joys and challenges I faced at the theatre. She understood the world of an actor, she had sat in the seat of a director, she and Chuck had been supporters of theatre. She knew this world so well.

Some of her favorite roles included Queen Eleanor in The Lion in Winter, Shirley in Shirley Valentine and Daisy in Driving Miss Daisy. I would hear amazing stories of the process of the actress preparing for these roles and some of the victories and challenges of performances.

Shirley mesmerized audiences with performances of her one woman shows: Katherine Hepburn, Shirley Valentine, Minnie Pearl and so many more. Her final public performance was on the ECTC stage as Minnie



Pearl. After Chuck's passing she regained her footing on stage here with Katherine Hepburn. She was concerned about a staged reading as she was very proud of the memory she had and we convinced her that it would be fine, her audience would embrace the tool of the script... and that they did. As she took the chair to read you could literally see the consummate professional transforming into character, every voice inflection, every look, every gesture told the story...you could

not take your eyes off her. Shirley and I talked about it and she decided to tackle Shirley Valentine next. Again, a captivating performance, but this time the artist in Shirley was able to breathe into the confidence that was gained with the Katherine Hepburn performance. She came off stage with such joy and life. At the next lunch she told me that someone had stopped her in Publix and reprimanded her for not coming back out. The audience had been giving her a standing ovation and this



person was disappointed that she did not return to the stage for another bow. What they didn't know is that Shirley and I were too busy celebrating her performance backstage! It's like new life had been given to her, and she had such joy in performing again.

One lunch Shirley chuckled as I sat down and let me know that the night before, a waiter at Vintj Food and Wine had asked her if her son was joining her today. She said, "I don't have a son." The waiter replied, "What about that bald guy you always have lunch with?!"

I could go on and on about Shirley's wit, creativity, passion for life and more. How our lunches were a welcome break that we both looked forward to. How theatre brought two people together and set the stage for a beautiful friendship. How her passion for life and theatre encouraged and inspired me every time I had the pleasure of being around her. But...I know she would also say, "Nathanael, a good play

has great edits!" So, I'll end by sharing this. At the last few lunches we had together, Shirley would recognize that our time together might be limited and I would tell her I didn't want to talk about it. She would respond, "Nathanael, I've had a good run. Look at my life, I've had a great run of it."

Yes, Shirley, you have had a great run. I and those that got to be a part in your narrative, that had the honor of being a character in the play of your life, are better for it. You were a gift; an elegant, charming, quick witted gift, that we will always treasure. So, without the expectation of another bow Shirley, I give you an eternal standing ovation in my heart.





Classical Chamber Music Festival Announces 5th Season Celebration

The Emerald Coast Chamber Music Festival has announced its lineup of concerts for the 2025 season. Festival co-Artistic Director and Artist Faculty member Jacob Clewell (viola) offered a summary of the season, saying, "This year's festival is centered around music the faculty love and have chosen themselves, and it ranges from music we grew up listening to from Beethoven and Mendelssohn to a couple more recently

As a special feature for the festival's fifth year of concerts, all ticket fees have been eliminated for the 2025 season. The team that organizes the annual festival is inviting the community to come and celebrate classical chamber music alongside the faculty and students of the ECCMF Chamber Music Institute without need to pay for a ticket. Admittance to guest artist masterclasses (where participants in the Chamber Music Institute

of classical chamber music, held in one of the United State's most visually stunning locales. The annual Chamber Music Institute provides student participants with the highest quality musical education experience in an inspiring environment, while the Showcase Series features the festival's internationally renowned faculty in an artistically superb set of concerts serving the Northwest Florida area.

More information about EC-CMF performers, concerts and festival activities is available at www.emeraldcoastchambermusicfestival.org.





written pieces we simply adore. I really can't wait for the community to see what we have in store for this year's celebration." The festival will also be expanding its outreach activities, offering more casual performances outside of the formality of a concert hall.

Most concerts are presented by the festival's internationally acclaimed Artist Faculty, who travel to the area from across the United States and Canada for this event each year. These performers have appeared extensively throughout North America and Europe, in such venues as Chicago's Symphony Hall, Toronto's Koerner Hall, and the holy grail of concert venues, Carnegie Hall in New York City. The festival also boasts a comprehensive Chamber Music Institute, at which approximately 40 students from the country's top music schools participate in two weeks of intensive study with ECCMF artist faculty and guest artist teachers.



perform for sought-after guest artist teachers) will remain paid, with a festival pass giving access to every single masterclass.

Concerts at ECCMF 2025 run from May 17th to June 1st. Each concert takes place in the acoustically superb Tyler Recital Hall in the Music Wing of the Mattie Kelly Arts Center on the Northwest Florida State College's beautiful campus. Free tickets to reserve a spot in the very limited seats at the concerts are available through the festival's website, with any remaining seats available on a first-come-first-served basis.

The Emerald Coast Chamber Music Festival was established as an annual celebration



Piano Man: a Tribute to Billy Joel featuring Mark Kovaly has become one of the most highly respected and sought after tribute shows in the country. Unique attributes include Mark's ability to play additional instruments like the harmonica and accordion. This is truly a one-of-a-kind tribute to the iconic Piano Man himself.

Mark your calendars and grab your tickets now for a night filled with nostalgia, energy and pure musical bliss. Piano Man live in concert for one night only to ignite the stage with an electrifying performances and iconic songs.

Tickets: www.mattiekellytickets.com or call 850-706-5206 reserved tickets \$19.50-\$44



Best Retirement Advice for 2025

By Randy Locklier, President and Chief Investment Officer, Gulf Financial

Here's a list of things to keep an eye on if you are planning to ride off into the sunset soon.

1. Understand Sequence of Returns Risk

Sequence of Returns Risk is a fancy term but what does it mean? Here's the simple version: At some point during your 25-year retirement, there will be at least one bear market. Your finances will be much worse off if a market slump or crash occurs at the outset of retirement. The name of the game is to reduce risk and minimize principal withdrawals during a market downturn.



2. Delay Starting Social Security

Social Security is guaranteed income, indexed for inflation. That makes it extremely valuable. Mid 60's is better than 62 for a start date. Tap other sources of retirement income before starting Social Security.

3. What is Your Healthcare Gameplan?

Americans are eligible to enroll in Medicare at age 65. There can even be penalties for failing to enroll on time. Make a plan to sign up in the months leading up to your 65th birthday. If you retire before age 65, you'll also need to obtain health insurance on your own before Medicare kicks in. Can COBRA or the Affordable Care Act (ACT) insurance provide a bridge? Consider a Health Savings account to make your premium tax-deductible. Make a plan now before these choices are forced on you.

4. Consider Part-Time Work

Sometimes it's a good idea to keep some income flowing. 27% of retirees work part-time and this helps with expenses and has the added benefit of increased mental acuity and longevity.

5. Pivot Investments from Growth to Asset Preservation and Income

Retirement is not the time for a lot of risk. Rather, consider it as a time to live off the interest and income your portfolio earns while maintaining a secure principal base. Find an advisor that specializes in lower-risk income portfolios when seeking professional investment help, always work with a Fiduciary Advisory that is bound by law to act in your best interest.

6. Get Professional Help

Now that it's time to deal with Retirement Planning math or estate and tax planning it's time to lean on others. I'd encourage everyone to consult a fee-only financial planner or accredited Financial Counselor simply because there are so many decisions to make. After all, you've never retired before, but an experienced advisor has guided many, many people through the process.

Here's a great idea: reach out to Gulf Financial and schedule your free consultation today. It doesn't cost a thing, and you will get actionable information tailored specifically to your needs.

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Around Town

Three Ways We Failed You and How We Will Make It Right: A Developer's Perspective



By Bekah Manley

In the wake of increasingly devastating storms and a housing market that feels more broken than ever, it's time for an honest conversation about how traditional development practices have failed you. My business partner, Joseph Beeman, and I want to address three critical areas where the industry has let you down – and how we plan to make it right.

1. Cost: Homes That Break the Bank...and Then

The Failure: For too long, housing has been a race to the bottom—developers cutting corners to maximize profits while homeowners bare the financial burden of subpar construction. Rising costs for materials and labor have only worsened the problem. The result? Houses

that are increasingly unaffordable, expensive to maintain and costly to insure.

The Solution: In Florida, skyrocketing insurance premiums have become an unbearable burden for many homeowners. By utilizing advanced materials and resilient designs, we can build homes that lower risks, leading to more manageable insurance costs for families. Imagine homes that are not only affordable to build, but also provide financial peace of mind year after year. This shift doesn't just reduce costs, it creates lasting value for homeowners.

2. Time: The Endless Waiting Game

The Failure: The traditional building process is notoriously slow, often plagued by inefficiencies and delays. In disaster-stricken areas, this lag can leave families displaced for months, if not years. The time it takes to rebuild communities is unacceptable, especially when people's lives are hanging in the balance

The Solution: Innovations like 3D printing are revolutionizing the timeline of construction. With this technology, homes can be built in a fraction of the time it takes using traditional methods. Combined with prefabricated components and modular designs, 3D printing al-



lows for rapid recovery in stormhit regions and quicker access to housing in high-demand markets. These innovations are the key to delivering homes when they're needed most.

3. Safety: Built to Fail

The Failure: The harsh reality is that many homes today are not built to withstand the challenges of tomorrow. Whether it's hurricanes, flooding, or other extreme weather events, current building standards have proven inadequate. The result is not only financial loss but emotional devastation for families who thought their homes were safe havens.

The Solution: Nature provides inspiration for resilience. Hurricane-resistant designs and energy-efficient components are practical solutions that can be

implemented today. By rethinking how and where we build, we can create homes that protect and nurture, even in the face of extreme conditions. This is about more than just safety – it's about ensuring peace of mind for the people who call these

Why You Should Care

houses home.

If you live in the local area,

you've seen firsthand the devastation that hurricanes and rising insurance costs can bring. The current approach to building isn't just failing – it's actively putting our families, our finances and our community at risk. We can't afford to keep doing things the way they've always been done.

The solutions we've shared here are just a glimpse of what's possible. If you feel we, as developers, have failed you, we invite you to connect with us so we can show you how we will make it right. If interested, please email me at Bekah.Manley@TheiaDevelopment.com.

It's time for the industry – and all of us – to rethink what's possible. Together, we can rewrite the narrative and build homes that learn from the past, address the needs of the present and shape the future.

East Pass Park to Reopen With Improvements

By Carolyn Newcomer Ketchel

In spring of 2020, Eglin AFB made a decision to close the park on the south side of Marler (Destin) Bridge, mainly because of the trash that had become unmanageable. Coast Guard personnel spent every Monday morning cleaning trash that had been left behind by weekend users of the area. As a mother of two Eagle Scouts, we taught our scouts to "leave no trace," which means the area visited should look better than when you found it. Sadly, this idea was not adhered to by those using this property for recreation. The southern view, across from

Noriego Point is a stunning piece of property that locals enjoyed for a "day at the beach" for many years as we entered the "World's Luckiest Fishing Village."

The county has worked in partnership with Eglin AFB leadership to come up with a workable solution for managing the area and East Pass Park is set to re-open as a public beach. Okaloosa County has agreed to be in charge of the property. We intend to have paved parking spaces, bathrooms, lifeguards, park rangers and sheriff marine patrol. We will also have fencing, boardwalks, signage, trash receptacles, beach cleanup, tur-

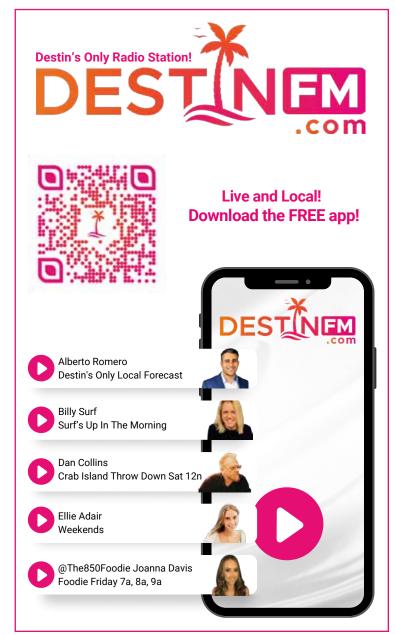
tle lighting and similar improvements.

The intent is a safe area that is clean and well attended that can be utilized by everyone. Our military partners at Eglin are pleased with the plan.

The park amenities will be paid for by Tourist Development Council (TDC) dollars. We expect the cost of the park improvements to be somewhere between \$.5 million and \$1 million.

Many of you have followed the Bike Path that is being built on the Gulf side of Hwy. 98 from Brooks Bridge to Marler Bridge.

Continued on next page





Ask Destinites:

Our 4th Meet-N-Greet and Joe's Bayou Update



By Patricia Lee, Owner Destinites.com

Do you own property or live in the local surrounding Destin area? We would love for you to attend our 4th Meet-n-Greet. These gatherings are always a lot of fun and include local business product/services giveaways! Details will be posted in our Destinites private Facebook group. If you are a Destin resident or in the close surround-

ing area, I invite you to join our private targeted group for locals and property owners at Facebook.com/groups/Destinites with 11,400+ members (Est. Oct. 2018). Check out our monthly newsletter and local business directory at Destinites. com where 400+ local businesses are already listed.

In our Destinites group this past month, I shared a progress update by Mayor Bobby Wagner regarding Joe's Bayou Destin (800 Beach Drive Destin 32541). Construction is set to begin September 2025 with \$12.2 million secured through the NRDA Final Restoration Plan RP-1. "I just returned from the capital with strong momentum for an additional \$1 million in state Storm Water Resiliency Funds to improve the outfall," said Mayor Wagner.

"What's coming? 1. New boat trailer parking lot. 2. Mooring dock. 3. Restrooms. 4. Picnic pavilions. 5. Upgraded fishing pier. Big steps toward better access and sustainability for our waterfront! More updates to come."

Below Are Some of Our **Group Member Responses:**

1. Now can we add more public fishing spots? Public parks? Maybe open up Okaloosa side of Destin bridge again to

Mayor Wagnor's Response: "Yes, yes and yes. Even this plan at Joe's comes with a new fishing pier that has been redesigned to allow for better fishing."

- 2. Another over done project. Just look at Norriego Point; what a mess.
- 3. So cool, it's gonna be an awesome addition for the community!
- 4. Looks awesome Mr. Mayor! Thank you!
 - 5. I like how quiet and re-

served Joe's Bayou is right now. So much of it is still untouched and it's like my fav place to go to just chill because of how quiet

- Was wondering for all the water loving dogs? Can you make a safe place for the dogs to get into the water? Please. I believe there would be a lot of happy dogs!
- 7. What about leash laws? There is already a problem here with dogs running around off leash while folks are trying to launch their boats. It's a safety hazard for people and dogs. Is there going to be a fenced-in area for dogs now?

Mayor Wagnor's Response: "Yes, the current law that would be grandfathered into the new park, if nothing changes, would be on leash."

8. I hope we are allowing for large boat trailer parking and turn radius. We have several local people who use the overflow lot for this purpose.

- 9. This looks like it's taking away all of the gravel boat trailer overflow parking and the boat ramp attendant stand. That gravel lot held a lot of spots that are needed and having the parking attendant to tell people to move prevents people from holding up the ramp during peak seasons! They're going to cut out half of the boat trailer parking at the main Destin boat ramp? That makes no sense.
- 10. Looks great! Keep up the hard work, Bobby. We appreciate you.

Mayor Wagnor's Response: "Thank you for sharing the news!" Full details on the website: joesbayoudestin.com.

As always, the mayor is welcome and we thank him for his participation in our group. He is so very appreciated!

EAST PASS

continued from previous page

It is set to open late March or beginning of April. East Pass Park will also serve as a trailhead and eastern terminus for the bridge to bridge bike path.

Although we have had a



number of years without the use of this area, the solution should make this a safer and cleaner environment for everyone. As locals know, the current of the east pass is strong when the tide rolls out. Over the years, there have been drownings and injuries in the pass. With the addition of lifeguards and sheriff marine patrol, we will provide

happy memories, for our time at the beach for locals and visitors alike in a well-maintained environment

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



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