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# 100 Men Who Care -**A Driving Force in Our Community**

Milestone quarter pushes local giving past \$100,000 in donations

By Lori Leath Smith

VOL. 8. NO. 1

In a world that often moves too fast to notice those in need. a local group of men is pausing—once a quarter—to make a lasting difference. And that pause is powerful!

This past quarter, 100 Men Who Care - Emerald Coast awarded \$9.300 to the Northwest Florida Guardian ad **Litem Foundation** (NWF-GAL), a nonprofit that stands in the gap for some of our community's most vulnerable

At a recent check presentation, members of the group met with Roslyn Snyder and Donna Franke of NWFGAL at their Fort Walton Beach offices to learn firsthand how their collective donation will directly impact children who are navigating the court system due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment.

"These are young people seeking stability in heartbreaking situations," said Don Rob-



erts, a 100 Men Who Care member and GAL volunteer. "Many come from homes affected by drug or alcohol addiction, incarceration, or other

traumatic disruptions. Guard- for their best interests. It's a ian ad Litem steps in so that role that can truly change the every child has someone to stand beside them-someone whose only goal is to advocate

**100 MEN** continued on page 2



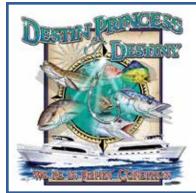
## Walking to Conquer Chiari **Malformation**

By Christopher Manson

Eleven years ago, Marion Gipson was diagnosed with Chiari malformation type 1. "I had it all my life, but didn't know," she says. "It started with headaches every day. No matter what I took, they wouldn't go away. The doctors told me I had migraines, but I forced the issue and got an MRI which led to my diag-

Chiari malformation is a condition in which brain tissue extends into the spinal canal. According

> WALKING continued on page 4



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## Community

### **100 MEN**

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course of a child's life."

The Florida Guardian ad Litem Office pairs trained volunteer advocates with children involved in the dependency court system. Here in Okaloosa and Walton Counties, NWFGAL goes beyond the courtroomraising funds to meet the daily needs of these children: things such as clothing, school supplies, tutoring, therapy, summer camps, and even birthday giftssimple things that remind a child they matter.

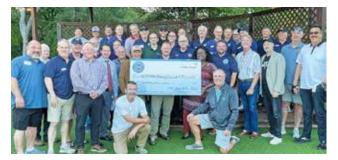
"Our mission is about more than just showing up in court," said Roslyn Snyder. "It's about helping children cope and showing them someone cares. Whether it's ensuring they have shoes that fit, a backpack to carry to school, or a counselor to help them work through trauma—we want them to feel seen, safe, and supported. This gift helps make that possible."

For the men of 100 Men Who Care, the act of giving is rooted in purpose. Since the chapter's founding, their "quiet, but aimful pauses" have contributed more than \$100,000 to 15 nonprofits throughout Okaloosa and Wal-

Countieston supporting organizations that serve children, single mothers, veterans, the homeless and those with unmet medical needs.

The model behind 100 Men Who Care is refreshingly simple—each member commits to donating \$100 quarterly, creating a powerful giving pool. I first spoke with Scott Rude, founding member of the

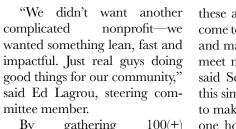
Emerald Coast chapter, when the group launched in 2021. Scott networked, met with Rotaries, local chambers, and wherever his message was welcomed, finding an exceptional number of community minded men to help shape a vision rooted in efficiency and generosity. These men bring experience from fields such as business, education and nonprofit leadership, and are united by one common goal: to make a tangible difference in their community without the barriers of red tape or complex





complicated

mittee member.



Bvgathering like-minded men and pooling contributions, membership provides local nonprofits with significant, immediate support-without asking for more than a few hours each year. That concept quickly resonated, and the impact has grown steadily. At each quarterly meeting, members hear from three nominated nonprofits, then vote on which one will receive the full donationnow nearing \$10,000. In just one evening, lives are changed.

"What amazes me most is the unbelievable people and organizations we're called on to support. Our members nominate

Established in 2021

**Scott Rude** – Retired busi-

Drew McDowell - Fi-

Ed LaGrou - Retired Col-

David Glinka - Retired

Master Sargeant, USAF and

ness executive and community

volunteer (Santa Rosa Beach)

nancial Advisor, Mariner

Wealth Advisors (Destin)

onel, USAF (Niceville)

these area nonprofits. Then, we come together to hear their needs and make a contribution to help meet needs in our community,' said Scott. "We're all busy, but this simple format gives us a way to make real, local impact in just one hour every few months. In an hour, we've changed a life. It's fast, it's efficient—and it's powerful.

The next quarterly meeting will be held at The Craft Bar - Harbor in Destin at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Septem**ber 16.** All men who care about the community are welcome to attend, meet the members, and learn how they can be part of something bigger.

"This community is full of people with good hearts. Sometimes they just need an easy and enjoyable way to give back. We may each give \$100, but collectively, the ripple effect is far

community volunteer (Nicev-

The membership has creat-

ed a giving circle built on sim-

plicity, local impact, and per-

sonal connection. The model

has inspired nearly 100 new

members and thousands in

charitable giving.





greater. That's the beauty of this model—it turns simple generosity into powerful change. That's what we built," said Scott.

And, as their donations continue to grow, so does their impact—one quarter, one check, one deserving local charity at a time.

To learn more or get involved, visit 100mwcec.com, email 100mwcec@gmail.com, or connect with the group on Facebook.

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Men Who Care – Emerald Coast





## Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

By Tamara Young, Public Information Officer

This time, Mayor Wagner and I sat down to discuss the "My Safe Florida Home" program that was approved this year for \$280 million dollars to help homeowners strengthen their homes against hurricanes. To learn more, visit MySafe-FLHome.com. It walks you through everything — from applying for the inspection to submitting your grant paperwork.

TY: We're in the midst of hurricane season and have free guides for anyone to pick up from City Hall that discusses preparations and other valuable information. But there's a program not referenced in the guide that can help our residents protect their homes from hurricanes and wind. Can you walk us through the My Safe Flor-

## "Reel Talk" from the City of Destin

## Storm-Ready and State-Funded:

Meet the Grant Every Florida Homeowner Should Know

ida Home program and why it's something Destin residents should be paying attention to?

BW: Absolutely. The My Safe Florida Home program is one of the smartest tools we have right now to help our residents prepare for storms. It provides free wind mitigation inspections and offers matching grants — up to \$10,000 — to help homeowners make their properties safer. For a coastal city like Destin, this isn't just helpful — it's vital.

TY: For the wind inspections, they send a licensed inspector to evaluate your home at no cost. They check everything from your roof to your doors, windows, and structural attachments — essentially, anything that could be strengthened to reduce wind damage.

**BW:** Once you have your inspection report, you can apply for a matching grant. For every \$1 you invest in strengthening



your home, the state will match it with \$2, up to \$10,000. So, if you spend \$5,000 of your own money, you can receive \$10,000 more — giving you \$15,000 in total improvements. We aren't talking about cosmetic upgrades. We're talking about improvements that could save lives and preserve property.

TY: It can also reduce insurance premiums.

**BW:** Yes, that's a major bonus. Most of the approved upgrades are eligible for wind mitigation credits, which can significantly reduce your homeowner's insurance. Some residents are seeing annual savings that pay back their investment in just a few years.

TY: Let's talk eligibility. Who can apply?

**BW:** To qualify, there is crite-

ria such as you must live in a single-family, site-built home, it must be your primary residence, the home must be valued at \$700,000 or less, and you need to be located in a wind-borne debris region — which Destin absolutely is.

TY: I know the grant portal reopened on August 4th, but is there a deadline?

**BW:** There's no fixed deadline, but I strongly

urge residents to act now. The state legislature allocated specific funds to this program, and once they're gone, they're gone. Be sure to have your 2024 taxes completed if you wish to qualify for one of the waves that require you to show household income. Qualifying in these early waves will significantly increase the chances that funding will be there for you to use.



## Community

#### **WALKING**

continued from page 1

to mayoclinic.org, this occurs when "part of the skull is misshapen or smaller than is typical. The skull presses on the brain and forces it downward." It is not a common condition, and increased use of imaging tests has led to more diagnoses in recent years.

This year, Gipson is organizing her third Conquer Chiari Walk. (She also serves on a special advisory board.) The event is set for Saturday, Sept. 20, at PROPS in Freeport's Hammock Bay. Registration is from 8 to 9 a.m., and the walk starts at 9:30. The walk will feature vendors, food trucks, a silent auction and more. Additional performers and speakers will volunteer their time.

"Alaqua Animal Refuge is

bringing some of their puppies out for the kids to enjoy," says Gipson. "The dogs are very therapeutic for us, and I'm really looking forward to it." The Hammock Bay Line Dancers are slated to appear as well. "It's a big deal!"

Gipson's goal is to bring awareness to Chiari malformation. She says the medical community "has got kind of a grasp on it now. Once I put it out there, a lot of people let me know that they or their kids have it." She formed a support group for "Chiarians" and people with related conditions.

She meets people with Chiari malformation every month and is planning for other meet and greet type events in the future. "I've put together Purple Night Out to bring the Chiarians in this area (together). We have a pot luck, and everyone wears

purple" which is to Chiari what pink is to breast cancer.

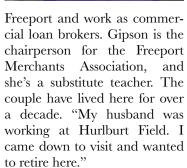
For years, Gipson says she "didn't have a clue what was going on." She kept having symptoms, and her doctors kept dispensing medication. "My chiropractor actually told me what was happening to me and sent me to a neurologist," she says. The neurologist told Gipson she would need to undergo brain decompression surgery, but she ended up not having the procedure.

"My issues are mild," says Gipson. "I'm able to function and drive around the area. There are limitations. I can't lift over 10 pounds, do anything strenuous, or stand or sit for long periods of time, because of the pressure of the brain tissue on the spine. I have to be very cautious."

She and her husband live in







Last year's Conquer Chiari Walk drew 50 participants, some with painted faces and purple tutus. "It's really growing, and people come together." All proceeds from the event go to the



Conquer Chiari Foundation for research and education. "There is no cure for this condition, and funding is really needed for research," says Gipson.

"I want to continue to bring awareness. If people are having headaches and their doctors are calling it migraines, they need to be advocates for their own bodies and make sure it's not Chiari malformation or something related."

Discover more at walk.conquerchiari.org.







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**Community** 

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## Cali's To Do In Destin! AUGUST 2025

Sip & Shop | 3-7pm | EKKO at Destin

• • • • • • • • • 6 • • • • • • • • •

Summer Parties on the Lawn | 5pm-8pm | Destin Commons

C.A.R.E.ing for Turtles | 5pm | Gulfarium Care Center

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

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys

**Wednesday Night Concert Series:** Boukou Groove | 7pm | Baytowne

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty Fireworks | 9pm | Okaloosa Island Boardwalk

Magical Night at Bosforo | 5pm-11pm | Bosforo Mediterranear

Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Café

All American Thursday | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village

Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup 7pm | Downtown Music Hall

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Light-

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village Thursdaze Light Show |9pm|Bay

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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

Summer Parties on the Lawn | 5pm-8pm | Destin Commons

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm

Locals on the Harbor | 5pm | Boathouse Oyster Bar

Coastal Country Concert | 6pm | Harborwalk Village Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm

I Bric a Brac Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 10am | Harborwalk

Inaugural Car Meet | 9am | Step One Back to School Bash | 11am | Destin

Nutcracker Auditions | 12pm | Studio

**Summer Sun-Sets Concert Series** 

6pm | Harborawalk Village



Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry Ts Light-

Free UFC Main Event Fight Night Watch Party | 9pm | Native's Cove

•••••• 10 ••••• **Destin Community Farmers Market** 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Rosé All Day | 1pm | The Henderson

Scallywag Sundays | 7pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

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

Trivia Night | 6pm | Beachview Break-

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery Movie Monday | 8pm | Baytowne Wharf

**EC Public Relations Organization** Meet Up | 11:30am | FWB Chamber Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin Trivia Night | 6pm | Rick's Crab Trap

Boomin' Tuesday Party | 7:15pm | Baytowne Wharf

Boomin' Tuesday Fireworks | 9:15pm | Baytowne Wharf

•••••• 13 ••••• Sip & Shop | 3pm-7pm | EKKO at Destin Commons

Summer Parties on the Lawn | 5pm-8pm | Destin Commons

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay

Music Match Game Night | 5pm | The

Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys

**Trivia Night** | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The

Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Palm Folly Wednesday Night Concert Series

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Café

All American Thursday | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village

Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup 7pm | Downtown Music Hall Karaoke with Mary-aoke | 7pm | Sound-

side FWB Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Thursdaze Light Show | 9pm | Bay-

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm |

Summer Parties on the Lawn | 5pm-8pm | Destin Commons

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

Comedy on the Boulevard | 7pm | Emerald Coast Theatre Co

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm I Bric a Brac Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in

Miramar Beach Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Light-

70th Anniversary Special | All Day | Gulfarium

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Light-

•••••••• 17 ••••• **70th Anniversary Special** | All Day | Gulfarium

**Destin Community Farmers Market** 9pm-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk Rosé All Day | 1pm | The Henderson

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Trivia Night | 6pm | Beachview Breakfast Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap

•••••• 20 ••••• Sip & Shop | 3pm-7pm | EKKO at Destin Commons

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

Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery Rock 'n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The

Wednesday Night Concert Series 7pm | Baytowne Whar

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

**Built to Lead: Women in Construction Summit** | 11am-4pm | Emerald Grande **Ladies Night** | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina

Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup 7pm | Downtown Music Hall

Karaoke with Mary-aoke | 7pm | Soundside FWB

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry Ts Light-Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

•••••• 22 •••••• Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm |

Skybar Destin Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm

Comedy on the Boulevard | 7pm | ECTC at Grand Blvd

Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm l Bric a Brac Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in

Miramar Beach Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry Ts Light-

Free UFC Main Event Fight Night Watch Party | 9pm | Native's Cove

24 ..... **Destin Community Farmers Market** 9pm-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk **Destin Commons Farmers Market** 11am | Destin Commons

The Resting Tree Open House | 11am-2pm | 1177 E. John Sims Pkwy Niceville Rosé All Day | 1pm | The Henderson

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill ••••••• 25

Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm |

Trivia Night | 6pm | Beachview Breakfast

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

•••••• 26 ••••• Mindful Meditation | 9am | Destin Library

Run Club | 4:30pm | Idyll Hounds

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin **Trivia Night** | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap

••••••• 27

Sip & Shop | 3pm-7pm | EKKO at Destin

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

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery Prose & Pours Book Club | 6pm | 30A Distilling Co
Rock 'n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

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

...... 28 ...... Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community

Little Black Dress Night | 6:30pm-9:30pm | Marina Café

Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup 7pm | Downtown Music Hall Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry Ts Light-

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island

Perfect Hues: Baytowne Art Festival 5pm-9pm | Baytowne Wharf Free Outdoor Movie Night | 7:30pm |

Native's Cove Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm

Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in Miramar Beach

Karaoke | 9pm | Harry Ts Lighthouse

..... 30 ..... Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL Perfect Hues: Baytowne Art Festival 5pm-9pm | Baytowne Wharf Labor Day Celebration | 6pm | Harbor-

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Light-

house

Free UFC Main Event Fight Night Watch Party | 9pm | Native's Cove

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

Destin Community Farmers Market 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk Rose All Day | 1pm | The Henderson

Perfect Hues: Baytowne Art Festival 5pm-9pm | Baytowne Wharf Labor Day Celebration | 6pm | Harbor-

Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850 Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill



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# Why Hiring a Full-Service Wedding Planner Is Essential

By Kristin SULLIVAN. THE ALICE

Planning a wedding is one of life's chermost ished journeys, but be-

hind the scenes it can quickly become overwhelming. From timelines and vendor coordination to design logistics and guest experience, the intricacies of a luxury wedding demand more than Pinterest boards and good intentions. At The Alice, and from the lens of a seasoned wedding planner turned venue manager, I have seen it all. And I can confidently and without any doubt say this, "A full-service wedding planner is not just a luxury, it is a necessity."

From the Venue's Point of View: As a luxury waterfront wedding venue, our role is to provide a breathtaking canvas—lush landscapes, seamless flow, five-star amenities, and an unforgettable setting. But when it

Insights from a Venue and a Former Wedding Planner comes to execution, logistics, and guest management, a venue is

not equipped to act as a full time on on-site coordinator, stylist, timeline manager, or emergency fixer. That's where a full-service planner steps in.

#### A professional wedding planner ensures that:

- The vision is brought to life with precision | they translate abstract ideas into tangible results without putting pressure on the venue staff to step outside
- Timelines run smoothly from vendor load-in to breakfast send-offs, a planner orchestrates every moving part with grace and professionalism.
- Expectations are aligned | planners bridge communication between the couple and the venue, ensuring that no detail is lost or misinterpreted.
- · Vendors are vetted and managed | venues work with planners to know who delivers on quality, who communicates well, and who's best suited for a luxury celebration.

• Crisis management is handled quietly and efficiently | if something goes off-script, the planner is the one quietly solving it, without disrupting the flow of your event or your guest experi-

For venues such as The Alice, partnering with a professional planner means we can stay focused on what we do best; hospitality, ambiance and making sure the property is showcased to perfection.

From a Former Wedding Planner's Perspective: After planning destination weddings for over 25 years, I know firsthand what it takes to deliver a flawless celebration. A full-service planner doesn't just make things pretty, they protect your investment, manage your stress, and ensure every vendor, detail, and moment is intentional and elevated.

Here's what many couples do not realize: Venue staff are not wedding planners. They won't create your timeline, cue your music, pin on boutonnieres, wrangle the wedding party, or steam your veil.

Your friends and family should not be responsible for logistics. Your mom, sister, or best friend shouldn't be on the phone with the band, setting chargers

on tables, or wondering where the florist is.

Last-minute surprises happen...often. From weather shifts to power outages to misplaced

Continued on page 42





















## The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Big Lineup:

Brews, Art, Music & More!

#### Save the Date for the 17th **Annual Baytowne Fest!** Friday, Oct. 10 - Saturday, Oct. 11 | The Village of **Baytowne Wharf**

Mark your calendars - the barrels are about to roll again! The Village of Baytowne Wharf is gearing up for its 17th Annual Baytowne Beer Fest, one of the Emerald Coast's favorite fall traditions. This two-day celebration of hops, malts, and mouthwatering bites returns Oct. 10-11 with more flavors, more music and more reasons to raise a glass.

The main tasting event happens Saturday, Oct. 11, from 2-5 p.m., featuring more than 200 craft beers plus tempting food tastings to pair with your pours. From local favorites and American specialties to bold, international brews, you'll sip and savor as you chat with brewery reps, explore the brand-new "Beer from Around Here" showcase, stroll the returning fan-favorite Seltzer Lane and soak up live music all weekend long.

Best of all, it's beer and bites for a cause - a portion of proceeds benefits Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and the Sandestin Foundation for Kids.

Tickets go on sale mid-August! Stay tuned for updates and full beer and food lineups at baytownebeerfestival.com.

## **Perfect Hues: Baytowne Wharf Art Fest!**

#### Friday, August 29th -Sunday, August 31st | 5-9 p.m. nightly | FREE

This Labor Day Weekend, join Baytowne Wharf for Per-





fect Hues: Baytowne Wharf Art Fest. Each evening from 5-9 p.m., stroll The Village streets as you browse a variety of artwork from local and regional artists. Enjoy LIVE music throughout the festival and a spectacular fireworks show over the lagoon on Sunday at 9 p.m. Kick off the fall season with this unique, moonlit weekend!

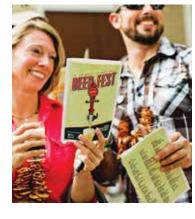
### Music Line up: **Friday**

5-7 p.m | Jessie Ritter 7:30-9 p.m | Tanner Gray Saturday

5-7 p.m | Casey Kearney 7:30-9 p.m | Almost Famous Sunday

5-7 p.m | Emily Bass 7:30-9 p.m | Jared Herzog

Vendor Registration ends Aug. 18.



#### A Can't Miss Wednesday **Night Concert Series!** Wednesdays NOW -August 27

7-9 p.m. | FREE **Events Plaza Stage** 

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

### Live Local Favorites Music Lineup:

August 6: Boukou Groove August 13: 12Eleven August 20: One False Move August 27: Saltwater Revival

#### **Movie Monday**

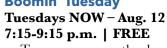
### Mondays NOW - August 11 8 p.m. | FREE

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

August 11 | A Minecraft Movie

## **Boomin' Tuesday**

Turn your eyes on the sky and



watch as Baytowne Wharf lights up the night with a breath-taking, fireworks show over the Village Lagoon at 9:15 p.m. PLUS now enjoy a DJ Dance Party with DJ Mike Whitty in the

## **Thursdaze Lights Show** Thursdays NOW -August 14

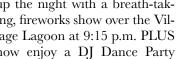
Events Plaza at 7:15 p.m.

This one-of-a-kind aerial









## 9 p.m. | FREE

display blends technology and coastal charm, making it the perfect way to celebrate the magic of the Village under the stars!

## **Beach TV LIVE!**

Tune in on Beach TV daily live to watch what all is going on in The Village of Baytowne Wharf LIVE!

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







## **Destin Seafood Festival Returns for 47th Year** with Local Flavors and Live Music

By Cali Hlavac

One of Destin's most beloved traditions is back and bigger than ever. The Destin Seafood Festival returns Sept. 26–28 for its 47th year, transforming the Destin Harbor into a milelong celebration of fresh Gulf seafood, live music and coastal culture. More than 30,000 locals and visitors are expected to attend this free, family-friendly

Stretching from HarborWalk Village to Heron Harbor, the festival features five stages of live music with local and regional artists performing everything from rock and reggae to country and tropical tunes-and more. The pedestrian-friendly, waterfront boardwalk and docks become a feast for the senses as more than 100 local food and craft vendors — jewelry, clothing, sculpture, glass, watercolors, oil paintings, designs and more — plus Destin's favorite restaurants — serve up seafood specialties, cold drinks and handmade art. And don't

Visit Our Website

www.destinseafoodfest.com



forget this year's seafood festival T-shirt!

A Festival with Local Flavor: What began in 1978 as a one-day gathering on "Kelly's Hill" to honor local fishermen has grown into a can't-miss Destin tradition. Proceeds still benefit the community, supporting the Destin Charter Boat Association, Miss Destin scholarships, the Destin Fisherman's Fund and other local causes.

Festival organizers pride themselves on keeping admission free, though VIP passes are available for those who want an elevated experience. With your paid ticket, the VIP area offers unlimited tastings from local restaurants and chefs, private restrooms, a cash bar, TVs and



exclusive live music. This year's VIP highlight is Cajun TwoStep founder, viral cooking sensation and influencer Stalekracker, who will take over the VIP Main Stage on Sunday with live demos and plenty of Louisiana flair!

Fun for All Ages: Kids won't be left out of the fun. The expanded Kids Zone, sponsored by Fudpucker's, features oyster shell painting, sand art and play areas for little ones. The HarborWalk Kids Fun Zone adds hamster balls, a rock-climbing wall, zip line and face painting with a shaded seating tent nearby for parents to relax.

Music on the Harbor: Music lovers can bring a chair, kick back or dance along the docks as local bands play on



each of the five stages throughout the weekend. Harbor restaurants and bars will also host their own lineups of local favorites. A full entertainment schedule will be announced at DestinSeafoodFestival.com.

Parking and Shuttle In**formation:** Festival parking will be available at Heron Harbor, HarborWalk Village, the Marler public lots, Destin Community Center and the Destin Fishing Museum. Free shuttles will run from Morgan Sports Complex to the Destin Harbor throughout the weekend.

The Destin Seafood Festival serves as the kickoff to October's month-long Destin Fishing Rodeo, another cornerstone of local tradition. Whether you're



a longtime local or first-time visitor, this is your chance to savor fresh Gulf flavors, soak up harbor views and celebrate the community's fishing heritage.

For festival maps, vendor information, VIP passes and sponsorship opportunities, visit DestinSeafoodFestival.com or email info@destinseafoodfest.

Come hungry. Leave happy. See you on the Harbor! Info & VIP Tickets: DestinSeafoodFestival.com.





# SOF Missions Hosts 9th Annual GALA to Ignite Hope and Honor Our Nation's Heroes

Shield of Faith (SOF) Missions is proud to announce the 9th Annual Emerald Coast Gala, returning to the prestigious Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center on Septem-

ber 13, 2025. This year's theme, Military Code: RED, represents our steadfast commitment to Resilience, Empowerment and Determination in support of our Nation's warriors. SOF Missions remains dedicated to its mission of combating the tragic epidemic of suicide among our warriors, including active-duty service members, Veterans and first responders. To

date, the organization has provided more than \$10.1 million in support to over 3,500 warriors nationwide through the Be Resilient Clinics and local Warrior Retreats held at EXOS at Andrews Institute, delivering comprehensive, no-cost care to those who need it most. These clinics focus on the psychological, physical, social, and spiritual health of each person. Care plans are provided through clinical, coordinated, and collaborative care.

With a striking red theme and formal flair, the evening promises a powerful blend of elegance, celebration, and purpose. Guests will enjoy live entertainment by Thin Ice, an electrifying rock band that is sure to light up the night. The culinary team at the Convention Center will deliver an unforgettable red-themed dining experience showcasing their exceptional talent and creativity.

The gala will feature an inspiring keynote address from a distinguished warrior guest speaker, alongside exciting live and silent auctions, signature drinks, and opportunities to connect with others who are pas-

MISSIONS

sionate about honoring and supporting our heroes.

All proceeds from the event will directly benefit the warriors who need it most, ensuring they receive personalized care regardless of their financial circumstances.

This is more than a gala. It is a statement. It is a celebration. It is a night to stand united in RED and boldly declare that our Warriors matter.

- **Tickets:** \$100 per person OR Sponsorship Opportunities
  - Live music by Thin Ice

Ticket includes dinner, dessert, and one complimentary drink

- **Attire:** Formal Red Theme. Elegant. Fierce. Unapologetically bold.
- Location: Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

To purchase tickets or explore sponsorship opportunities, please visit www.sofmissions.org/gala.









## **Around Town Events**

## **Comedy on the Boulevard Returns**

## Friday, Aug. 22, 2025 | 7 p.m. | ECTC's Main Stage at Grand Boulevard

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) and Panama City Comedy team up for another laugh-out-loud night with Comedy on the Boulevard presented by Blue Water Oral Surgery Center. The show features three acclaimed comedians bringing clean, family-friendly humor to Miramar Beach. Performing nationally, Nashville-based comedian and filmmaker Brinn Daniels, a Florida native, brings her quick wit and self-deprecating humor to our local stage. Joey Nickel, winner of the 2022 Savannah Comedy Competition, left his job at Apple to pursue stand-up full time. Known for his clean, relatable humor (and hairy appearance), Nickel performs regularly across the country. Award-winning comic Tara Brown is celebrated for her family-friendly style, earning titles like "Best Comedian" (Queen City Nerve, 2019) and winning Jeanne Robertson's "Comedy with Class" competi-

Tickets are \$27–\$45 plus processing fee. Purchase at emeraldcoasttheatre.org/special-events.

## **Built to Lead: Women in Construction Summit**

#### Thursday, Aug. 21 | Emerald Grande, HarborWalk Village, Destin

Join ContractHER Connect for a dynamic day of leadership, networking, and industry insight tailored for women in construction, design, and development. Featuring keynote speaker Sarah Stein (Sarah Stein Homes), expert panels, lunch, and a networking mixer at AJ's.

Tickets \$150. Info: contractors-connect.com/contracther-connect or email info@beespokeconsulting.com

#### Solaris Dinner Cruise for Taylor Haugen Foundation Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2025 | Baytowne Marina,

Miramar Beach

Set sail for an unforgettable evening supporting the Taylor Haugen Foundation and its mission to protect student athletes from abdominal injuries. Enjoy fine yacht cuisine with chef-selected desserts, a wine pull, and silent and live auctions—all while hearing inspiring stories from founders Brian and Kathy Haugen.

Boarding: 5:30 p.m. | Sail: 6–8 p.m.

Proceeds provide education and advanced protective gear for secondary youth athletes.

Tickets & sponsorships: TaylorHaugen.org

#### LadyWorld Festival - Pop Culture, Podcasts & Power Vibes

### Sept. 26–28 | Seascape Resort, Miramar Beach

The LadyGang is back with LadyWorld 2025, an immersive weekend escape packed with pop culture, comedy, music, and inspiration. This 3-day retreat features powerhouse headliners like Hannah Berner and the Girls Gotta Eat podcast duo, plus Kaitlyn Bristowe, Rachel Lindsay, Stassi Schroeder, and more.

Dive into glam workshops, wellness events, live podcasts, signature cocktails, photo ops, and plenty of Instagrammable moments! Multiple ticket tiers and accommodation options available. VIPs get exclusive merch, private planning access and more.

Grab your girlfriends and get your passes at Ladyworld.co

## **Golf4TheCure - Gulf Coast Tournament**

#### Friday, Sept. 12 | Raven Golf Club, Sandestin

Swing into action for a great cause at the 2nd Annual Golf4T-heCure — Gulf Coast Tournament, benefiting St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Enjoy 18 holes at the stunning Raven Golf Club, plus player gifts, raffle prizes, hole contests, and a post-play celebration complete with dinner, live music, a Kid's Zone, and the magical Lighting of the Lanterns tribute.

Register or sponsor at Golf4TheCure-Gulf-Coast.per-fectgolfevent.com

# 10th Annual Bloody Mary Festival - A Decade of Delicious!

### Saturday, Oct. 11 | 11 a.m.-2 p.m. | The Market Shops, Miramar Beach

Get ready to Eat, Drink, and B MARY! Celebrate 10 years of



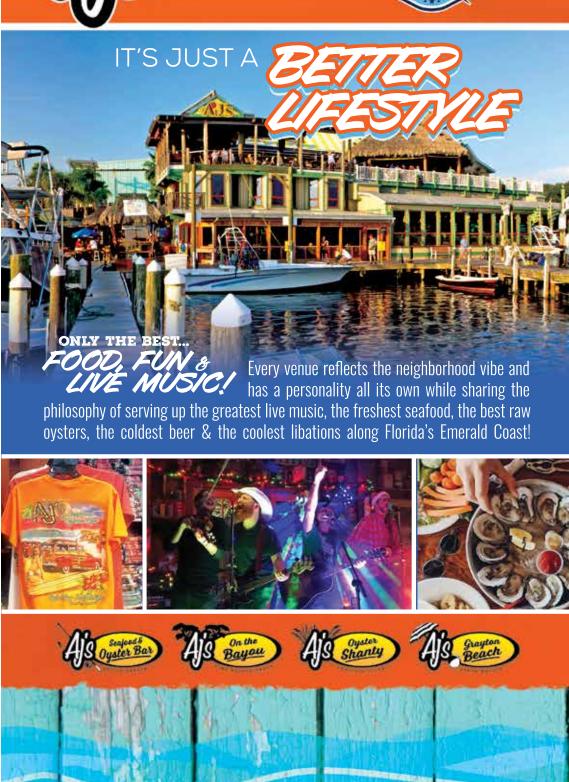
bold flavors and brunch vibes at the 10th Annual Bloody Mary Festival, powered by Step One Automotive Group. Sample unlimited creative bloody marys from the area's best restaurants and bars—loaded with overthe-top garnishes from grilled cheese to sushi.

Also enjoy craft brews, bubbly, food vendors, live music, a cigar bar, and SEC football on the big screen. 21+ only. Proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity – Walton County.

Info and tickets: TheMarket-Shops.com/Bloody-Mary-Fes-

Continued on page 24







## Palms Resort Brings Dinner, Drinks, Live Magic & Comedy to Destin!

An action-packed live show featuring World-Class Magic Comedy and Ventriloquism is now open with nightly shows at the newly renovated Palms Destin Resort Showroom.

Interactive magic takes place just inches away in an intimate showroom that offers excellent table seating. The performance features sophisticated magic & smart comedy targeting adults but is family-friendly and appropriate for all ages. The show is headlined by Bart Rockett who hosted his own nationally syndicated television show for three seasons, had a co-starring role on the former NBC Drama Parenthood and headlined his own 1.000-seat theater in the tourist mecca of Branson, Missouri for nine seasons. He has appeared in 85 countries around the globe and headlined for most every major cruise line.

AS SEEN ON

NBC CBS

Featurings

Hallmark



Rockett, who started at the age of 10, trained under Jeff Dunham and is recognized for his excellent comedy ventriloquism which is featured in the show. After growing up in the South, Rockett moved to Hollywood, California where his management team is located. He produced his teens to the finals of NBC's America's Got Talent and they have gone on to do major Hollywood projects over the years. Kadan, who starred in the movie Dark Skies with award winning actress Keri Russell and on CBS's rush hour

"Daw-dropping magic act"

combines forces with his Sister, Brooklyn to make guest appearances in Rockett's Destin show.

Brooklyn is well known for her viral Super Bowl commercial that currently has nearly 800 million views on YouTube and most recently played Hollywood superstar Bradley Cooper's daughter in a project with Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

This talented family has been vacationing in Destin for many years and now that Rockett's

kids are almost grown, he is excited to be back for a longterm residency in the place his Grandparents first introduced him to as a child. Rockett shared, "For me, coming back here feels like coming home. Some of my greatest childhood memories happened on these beaches and it's my desire to bring something unique to the area that is a fun experience for families to attend & make their own amazing memories."

Nightly shows happen at

7:30 p.m. with 5 p.m. early seatings offered on Sunday's and select dates. A variety of alcoholic & non-alcoholic beverages are available as well as a full menu of food and dessert offerings before or after the show. Parking is plentiful and free in The Palms Destin Resort multi-level parking garage, that is attached to the showroom.

Advance reservations are required and can be made at the official ticketing site: USATour-Tickets.LIVE.

## 26th Annual Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show Coming to Destin-FWB Convention Center

Wes Fell, a longtime resident of Destin/Fort Walton Beach and the promoter of the Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show, invites the community to the 26th Annual event on Saturday and Sunday, September 20-21, 2025, at the Destin-FWB Convention Center, 1250 Miracle Strip Parkway, FWB.

This exciting two-day event—now in its 26th consecutive year-will feature over 100 Home Show and general business vendors. Attendees

can explore information and discounts on:

- Insurance, Roofing, A/C, Plumbing, Mortgages, Homes
- Interior Design, Flooring, Pools, Spas, Shutters, Leaf Guards
- Furniture, Generators, Siding, Heating & AC, Solar, Painting, and Remodeling
- Closets, Bath & Kitchen Remodeling, Windows, Doors, and more
- Electronics, Computers, Cell Phones, Vacations
  - Plus, health and wellness

vendors including Chiropractic, Hearing, Massage Therapy, and Skin Care

Emerald Coast Marine will also host a Super Boat Show and Sale with discounted boat show specials.

To register for booth space or for more info, contact Wes Fell at 850-353-2832 or email wesfell@cox.net.

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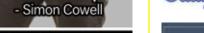














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To Become a Vendor or Sponsor in This Great Event - Contact Wes Fell (Event Promoter) at 850-353-2832 or WesFell@Cox.Net More Info & Registration Form at www.ParadisePromotionsfl.com

This is Another Great Paradise Promotion





## Menopause Doesn't Have to Be Miserable

By Dr. Karen DeVore

Let's start with something every woman de-

serves to hear: Menopause is not the end of your vitality.

It's a transition—a powerful, sometimes challenging, often misunderstood chapter in your life. And at the Tortoise Clinic, we believe it can also be one of your most empowered.

#### A New Conversation Around Women's Health

Too many women come to me saying the same things:

"My doctor told me everything's normal, but I still feel off."

"I was offered antidepressants but never asked about my hormones."

"I'm gaining weight, can't sleep, and I don't feel like myself anymore." Sound familiar?

Menopause and the years leading up to it (peri-menopause) can cause a wide range of symptoms—hot flashes, mood swings, insomnia, brain fog, low libido, fatigue, and weight changes. But instead of support, many women are dismissed or handed a pill without a deeper conversation.

That's where integrative care changes the game.

## What Is Integrative Menopause Care?

Integrative medicine blends the best of both Eastern and Western healing traditions. It means we don't just look at your labs—we look at your life. We consider your diet, stress levels, sleep, relationships, work, and everything else that impacts your well-being.

At the Tortoise Clinic, menopause care is never one-size-fits-all. It's personal, proactive, and designed around you.

# Your Hormones Aren't the Whole Story-But They Matter

As your estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone shift, it can affect nearly every system in your body—from mood to metabolism to memory. We use advanced hormone testing (including DUTCH and blood panels) to uncover where imbalances are hiding.

But we also look beyond hormones.

- Is stress overloading your adrenals?
- Is poor sleep undermining your immune system?
- Is your gut health affecting your mood or inflammation?

All of these matter. And all of these can be addressed—often without relying solely on medication.

#### Our Holistic, Patient-Centered Approach

Every woman's body is different. That's why we offer personalized wellness plans that meet you where you are. Here's what menopause support can look like at the Tortoise Clinic:

Functional Lab Testing: We go beyond standard bloodwork to assess hormone patterns (including DUTCH testing), thyroid function, nutrient status, and inflammatory markers. "Normal" isn't always optimal—we help you find what's right for you.

Herbal Medicine & Supplements: We craft custom herbal formulas and use medical-grade supplements to support sleep, reduce hot flashes, regulate cycles, and improve energy and focus.

Acupuncture: These therapies help calm the nervous system, improve circulation, balance hormones, and reduce the intensity of menopausal symptoms naturally.

Nutrition & Lifestyle Coaching: We guide you in making smart, sustainable changes that support hormone health, blood sugar stability, and overall vitality. No fads. No deprivation.

**Real Conversations:** We take the time to listen to your story, your goals, and your challenges. You won't be rushed or brushed off. You'll be heard.

#### **Why This Matters**

Menopause doesn't mean you have to slow down, suffer through, or give up on feeling great. It's a biological transformation, and it deserves thoughtful care. When supported correctly, women often feel more grounded, intuitive, and powerful than ever.

And the results speak for themselves: Women at the Tortoise Clinic tell us they're sleeping better, thinking clearer, reconnecting with their energyand feeling more like themselves again.

## Your Next Step Toward Vibrant Health

If you're in perimenopause, menopause, or even postmenopausal and struggling with energy, mood, sleep, or weight—don't wait for it to get worse.

Let's get to the root of it, together.

We're proud to be voted Best in Destin for Women's Wellness—and we'd be honored to support you on your wellness journey. Give us a call at 850.267.5611 or visit Tortoise-Clinic.com to schedule your consultation and mention this article to receive \$30 off your first service as a new patient.

Menopause isn't the end of anything. It's the beginning of living in deeper alignment with your body—strong, aware, and empowered. Let's walk that path—slow and steady—togeth-

# WOMEN'S WELLNESS REIMAGINED

What if your story mattered as much as your labs?

What if "normal" isn't optimal for you?

What if your fatigue, bloating, or anxiety isn't just stress - but a sign your body needs support?



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## Trends & Treasures!













#### Paw-sitively Perfect Gifts Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

Christmas magic starts early at Frill Seekers Gifts—and this year's breakout hit is the Beaded Pet Coin Purse. Each hand-beaded bag is personalized with your furry friend's likeness—dogs, cats, horses, even bearded dragons have been featured!

Founder Heidi LoCicero and her team transform your pet's photo into a wearable keepsake. Choose bead colors for the bag, add your pet's name in contrasting hues, and let the personalization elves craft a custom piece. Available as coin purses, wristlets, or clutch handbags, these gifts spark conversations wherever they go.

Custom work takes time—so start early and cross names off your list now. Free gift wrapping available in-store.

Mon–Fri: 10 a.m.–5 p.m. | Sat: 10 a.m.–2 p.m. (850) 460-2700 frillseekersgifts.com

#### Give Your Hair the Summer Treatment It Deserves Pure & Couture Salon

Pure Collective Salon
Looking for a stylist who can truly do it all? Meet Megan Wages, this month's featured stylist. With more than 10 years on the team, Megan has earned a reputation for her versatility and artistry. From Brazilian blowouts, keratin treatments,

hair extensions and precision cuts to styling for both men and women, she transforms every client who sits in her chair.

Megan is also a Certified Spray Tan Artist and skilled makeup artist, making her a one-stop shop for full-glam makeovers. Brides and bridal parties especially love Megan for her ability to create customized, elegant looks that perfectly fit the occasion. Her calm, professional presence makes wedding mornings stress-free and unforgettable. Whether you're refreshing your style midweek or prepping for a big event, you'll leave her chair feeling polished and confident.

Keep that salon look lasting longer with pro-grade products such as Oribe Gold Lust. These concentrated formulas protect color, enhance shine, fight frizz and guard against heat and UV—something drugstore products just can't match.

Special this month: Buy any shampoo, conditioner and styling product and receive \$20 off your purchase. Because your hair is an investment—treat it like one. Book today and experience the difference artistry makes.

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pureandcouture.com | purecollectivesalon.com

(Second location: 600 Grand Blvd., Ste. 102)

#### Cupcakes Make The Summer Smallcakes: A Cupcakery

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dream it, we can cake it. From flamingo-topped pool party carrot cakes to piano-key cupcakes, every creation is customized to celebrate life's sweetest moments.

Stop by for 13 signature cupcake flavors, four rotating specialties, housemade ice cream, jumbo cookies, cookie cakes, brownies, and even pupcakes for four-legged friends. August favorites include tropical-inspired treats bursting with color and flavor.

Need something extra special? Smallcakes customizes cakes and cupcakes with logos, photos or personal messages—perfect for birthdays, showers, or corporate events. Try a mini 12-pack sampler and taste every flavor!

Open Mon.–Sat. 11–7; Sun. 11–4.

(850) 842-9002 SmallcakesDestin.com | @Small-CakesofDestin

#### Dare to Dazzle Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Looking for a statement piece that's truly yours? At Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry, owner Ashleigh Woolly blends timeless elegance with fresh summer style. The showroom features one-of-a-kind coastal-inspired pieces in vivid gemstone colors and cuts—perfect for marking milestones, popping the question, or upgrading your everyday sparkle.

Custom design is Ashleigh's specialty. Whether it's crafting

wedding bands, engagement rings, or heirloom-worthy pieces, she takes pride in helping couples and clients celebrate life's biggest moments. From bold statement jewelry to refined classics like the Platinum 2.68 carat Paraiba Tourmaline with half-moon diamonds, each creation reflects care and creativity.

Ready to find (or create) something unforgettable? Visit Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry for a curated, one-on-one shopping experience.

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

#### Stronger Starts Here CRYO850 Performance & Recovery Center

Kick off the school year with an edge at CRYO850's brandnew Performance Center, now featuring Visionbody Wireless EMS Training and Reflexion Neuroscience Vision Training. EMS uses adjustable stimulation to boost strength, burn fat, and improve mobility in just 20 minutes-perfect for all ages and fitness levels, from beginners to competitive athletes. Reflexion's vision board sharpens hand-eye coordination, reaction time, and peripheral awareness. It even helps establish baselines to track recovery after impacts.

Back-to-school deals include: EMS Suit Fitting & Demo (50% off), Vision Training Packages (6 sessions \$149, 12 sessions \$299), Wild Ice Teen Facials (\$69), and the Student Season Pass Bundle (\$400, includes PPE bag and premium services). Student memberships also include free gear and services—up to \$140 in value!

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# **Bring Hope Now:** Local Nonprofit Aims to Solve Youth Mental Health Crisis

By Peggy Brockman

Imagine receiving a call from your child's school: your middle-schooler, diagnosed with ADD, lost his temper and screamed, "I wish I were dead." Because the staff knows you, they give you the option to take him to the emergency room yourself, instead of calling law enforcement.

You arrive at the ER, but there's no child psychologist. The ER doctor decides to send your child—seven hours away—to a facility in Orlando for evaluation. You object. Emotions rise. The doctor blames you and asks you to leave. Your child is transported anyway, placed in a holding area with wooden slab beds and other children in crisis, screaming. He's terrified.

Three days later, a tele-psychiatrist finds your child isn't a threat and should be released. But when you return from a brief trip home, you discover your child was already transferred to an inpatient facility in Pensacola—without your consent. He must now remain for another three days, all while you watch helplessly.

This is the true story a mother shared with me after a recent

Bring Hope Now presentation. Though a few years have passed and improvements have been made—such as the addition of Mobile Response Teams that now evaluate students on campus—children in crisis in our area still face long waits in local ERs and may be transported hours away due to a lack of local facilities.

This is exactly why we founded Bring Hope Now.

#### **A Growing Crisis**

In 2019, two community leaders—David Triana, founder of United for a Good Cause, and myself, Peggy Brockman—joined forces to address a terrifying trend: Northwest Florida, particularly Okaloosa County, had one of the fastest-growing youth suicide rates in the state.

We set out to bring hope through a national peer-to-peer suicide prevention program in local schools. Eglin Federal Credit Union kickstarted our mission with a \$50,000 donation. With support from Superintendent Marcus Chambers and the Okaloosa County School Board, the program launched in 2020. By the end of 2022, every school in the district had the



program in place. It became a model of success.

In 2024, Bring Hope Now officially separated from United for a Good Cause to pursue broader goals. We expanded into the military community with "Hope on the Line," a peer-led suicide prevention initiative for active-duty personnel. But another pressing need was calling us: a lack of local youth mental health facilities.

## By the Numbers: Why Local Help Matters

The data is staggering. In

the 2022–2023 school year, 376 children under 18 in Okaloosa and Walton Counties were involuntarily Baker Acted. Of those, 76% were first-time cases, and 92 were repeat cases.

Statewide, 87% of youth Baker Acts are due to suicidality: 46% had suicidal thoughts, 28% had a plan, and 10% had made an attempt.

Children are typically taken to a local ER, where they wait for an inpatient bed to open in Pensacola or Panama City. Some wait days. If extended treatment is needed, they're sent even farther—to Jacksonville or Orlando—hours from family and support systems. Many families can't even afford to retrieve their children afterward.

## What if that child were yours?

According to Florida Health Charts, 168 people in Okaloosa and Walton Counties went to an emergency room for self-harm injuries in 2023. Shockingly, 121 of them—72%—were children ages 5 to 19. Yes, even as young as five.

## From the 2023 Florida Youth Survey:

- 22% of students said they almost always felt symptoms of stress, anxiety, or depression.
- 46% said these emotions stopped them from doing daily activities.
- 19% had seriously considered self-harm.
- Encouragingly, 31% sought help.

But we need more resources. And we need them here.

## The Mission Ahead

With strong leadership from Board Chair Kathy Houchins and a growing board of community advocates, Bring Hope Now's next mission is clear: establish a youth mental health treatment facility for Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

We're currently seeking a facility or land to build a welcoming, home-like inpatient center. Until that becomes a reality,

we continue to train community members through QPR Gatekeeper Training—equipping everyday citizens with the tools to recognize suicide warning signs and how to respond.

We also aim to launch a local loss survivor program to support families who've lost loved ones to suicide.

#### **A Community That Cares**

We believe in this mission because we've lived it. I've personally experienced the pain of a suicide attempt and subsequent residential treatment with a grandson. I know what families are facing.

Bring Hope Now is not just one organization—it's a movement of people, volunteers, educators, parents, and advocates committed to changing the story for our youth.

On September 6, we'll host our 3rd Annual Bring Hope Dragon Boat Race at The Gulf on Okaloosa Island. It's not only a fundraiser—it's a celebration of resilience and community. We're looking for sponsors, racing teams, raffle and auction items, volunteers, and in-kind support. Do you know a family who's lost a loved one to suicide? We'd be honored to include a sign in their memory at the event.

To get involved or learn more, visit www.BringHope-Now.com.

It may take a village to raise a child—but it takes a whole community to save one.







# Deals Are Dying—But Here's the Move That Could Save Yours (And Add \$10K in Value)



By Paul Domenech, Mindset Coach, Realtor, Team Leader, The Domenech Group

## What's the proper way to value a home?

Most would say location, square footage, or recent comps. But in today's Florida market, affordability is king. And right now, it's under attack, not just from interest rates, but from a quieter, deadlier force: insurance premiums.

Here in Florida, we're seeing more and more deals collapse, not because the buyer didn't qualify, but because the insurance quote pushed the monthly payment past the pain point. In some cases, it's adding hundreds of dollars a month, pricing buyers out and slowing down momentum for sellers.

Everyone loves to blame the Fed. And sure, rates are a factor. But to think this market is being shaped by interest rates alone is short-sighted. The real killers of affordability right now? Insurance and fear.

But here's what most people don't know: there's a state-funded solution already in play that could be a game changer.

The My Safe Florida Home Grant Program, backed by the state and launched under Governor Ron DeSantis, provides eligible homeowners with up to \$10,000 in grant funding to harden their homes, things like impact windows, storm-rated doors and new roofs. These

upgrades don't just make your home safer, they make it more insurable. And that's the key.

By reducing risk, you reduce premiums. And when you reduce premiums, you reduce total monthly cost. In a high-rate environment, that matters more than ever.

This program doesn't just benefit homeowners staying put. It also positions sellers to stand out, and helps buyers afford more. It's one of the rare opportunities where everyone can win.

Want in? Visit MySafeFL-Home.com to check eligibility and apply. It's fast. It's free. And it could unlock real value in a tight market.

## Now let's talk about the next steps.

Because while this program is great, it's not the full solution. What you need is a strategy, not just a grant. You need a plan tailored to this market, built around your goals, and led



by someone who's not just chasing transactions but maximizing outcomes.

# That's where Pauly and The Domenech Group come in.

With hundreds of homes sold and boots-on-the-ground experience through every shift in this market, we don't guess—we guide. Whether you're buying, selling, or trying to time your next move, our team knows how to navigate challenges and turn pressure into profit.

We don't chase deals. We create results.

Visit THEDOMENECH-GROUP.com to connect with a team that knows how to move with purpose and lead with value—no matter what the market throws your way.

The opportunity is real. Let's go get it.

# A House Sold Name



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## Paul A. Domenech

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# Destin High School Opens with New Programs for 2025–26

Why settle for ordinary when you can have exceptional private school-type education completely tuition-free right here in the heart of Destin? While limited seats remain, enrollment is still open for the 2025–26 school

year at Destin High School (DHS), a top-performing public charter school.

Founded in 2021, DHS continues to grow rapidly. The Class of 2025 marked a milestone as the first to complete all four

years at the school and its largest graduating class yet, with 141 students. Principal Dr. Diane Kelley said the school's mission remains the same: equipping students with the academics, real-world experiences, and lead-



ership opportunities to thrive in college, careers and life.

## **Academics and Career Pathways**

DHS offers multiple academic tracks, including Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, honors, and standard courses alongside multiple career and technical education courses. Students are encouraged to tailor their education toward college or specialized careers, supported by expert faculty and community partnerships.

A new Culinary Arts Program debuts this year, led by Chef Davy Crockett of Keiser University. The program will provide hands-on training rooted in real-world practices, joining DHS's award-winning Performing and Visual Arts program and its growing radio broadcasting club in partnership with DestinFM. Additionally, Mr. J.C. Hollis will offer cybersecurity and introduction to information technology courses as another new addition.

DHS's Future Business Leaders of America chapter, led by Ms. Kelly Tucker, has also drawn attention statewide. Ranking high out of 1,400 schools that competed in the High School Stock Market Game, and while also earning first place at the 2025 state competition in social media marketing.

## **Athletics Achieve State- Level Status**

Since opening, DHS has built a competitive athletics program featuring more than 20 varsity sports. In June, the school earned full membership in the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA), allowing all varsity teams to compete for state championships.

Full membership followed a three-year application and provisional period. The school's FHSAA classification will vary by sport, but is expected to bring new opportunities for student-athletes and the Destin community.

### **Unique Coastal Programs**

Destin High offers experiences unlike any other school in the nation, thanks to its location on Florida's Emerald Coast.

The school is home to the only high school-based artificial reef program in the United States. Through its Fishing Education Program, students partner with Reefmaker of Orange Beach, Ala., to construct and deploy 5,500-pound concrete reefs in the Gulf. More than 20 reefs now sit 65 feet deep off the Okaloosa Island Pier, serving both as marine habitats and personalized memorials.

DHS is also the only Florida high school where students can earn a captain's license through a saltwater fishing program, preparing them for careers in charter or commercial fishing.

## New Four-and-a-Half Day School Week Launches

This fall, DHS will transition to a four-and-a-half-day school week. Classes will run Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Fridays will bring morning classes with dismissal at 11:30 a.m. for students to participate in internships and local service and volunteer opportunities. More than 80 percent of surveyed parents supported the shift, which school leaders say will provide focused instruction and improved work-life balance for families.

## **Staying Connected: ParentSquare**

To improve communica-

Continued on page 30





## **Emerald Coast Excellence:**

## Okaloosa Schools Earn Top Florida DOE Grades

The Florida Department of Education has released school grades for the 2024–2025 academic year, and it's great news! Okaloosa County School District has earned coveted "A" ratings, underscoring its commitment to academic excellence, student success and continuous improvement. These ratings reflect strong performance in key indicators such as graduation rates, learning gains, middle and high school acceleration, and college and career readiness.

Okaloosa County School District (OCSD) sustained excellence across the board once again earning an "A" rating, continuing its tradition of academic achievement. OCSD is one of only three districts in Florida to have earned an "A" every year school grades have been issued since 2014. The district posted a total of 793 points, up from 772 last year, and saw 92% of schools receive an A or B—an increase from 86% in the previous year.

OCSD also maintained an impressive 88% graduation rate and posted academic gains in English Language Arts, Math, Science and Civics. Notably, there was a 9-point gain in middle school acceleration and a 6-point increase in college and career acceleration.

## Graduation Rates by High School:

• Laurel Hill School – 100%

- Niceville High School 97%
- Crestview High School 97%
- Baker School 95%
- Choctawhatchee High School
- Fort Walton Beach High School – 89%

## School Grade Improvements (2024 - 2025):

- Schools earning an A increased from 15 to 19
- Schools earning a B decreased from 17 to 15
- Schools earning a C decreased from 5 to 3

## Notable School Improvements:

- B to A: Baker School, Bruner Middle School, Davidson Middle School, Walker Elementary
- C to B: Choctawhatchee High School, Edwins Elementary, Shalimar Elementary

## Schools Just One Point Shy of an "A":

- Fort Walton Beach High School
- Meigs Middle School
- Northwood Elementary School

## Schools with Consistent "A" Ratings (Past 3 Years):

- Elementary: Antioch, Bluewater, Destin, Edge, Florosa, Plew
- Middle: Destin, Ruckel
- Specialized: Okaloosa STEMM Academy, North-

# west Florida Ballet Academie • High School: Niceville High School

Superintendent Marcus Chambers praised the district's accomplishments, saying, "Once again, Okaloosa County has demonstrated what is possible when students, teachers, families, and school leaders work together toward a com-

mon goal. Earning an A rating is a reflection of the high standards we hold ourselves to and our belief in continuous improvement."

# Bluewater

PLASTIC SURGERY

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Board Certified Plastic Surgeon

Michelle Sasala MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner/Aesthetic Injector

## **OFFERING**



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## Month-Long Backto-School Sales Tax Holiday All August

Destin families can save big this month thanks to the Backto-School Sales Tax Holiday, running through Sunday, Aug. 31. The month-long event offers tax-free purchases on essential school items, clothing and electronics just in time for the new school year.

#### Tax-free items include:

• School supplies \$50 or less (binders, notebooks, pens, lunch boxes)

- Clothing and shoes \$100 or less (backpacks, pants, shirts, sweaters)
- Learning aids \$30 or less (flashcards, puzzles, interactive books)
- Computers and accessories \$1,500 or less (laptops, printers, headphones)

For full details and qualifying items, visit FloridaRevenue.com/BackToSchool.

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## **Built to Grow:**

## Why Investing in People Makes a Stronger Community



By Danica LaFaire, Owner

– Fish Window Cleaning,
Destin

The sun reflecting off a perfectly clean window here in Destin is a beautiful sight. But, what truly shines at Fish Window Cleaning isn't just the glass – it's the people behind it.

If you've ever walked into a business and just felt the energy — that sense of pride, kindness and ownership — then you already understand the kind of workplace I'm trying to build.

At Fish Window Cleaning here in Destin, we clean glass, yes. But that's just the tool. What we're really doing is building people up, creating jobs with purpose, and helping Northwest Florida shine — inside and out.

I've been asked before, "Why

put so much energy into cul-

My answer is simple, "because how a business treats its people affects everything. It affects the service customers receive. It affects the mood employees carry home. And it absolutely shapes the strength and resilience of our local community."

## That's why our mission is clear:

To provide year-round, growth-focused employment while keeping Northwest Florida beautiful, delivering excellent service, and being positive community stewards.

And that mission starts with our team.

## Culture Is the Foundation

We believe in:

- Fairness, Kindness, and Respect
- Choosing a Positive Attitude
- Doing the Right ThingCreating Wow Moments

These aren't just things we say — they're how we operate. Every Monday, our team comes together to check in on goals, share wins (like glowing Google reviews), and train around safety and service. And yes — safety always comes first.

New team members are given



a copy of The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, along with a note from me. That book helps us anchor our culture in trust, healthy conflict, shared accountability, and the drive to win as a group.

We've also built tools—like our team app—that make it easier to stay connected, solve problems, and celebrate progress, whether someone's in the field or heading to their next job.

## Growth That Goes Beyond the Job

We pay commission on every job. Bonuses are real. Sales opportunities are available. That means our team members control their earning potential —

and we teach them how to grow it.

But more than that, we teach goal-setting, personal budgeting, and long-term thinking. Because I don't want anyone just clocking in and out here. I want them leaving this business better than they came in — as leaders, as providers, and as people.

We're not here to create jobs that plateau. We're here to create careers that launch.

That's why every leadership opportunity we build — as we grow toward future satellite offices — we plan to fill from within.

## Why This Matters to the Community

When you invest in your people, they show up with energy, integrity, and purpose. That shows up in how they treat your customers, how they show up in their own homes, and how they engage with the community around them.

And when a business models this kind of leadership, it raises the bar for everyone.

We're also proud to give back directly — not for attention, but because it's part of who we are. We provide in-kind cleanings, monetary support or volunteer time for:

- Children in Crisis
- Path of Grace Thrift & Boutique
- Semper Fi & America's Fund
- The Fort Walton Chamber of Commerce
- United Way Emerald Coast

We want to be the kind of company that doesn't just succeed — but contributes.

### The Bigger Picture

I know we're just one small business. But I've seen firsthand what happens when you create space for people to grow: they rise to meet you.

Imagine the impact if more local businesses — big or small — created environments that nurtured their team's potential,

Continued on next page





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Lifestyle

# From Combat to Clean Living: A Hometown Hero's Mission for Healing - How Toxic Freedom Got Started

By Tre' Baity

It's crazy how life works. I never thought the hardest battle I'd fight wouldn't be overseas but right here, inside my own

My wife, Ashley, and I spent over a decade in the Army. We flew drones and deployed three times—two tours to Iraq and one to Afghanistan. On our last deployment, we arrived at a base that had just been hit by a ballistic missile. The strike was over by the time we got there, but the aftermath was everywhere.

The gym walls were coated in thick, black soot. We walked past it every day, worked out in it, lived around it. No one said much. Eventually, a memo circulated listing all the toxins still lingering in the air—chemicals that had no business being near human lungs. But to us, it was just paperwork. We had a mission, and as soldiers, you push through and get the job done.

Then people started getting sick. Passing out. Seizing. Muscles breaking down. My own body began failing, and no one could explain why. I bounced in and out of hospitals, drowning in prescriptions—22 at one point. One day, while working out at the gym, I got a call from the ER: I needed to come in immediately. My labs showed I'd been having heart attacks and was likely having one right then.

I felt like I was dying—not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, spiritually. The meds weren't saving me. They were numbing me. Slowly killing me.





At some point, I decided—I'm done. If I'm going out, it's going to be on my terms.

I stopped everything. The medications. The endless appointments. The fear. I turned

Then I turned to plants herbs, smoothies, juicing, whole foods. I dove into learning about natural medicine, detoxing and ancient healing practices. I had to figure it out myself. Nobody else was coming.

And little by little... I started coming back.

The weight dropped. The prescriptions disappeared. My mind cleared. My spirit returned. My self returned. Through it all, Ashley was right there—my anchor, my warrior. She saw me at my lowest and believed in me when I barely

That healing sparked something bigger. We realized this wasn't just our story. Countless people are silently sufferingfacing mysterious health issues, feeling off but not knowing why.

That's how Toxic Freedom

It wasn't about selling products. It was about giving people what we wished someone had handed us—a place where everything is clean, non-toxic and real. Products we trust enough to use on our son, in our home, in our lives.

We built www.toxic-freedom. com so everyone can easily access what we offer-no matter where they are. If you're local, we provide convenient delivery right to your door in Destin. Fort Walton Beach and Miramar Beach—no traffic, no hassle. And if you're further away, we ship nationwide with just a click, delivering clean, non-toxic living right to your doorstep. Toxic Freedom is personal to us. We went to war overseas. Now we're fighting a different war here at home—a war against silent toxins and ignorance.

And for healing. Real, lasting, deep healing.

That's our mission now. And I know why we had to go through everything we did.

Because now, we're finally doing the work we were meant to do.

Ready to make the switch? Visit www.toxic-freedom. **com** and bring clean, non-toxic living straight to your doorstep.

Tre' Baity is co-founder of Toxic Freedom. He lives in Destin with his wife, Ashley, and their son.



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## **BUILT TO GROW**

continued from previous page

rewarded effort, and built real trust. We'd see stronger families, more resilient storefronts, and a tighter, more vibrant community.

That's the kind of momentum we're proud to help lead.

For us, it's never just been about windows.

It's always been about people. And if we can keep growing a team that reflects that — while making our coast just a little brighter every day — then I believe we're doing something that matters

## Ready to Join Our Team?

We're always looking for individuals who share our values and want to grow with us. If you're a positive, driven person looking for a career with purpose, we encourage you to explore what we have to offer.

Visit FishWindowCleaning. com/3249 to learn more about current opportunities.

Or if you're looking for a reliable, community-minded partner for your home or business, we'd love to serve you.

Call us at 850.842.2162 for a free estimate.



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# Nestin Niving, Entertainment, Specials

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

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

## Local Couple in the Running for Variety Magazine's America's Favorite Couple

Two local marketing and public relations professionals, Frank Berte and Tracy Louthain, are in the TOP 5 of Variety Magazine's America's Favorite Couple Contest, benefitting Oceana and the LA Food Bank. They have been long time residents of the area, calling Niceville, Destin and Freeport home since the early 2000's. They were long-time friends and colleagues who reconnected over protecting access to the beaches of South Walton & Destin. You might see them around town on their electric bikes or SUP boards celebrating the beauty of our destination or working at local events and serving our community. Their recent passion project, Anchored in Freeport, conducted in partnership with



the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County and the City of Freeport, aims to place concrete anchors decorated by local artists to bring cultural enrichment, beauty, tourism opportunities and enhanced sense of place to the City of Freeport. If you'd like to support this local couple in making it to the next round, vote for them online daily at https://americasfavcouple.org/2025/tracy-and-frank.

## **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, there's no bad seat in the house. So, come by and watch the games all season long. Happy Hour Specials everyday, 3-6 p.m., \$2 off all bar drinks and Monday-Friday from 3-5 p.m. \$3 off a dozen raw ovsters. 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 our amazing live music line-up at Facebook.com/ austonson98.

(850) 842-3200

# Austonson 98.com Boathouse Oyster Bar

125 Poinciana Blvd.,

Miramar Beach

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

## 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 summer treasures and merchandise!

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

#### **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

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

## 288 Harbor Blvd, Destin (850) 837-3645

# Pirates + Food + Booze = Fun at Pirate Brew Fest 2025

#### **Pirate Brew Fest 2025**

Ahoy, mateys! Ready yer sea legs and polish yer tankards, Pirate Brew Fest is droppin' anchor at Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill on November 1, 2025, from 11 AM to 3 PM! This free-for-all shindig features a bounty of local breweries and spirit-makers handing out free samples and swag faster than a cannon volley.

Festivities go from 11am to 3pm.

#### **Pirate Brew Fest Fun**

There's no better way to unleash your inner buccaneer than at Pirate Brew Fest, where the air will be filled with the clink of frothy steins and the roar of Coconut Radio's live island-rock tunes. You'll test your sea-dog skills in axe throwing and pirate games, snag swag and free samples from the region's finest breweries and distillers, and feast on Fudpucker's flamegrilled burgers, hot dogs, and savory pirate-inspired specials. Wander among talented art vendors peddling hand-crafted treasures, then marvel at rare beer relics brought ashore by the BCCA Spearman Chapter of the Bama Cannas. Whether you're dueling for axe-throwing bragging rights, dancing to live music under the sun, or simply sipping a cold one while soaking up the salty atmosphere, Pirate Brew Fest promises four hours of rollicking, friendly fun that'll have you shouting "Yo ho, let's go!" all the way home.

## **Pirates & Destin, Florida**

Legends whisper that during the Golden Age of Piracy, cutthroats and corsairs crept into the sheltered coves of today's Emerald Coast, right off the shores of Destin and Fort Walton Beach, to prey on Spanish treasure galleons laden with New World silver. Rumor has it that Jean Lafitte's informants slipped him word of rich cargo slipping past Destin Pass, while buried chests are said to lie beneath Fort Walton's sugar-white sands, cursed to guard their secrets. Even now, anglers trolling the Gulf just beyond Okaloosa Island sometimes haul up barnacled cannonshot and rusted fittings, ghostly souvenirs of the courtesy of the BCCA Spearman Chapter of the Bama Cannas, and live island-rock vibes from Coconut Radio—all against a backdrop of salty seaair revelry where eye-patches

and tricorns are highly encouraged and admission costs you not a single doubloon!

SO, STOP BY AND HAVE A SOME FUN at Pirate Brew Fest – ya scalawags! Visit Us in Destin.

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



buccaneers who once danced with fate in these sun-kissed waters.

## Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

Fudpucker's itself is a destination that embodies the spirit of family-friendly fun, with its title of "Best Family-Friendly Restaurant" earned through a commitment to providing memorable dining experiences. Gator Beach, dubbed The World's Greatest Alligator Park, allows visitors to interact with these fascinating creatures, offering an educational experience that leaves lasting memories.

The anticipation for Pirate Brew Fest 2025 reflects a broader community excitement, drawing visitors from across the United States. Known for hosting vibrant events like Gatorfest, Teen Night, Kid's Day, the Noon Year's Eve Balloon Drop, Kick-Off Parties for EC Volleyball and Jeepalooza, and Jazz Dinner Shows, Fudpucker's continues to be a beacon for family entertainment, making it the perfect venue for Pirate Brew Fest 2025.

#### **Food, Fun & Pirates**

What's on deck at Pirate Brew Fest 2025: axe throwing and swashbuckling pirate games to test your sea-dog mettle, free samples and swag from the Emerald Coast's finest breweries and distillers, Fudpucker's flame-grilled burgers, hot dogs, and pirate-inspired bites, a treasure trove of handcrafted art and beer-branded merch, beer history and rare memorabilia



# Destin Dining, Entertainment, Specials

#### DINING

continued from page 22

come and watch your team play. Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than 70 big screen TVs showing all your favorite college and pro teams.

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

en days a week. Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mi-







mosas and bloody marys. Enjoy some of your favorite food and drinks, and scrumptious early bird dinner specials Monday to Friday, 3-6 p.m. Sip and unwind with happy hour from 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday. And come on in for live music on the docks.

DAILY CRUISES: Introducing Tailfins Island Adventure! Departures seven days a week aboard "Talk of Town" Tikis, Tailfins' newest, one-of-a-kind tiki boat. They feature on-board restrooms and certified captains. 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) 650-1111 On the Harbor in Destin, 172 Harbor Blvd. tailfinsdestin.com

#### **Tequila's Mexican Restaurant**

Did someone say Margaritas? Tequila's Sports Bar and Grill is a local favorite, with world class, jumbo-sized margaritas, Mexican food favorites inspired by years of tradition and authentic spices 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. 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 favorites here." Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner or call ahead to place your take out and to-go orders.

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

## **EVENTS**

continued from page 11

## **Lyrics on the Harbor: Destin's First Songwriter Festival Debuts This Fall**

#### October 10-11, 2025 | Heron Harbor, Destin, Florida

For the first time, our historic Destin Harbor will echo with the stories behind the songs you love. The inaugural Destin Songwriter Festival arrives October 10-11, 2025, transforming Heron Harbor (314 Harbor Blvd.) into two days of music, storytelling and coastal beauty.

Expect free daytime performances on three side stages at

harbor-front bars and restaurants, followed by ticketed evening headliner shows on the Main Stage — all set against our beautiful Destin Harbor. Acclaimed songwriters from throughout the country will share intimate acoustic sets and the inspiration behind their hits, creating an unforgettable experience for music lovers and storytellers alike.

## Tickets & Details

GA 2-Day Pass: \$60 GA Friday or Saturday: \$35/

VIP Table (2-Day): \$1,000 Main Stage shows require

Continued on page 25

#### **EVENTS**

continued from page 24

GA or VIP tickets; side stages are free.

A portion of proceeds supports Operation Song, a nonprofit helping veterans and military families heal through songwriting.

Visit DestinSongwritersFestival.com to learn more and get your tickets.

#### Support the Fall Silent Auction Benefiting Emerald Coast Food Rescue

# Friday, Oct. 24 | 6-9:30 p.m. | Local Market, Destin

Emerald Coast Food Rescue (ECFR) invites the community to its Annual Fall Silent Auction—an evening of giving, good food and meaningful impact raising vital funds to support ECFR's mission of rescuing food surplus and redirecting it to those facing hunger in Okaloosa and Walton counties. Inkind donations for the auction will directly help fund operations that deliver over 250,000 pounds of food each month—at no cost—to 43 local programs, including food pantries, soup

kitchens, shelters, after-school programs and subsidized clinics. Your support ensures that food doesn't go to waste—and families don't go hungry.

To donate or learn more, visit Emerald Coast Food Rescue or email info@emeraldcoast-foodrescue.org.

#### Eggs on the Beach - Cook Team Registration Now Open!

#### Saturday, Nov. 1 | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. | Seascape Resort, Miramar Beach

Get fired up for the 11th Annual Eggs on the Beach, the beloved Big Green Egg cooking competition hosted by Bay Breeze Patio! This family-friendly foodie fest brings together backyard grillers, chefs, and nonprofit teams to serve up creative, bite-sized samples hot off the Egg to a hungry crowd and a panel of honorary judges.

Compete for trophies, cash prizes, a brand new Big Green Egg, and the coveted "People's Choice" title. Registered cook teams receive commemorative t-shirts, rubs, and an Egg to use onsite. Nonprofit teams also compete for donations toward their mission.

Proceeds benefit Fisher

House of the Emerald Coast and Food For Thought, two impactful local charities serving military families and food-insecure children.

Taster tickets go on sale soon, and Demo Eggs used at the event are available for pre-sale at a discount! Whether you're grilling or grazing, you won't want to miss this smokin' hot event.

Sign up or sponsor at Egg-

sOnTheBeach.com or call (850) 269-4666

#### 30A BBQ Festival - 10 Years of Sizzling Flavor!

#### Friday, Nov. 7 | 5–8 p.m. | Grand Boulevard, Miramar Beach

The 6th Annual 30A BBQ Festival, presented by 360 Blue, serves up all-you-can-eat barbecue, live music by River Dan,

drinks, a silent auction, and more—benefiting The Sonder Project's 10th anniversary.

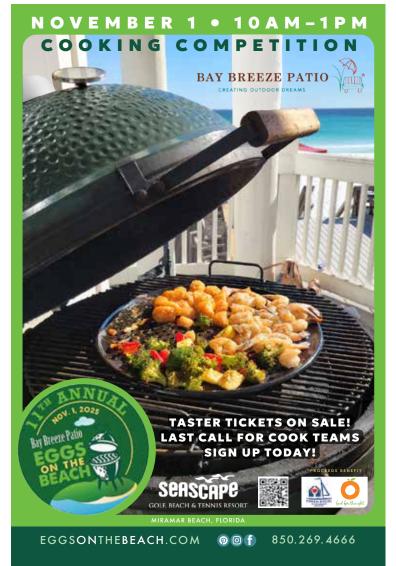
GA: \$60 | VIP: \$125 | Kids 12 & under free

Tickets: bit.ly/30a-bbq-2025 | Sponsorships: jessica@proffittpr.com











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Monday-Friday 3-6pm Local Catch Mahi \$19.95 New Orleans Cajun Gulf Shrimp \$19.95 Kansas City Baby Back Ribs Half Rack \$15.95 / Full Rack \$24.95

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## Seashells on Our Beaches

By Helen Petre

Most of us go to the beach and see shells, but we rarely know their names. These amazing creatures live in the harsh salt beach conditions and can build their own homes out of stuff they find there, which is mostly calcium carbonate. Here are some of the common shells on Our area beaches and a few cool things about them.

#### **Mollusks**

Most of the shells on our beaches are mollusks, with calcium carbonate shells. Before they end up on the beach, the animal inside usually dies, and then a storm, or tides, bring the hard, empty shell to the beach. In Florida, if there is no animal inside the shell, you can take them home.

## **Coquina (Donax variabilis)**

Coquina are the most obvi-



Donax variables. Florida Fish and Wildlife. 2025.

ous and numerous shell on the beach, under your feet at the swash line. Although they are



Half a cockle shell.

easy to collect, if the two halves are attached the animal is probably alive.

### **Cockles (Family Cardiidae)**

The most common mollusk shell on our beaches, after live coquina, is the cockle shell. Cockles live close to the low tide line, so when they die it is a short trip to the beach. These two-inch, heart shaped shells can be white, red, brown, or yellow and have ridges. Cockles, like most shells you find on the beach, are bivalves, which means the two halves fit together with a hinge. Usually, that hinge breaks on its way to shore, so you find half the shell on the beach.

## Bay Scallops (Argopecten, irradians)

Bay scallops are fan-shaped mollusks with ridges and scalloped edges. They are about three inches across when fully grown and have tiny blue eyes lining the shell when alive. They live in shallow coastal waters, and especially sea grass meadows, which provide shelter and food. They are often buried in



Olive shell. Wikipedia. 2025.

the sand and live for about a year. The upper shell is usually dark and mottled, and the bottom shell is white. Scallops spawn in the fall when the water temperature changes. They produce millions of eggs and sperm, but only one fertilized egg in about 12 million reaches adulthood. Scallops are sensitive to environmental changes such as sea grass losses. Once common on our beaches, they now occur in only isolated populations.

#### **Marine Gastropods**

Marine gastropods are sea snails. They have only one shell, which is twisted, and interestingly, unless a hermit crab that has taken over the shell (which is a crustacean and not a gastropod), the animal inside is twisted as well.

## Crown Conch (Melongena corona)

Crown conches grow to five inches long, and have red, brown, purple, or yellow horizontal stripes. The long, narrow points at the end of the shell look like a crown, providing the common name. Crown conches are carnivores, and they eat small bivalves, like coquina and scallops. They live in sea grass beds. Females are larger than males, produce about 500 eggs, and attach them to sea grass blades. Hermit crabs really like to live in crown conch shells.

### Olive Shells (Oliva sayana)

Olive shells are smooth, shiny, two-inch-long shells, often greenish, light tan, or brown. The animals are carnivorous and feed on bivalves, invertebrates, or sometimes carrion. They are super-fast sand burrowers.

Helen Petre is a retired USDA biologist and college biology professor. She spends her time volunteering, teaching, and writing science articles to share her interests with future generations.





**Off the Hook** 

# Celebrating 70 Years of Marine Animal Magic

By Mary Fomby, Gulfarium

Since opening its doors on August 14, 1955, Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park has been a cornerstone of the Emerald Coast—captivating guests with unforgettable marine animal encounters while making a lasting impact on ocean conservation.

For 70 years, the Gulfarium has remained dedicated to educating, entertaining, and inspiring generations of visitors. What began as one of the world's first oceanariums has grown into a beloved institution and a leader in marine animal care and rescue. From dolphins leaping into the hearts of visitors to rescued sea turtles returning to the waves, the Gulfarium's mission has always centered on connecting people with marine life—and protecting it for the future.

In 2023, the Gulfarium unveiled Dolphin Oasis, a stunning new habitat designed to enhance both animal well-being and guest engagement. This 24-million-dollar expansion includes expansive saltwater habitats, lush surroundings, and





state-of-the-art features. Dolphin Oasis reflects our continued commitment to providing the highest standard of care for our animals. It's also a beautiful and immersive addition for guests, offering new opportunities to connect with our resident dolphins. As we celebrate this milestone year, the Gulfarium remains focused on both our guest experiences and the lives of the animals in our care.

In recent years, the park's conservation efforts have tak-



en center stage. Since 2015, the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center has rescued, rehabilitated, and released hundreds of sea turtles back into the Gulf. This vital work supports the survival of endangered species like the Kemp's ridley and loggerhead turtles, and it's only growing.

In addition, the Gulfarium recently partnered with the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP) to provide continuous care for rescued manatees at the newly opened Manatee Cove habitat. This 3.5-million-dollar collaboration is a milestone in the park's history and an exciting opportunity to contribute to national manatee conservation efforts. Fittingly, one of our current manatee residents—Romeo—is also over 70 years old,



making him the oldest known manatee in human care and a living symbol of the Gulfarium's own 70-year journey.

As the Gulfarium celebrates its 70th anniversary year, the community is invited to join in the celebration. From August 10–17, a special membership sale will offer guests the chance to enjoy unlimited visits at a reduced rate. And on August 16-17, the park will offer admission for just \$19.55—a nod to the year it all began. This discounted rate applies to all ages, making it the perfect time for families, friends, and longtime fans to experience the wonder of the Gulfarium.

The celebration doesn't stop in August. Throughout the rest of the year, the Gulfarium will mark this milestone with exclusive 70th-anniversary merchandise, special member-only events, and community programs that honor the legacy of marine conservation and education.

From its earliest days to its newest achievements, the Gulfarium has remained committed to marine life, innovation, education, and community. Now, as we celebrate 70 years of care, we look forward to continuing that legacy with new generations of ocean advocates.





## Captain Lucky's Rodeo Log: What To Catch

By Frank Berté, aka Capt. Lucky

As the captain of a charter boat plying the emerald waters off Destin Harbor, I've seen firsthand why we've earned the nickname "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village." Each October, during the Destin Fishing Rodeo, the spectrum of species that makes its way to AJ's weigh-in dock is nothing short of spectacular. There are over 30 recognized species across 29 divisions—each with its own division and prize category! So, here's my rundown of the most sought-after species you might reel in at the Rodeo:

**King Mackerel:** Razor-sharp teeth, jet-fast, and relentless. These migratory speedsters swarm our nearshore reefs and structure, delivering high-speed thrill to anglers.

Vermilion Snapper - Mingo: This deeper-hued Vermilion Snapper— is prized for delicious table fare. Bottom-dwelling, robust fighters that frequent reef habitats.

Grouper (Gag, Snowy,



Warsaw, Yellowedge): Stalwarts of the reef and wrecks: deep-bodied, heavyweights requiring patience and power to haul. The Deep Drop division targets these bottom fish.

**Amberjack:** Known as "reef donkeys" for their stubborn, heavy pulling power—strong and often caught offshore.

Mahi Mahi (Dorado/Dolphin Fish): Flashy, colorful, acrobatic — the offshore champion. Quick to strike, fun to fight and excellent on the plate.

**Wahoo:** Slim and fast, built for drag-popping runs. Found in deeper offshore waters like the 100-fathom curve.

**Yellowfin Tuna:** Sleek, powerful pelagics that challenge anglers with sustained speed. Prized for its sushi-grade filet.

Billfish: Blue and White Marlin, Sailfish: The marquee stars of the Offshore and Billfish divisions. Renowned for sky-rocketing leaps and marathon battles.

**Triggerfish:** Toughmouthed reef fighters—com-





pact but feisty.

## Redfish

Bay-fishing favorites. This species—get inshore bragging rights for the highest fun vs. flavor balance.

#### Cobia

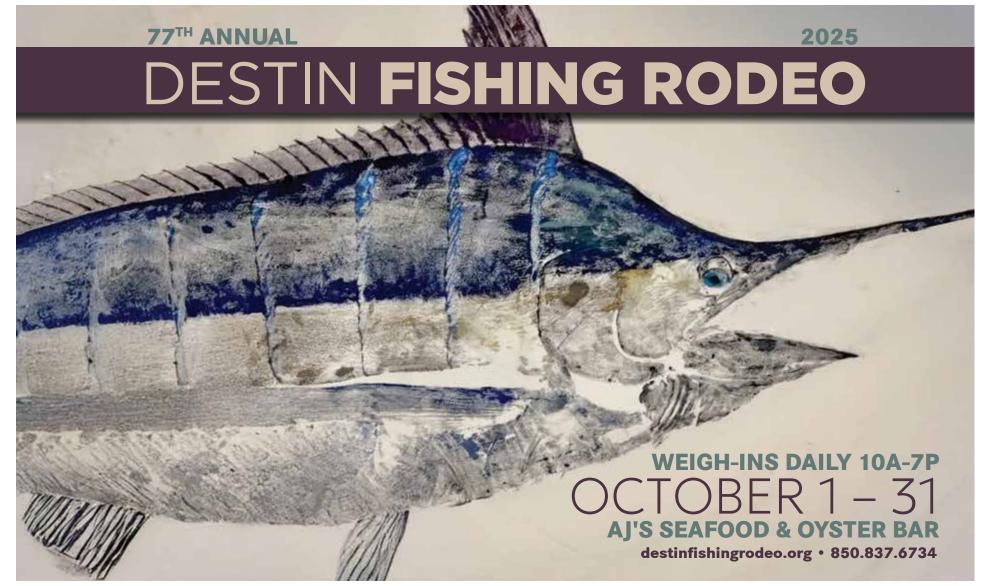
The "Black King" of nearshore currents: massive, slow and a true trophy in spring to early summer—but occasionally hanging around come October.

#### Swordfish

A deep-water titan. Catchand-release is typical, but swordfish presence adds prestige to the deep-drop battle.

#### Pompano

Continued on next page



**Off the Hook** 

This highly migratory, coastal species is as delicious as it is beautiful.

## From the Helm: Pre-Rodeo Feel

Dawn on October 1, 2024: Moored amid the fleet behind AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, I watched the harbor buzz with tournament energy. Long-time clients and fresh faces, lines in hand, all eager. As we cut through the swells toward the shipping channel, I felt the same tingle I've felt since my first season.

Destin's geography gives us an edge: shallow bays, jetties, reefs—to the edge of the continental shelf—all reachable in a morning run. For lucky locals like me, it's a playground unmatched anywhere else.

## Day 3 - Nearshore Triumphs

We hit the reef zone first light. Within minutes, anglers were rod-in-hand, bait streaming. First haul: Tripletail, then juvenile Amberjack.

By noon, we'd pulled in Gag Grouper that tested the reel drag. And a bull Redfish & drifting Speckled Trout inshore as we re-positioned near the jetties. Trophies await on those early reefs

#### **Deep Drop Division**

One of my trusty crews hit the 300-foot mark. We dropped gear—baited jigs designed for the bottom. After a tense wait: A Snowy Grouper, then a Tilefish, sleek and silver.

Barrelfish—a rarity, but eligible in this division. Yellow edge Grouper to round things out.

Late night deep drops pay off in the morning weighing-in on the dock—catching prize monev.

### Mid-Rodeo

Campaigning the Continental Shelf edge (~20 miles out). There's a rhythm: Spectacular Mahi Mahi erupts on a spread—bright and agile.

A pair of Wahoo blaze off the port side. By midday, we tempting a Blue Marlin. Line whistles. The fight lasts 45 minutes—100 lb. leader against simmering Gulf tension.

## Why Destin Dominates the Game

Why does this place yield such a variety? Because Destin is



uniquely positioned—port closest to the deep edge, nearshore reefs, inshore waters—all in swift run time. That's what earned us "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village." We didn't just earn the title—it's a way of life.

This Rodeo isn't just a tournament; it's a celebration of heritage. Since its 1948 inception by early Destin families and local captains, it's been the anchor of Destin's fishing identity.

## The Final Day is a Carnival

Costumes, celebrations, cos-

tume weigh-ins, poster-board photo blasts and the final tabulation of winners. For some, it's a dream realized. For my crew and me, it's one more glorious month behind the wheel, rod bent and hearts roaring.

Because here in Destin, we're all in on three simple truths:

Fish are our living trophies — every haul, every ounce, tells a story.

Community is our sea — anglers, families, spectators, captains all ride this together.

Luck? Nah brah. It's skill,





tradition, location—and a love for the fight.

Remember, when you are one hour out from the dock, be sure to call Gnarly Harley, to have him meet you on the docks. He will immortalize your catch with his special Gyotaku technique, seen in the art of this article. gnarlyfishprints.com

So welcome aboard—whether you're here in 2025 or a future Rodeo. The harbor's call is irresistible. Whether you're chasing the flash of a Mahi, the grit of a Grouper or the leap of a Marlin, Destin delivers.

Tight lines and fierce friend-ships!

See you on the AJ's docks this October.

— Captain Lucky, Destin Harbor







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**Off** the Hook

# Epic Catches and Big Payouts: 23rd Annual Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic Awards \$1.85M at Sandestin

The 23rd Annual Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic (ECBC) returned to Baytowne Marina at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort from June 18–22, 2025, bringing together 78 elite

sportfishing teams for a week of high-stakes competition, camaraderie, and unforgettable moments. With a total payout of \$1,851,937.56, this year's tournament delivered impressive catches and tight races across all categories.

The action-packed week kicked off with the Captain's Meeting on Wednesday night, followed by the thrilling Thursday shotgun start. By Friday and Saturday, Baytowne Marina was the center of attention as teams backed into slips and weighed in some of the Gulf's finest gamefish.

In the Heaviest Blue Marlin category, All-In Southern Charm with angler Ron Davis claimed first place with

a 654.60 lb. marlin, earning over \$522,000 in total winnings. DEVOTION and A Work of Art rounded out the top three with fish weighing 640.40 lbs. and 604.40 lbs. respectively.

## Other top winners included:

- Heaviest Tuna: Knot Done Yet, 181.40 lbs (Blake Garland)
- Heaviest Dolphin: MAE, 50.50 lbs (Drew Marshall)
- Heaviest Wahoo: SQUID ROW, 54.90 lbs (Buck Gosnay)

The Release Division was dominated by Team Supreme, taking home over \$200,000 with 2175 points. DEVOTION and NIKKI BELLA secured second and third in a close contest.

Top Angler honors went to Ron Davis (All-In Southern Charm), while Team Supreme's Alex Krake was awarded Top



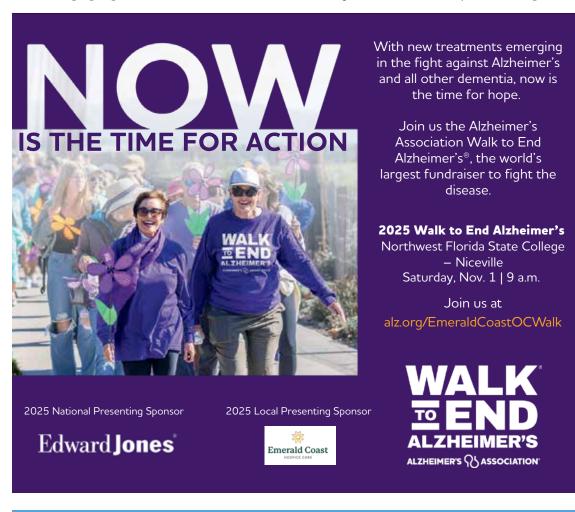
Release Angler. In the Top Lady Angler category, Helen DeLaney aboard Yellow Steel earned her title with 1,000 points.

The tournament also recognized young talent:

- Top Junior Angler Billfish: Leah Pratt on It Just Takes Time, 700 points
- Top Junior Angler Gamefish: Ethan Cruz on NIKKI BELLA, 153.10 lbs

The ECBC team extends a sincere thank you to every angler, crew member, sponsor, volunteer, and vendor who helped bring the 2025 tournament to life. Your passion fuels the heart of this Gulf Coast tradition.

Mark your calendars, the 24th Annual Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic will return to Sandestin's Baytowne Marina, June 17–21, 2026.





#### **DESTIN HIGH**

continued from page 18

tion, DHS has rolled out ParentSquare, an all-in-one platform for parents to receive school news, message teachers, sign up for events and view calendars. The platform is accessible by email, text, app or web and supports multiple languages.

## **Annual Fund and Community Support**

The DHS Anchor Annual Fund supports classroom materials, technology, safety upgrades, academic programs, counseling and more. Donations of any amount — from \$25 to \$2,500 to \$25,000 or more, make a direct impact. The school's broader fundraising goal for 2025–26 is \$800,000, including grants and special events. Major gifts also help fund strategic priori-

ties such as faculty recruitment, campus improvements and career program expansion.

## **Enrollment and Contact Information**

Tuition-Free-Open enrollment for 2025–26 is underway; however, spots are limited. Families can apply online at https://destinhighschool.schoolmint.com, visit the campus at 4325 Commons Drive W., Destin, or call 850-204-4044. More information is available at destinhighschool.org.

At DHS, students find more than an education. They discover a community that prepares them academically, physically, and emotionally to lead and succeed. Whether your child is a scholar, athlete, artist, or entrepreneur, there's a place to grow, lead, and shine at Destin High School.





#### By Barbara Palmgren

A few months ago, the article I wrote about one of Destin's premier golf courses focused on its renovation. Skillfully planned over a two-year period during off season in the winter, the course is now the challenge it promised members and the pub-

With tour angled sand protected by capillary liners installed in new bunkers, scores could be improved... if one knows how to hit the perfect sand shot from the bunker onto the green and even in the hole itself!

John Townsend, General Manager, gives credit to the designer and can be quoted as saying "Bill Bergin has enhanced Fred Couples and Gene Bates original design, bringing out its best features and making the course even more enjoyable for everyone."

During the middle of July,

## Golf Serles: Kelly Plantation Challenges the Emerald Coast Golf Tour

golfers on the Emerald Coast Golf Tour teed up their balls and began a three-day tournament. They enjoyed the new challenge of this beautiful course and had only praise for the course and the staff at Kelly Plantation.

There were three winners after three grueling days in the heat. Grant Leaver emerged victorious as the first-place winner with scores of 71,65, and 68 for a total of 204. Dylan Vause and Hayden Carner shared second



place with a score total of 217.

Tour director, Geno Celano, attended to present awards and congratulate all the golfers that spent three hot but memorable days on the famous emerald green course nestled in the heart of Destin.



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## 2025 High School Football Schedule

#### **Destin Sharks:**

Head Coach: E.G. Green August 22 - vs. Northview August 29 - vs. Baker September 5 - Open Week September 12 - at Pensacola September 19 – vs. Taylor County September 26 – at Opp (AL) October 3 – at Pensacola Catholic October 10 - Open Week October 17 - at Chipley October 24 – vs. B.T. Washington

#### **Fort Walton Beach** Vikinas:

October 31 – at Port St. Joe

Head Coach: Josh Pulliam (1st Year)

August 15 - vs. Blountstown (KO Classic)

August 22 – at Tate

August 29 – at South Walton

September 5 - vs. West Florida

September 11 – vs. Washington

September 19 – at Walton

September 26 - at Rickards '

October 3 – vs. Wakulla October 10 - vs. Arnold \*

October 17 - Open Week October 24 - vs. Choctaw

October 31 – at Crestview

\* Denotes District Game



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There are more than 300 types of honey, each with its own unique flavor, color and nutritional properties. Be sure to look for raw and unfiltered honey. Other honeys are usually pasteurized (exposed to high

# Hey, Honey

heat) destroying the yeast that is naturally present as well as destroying most of the honey's nutritional properties.

Visiting as many as 50,000 flowers every day to collect nectar and pollen and then delivering it to the hive where the worker bees turn it into honey, are a honey bee's job. The flowers they thrive on determines the color, tastes, benefits and uses. Honey has been found in ancient tombs and it was still edible. It has no expiration date unless it is introduced to water.

The varying glucose and fructose levels found in honey is what causes it to crystallize at different rates. This does not

affect the honey. It can be softened by placing a bowl with the honey in warm water. To help prevent honey from crystallizing store in a room temperature area and out of direct sunlight in glass jars rather than plastic containers. It is also recommended to use wood vs. metal for extracting honey from the jar. Consistent exposure can affect the enzymes in the honey, and since honey its acidic, it can cause corrosion of the metal over long exposure.

Honey can also contain antioxidant and antibacterial or expectorant properties, probiotics, anti-inflammatory agents or be rich in iron. There are other properties as well, and each honey has its own medicinal applications. Here are some great ones to place in your arsenal.

**Tupelo Honey** - Found in Florida and the remote swamps of Georgia. Buttery and sweet making it good for BBQ sauces and as a drizzle over desserts or ice cream. Benefits include antioxidant and antibacterial properties.

**Alfalfa Honey** - Also known as Lucerne honey is good for baking or as a sweetener for lemonade, teas, etc. Consume regularly to treat diabetes, anemia and fever. It's rich in probiotics.



**Eucalyptus Honey** - Australia and California. Use for mild coughs and colds. Acts as a potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant agent to boost the immune system

**Buckwheat Honey** - Darkest and strongest among popular types of honey in the world. High in antioxidants and rich in iron. Great for treating anemia, sore throats, coughs and boosts lower cholesterol levels. Also good for wound cleaning and skin care.

**Sage Honey** - California. Incredible for fighting diabetes and helps indigestion. It has antioxidants, antibacterial and expectorant properties.

Orange Blossom Honey-Spain and Mexico and common in Texas, southern California and Florida. Boasts high natural anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that support the immune system.

**Wildflower Honey** - Widely used to fight allergies, especially when consumed as a natural sweetener in smoothies and teas

**Dandelion Honey** - Australia. Excellent for boosting immune system and superb for gastrointestinal tract and bowel health

**Fireweed Honey** - This honey is created by the plant that sprouts and grows after a forest fire. Great for baking, gourmet

cooking, glazes, marinades and grilled food. Has antibacterial and antioxidant properties boosts immune system

**Sourwood Honey** - Appalachian Mountains. Superior antibacterial and antioxidant properties.

**Linden Honey** - Most part of Europe. Used in desserts, tasty cheese and tea sweeteners. Helps alleviate insomnia (before-bed herbal tea) and anxiety as it acts as a sedative. Ideal for treating coughs and colds and detoxifying the body

**Avocado Honey** - Mexico and California. Rich in minerals, antioxidants, and vitamins. Boosts immune system, aids in preventing anemia and hastening wound healing.

**Acacia Honey** - North America and parts of Europe. Great for treating diabetes, cleansing the liver and regulating the intestines.

**Manuka Honey** - New Zealand Has incomparable medicinal benefits and is a top pick in the pharmaceutical industry. Has many medicinal applications from wound healing to several internal benefits.

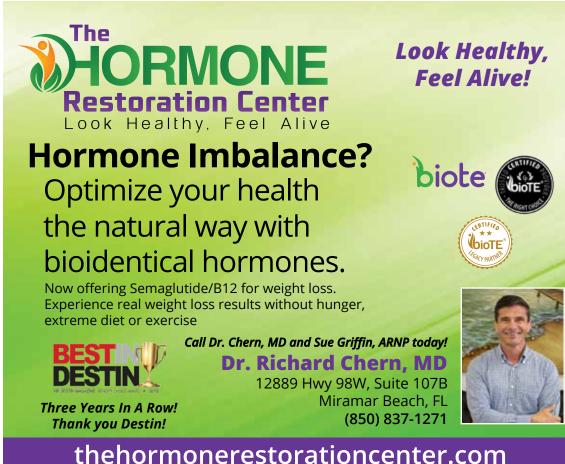
**Clover Honey** - New Zealand and Canada. Excellent in salad dressings, sauces and cooking recipes. High amounts of phenolic acids improves heart and lung function and boosts the nervous system.

**Blueberry Honey** - Michigan and New England. Excellent spread on toast and biscuits and sweetener for granola or drizzles on fruits and yogurt. Boost immune system and fighting colds. Exceptional antioxidant and antibacterial powers.

I have a few on my list to try. Using it in recipes in place of sugar as well a teaspoon for a special evening treat sounds like to good place to start.

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











By Melanie Yost, Be Well Solutions

Matthew Perry's untimely death brought the therapeutic use of ketamine for brain health issues into the public spotlight. Let's take a closer look at ketamine—what it is, its history, and methods of administration.

Ketamine has proven to be highly effective in helping people struggling with treatment-resistant depression, anxiety, PTSD, and chronic inflammatory pain. By providing relief, ketamine enables people to lead happier, healthier lives. Initially developed as an anesthetic over 60 years ago, ketamine was used in the 1970s to successfully treat PTSD in Vietnam War soldiers. Unfortunately, its use was abandoned due to the stigma surrounding other psychedelics like LSD and PCP. Instead, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors

# Matthew Perry's Death and the Spotlight on Ketamine Therapy for Brain Health

(SSRIs) emerged as the preferred treatment, as they were believed to lack the addictive qualities of psychedelics.

After 50 years of SSRI usage, however, researchers are now finding little evidence to support the theory that depression is caused by a lack of serotonin, dopamine or norepinephrine. In fact, SSRIs are effective in only about 40% of the people who take them. In contrast, ketamine shows an 80–85% efficacy rate in treating mood disorders and chronic pain.

Over the past 10–15 years, more than 2,000 papers have been published on ketamine's potential to help with treatment-resistant mood disorders. Researchers have found that ketamine can begin to relieve symptoms of depression immediately after the first treatment. Long-term relief, however, stems from neuroplasticity. When patients complete six ketamine treatments over a 2-3-week period, the drug helps rewire neural circuits, leading to

sustained positive mood changes. Additionally, ketamine binds to receptors in the opioid pathway, providing relief from chronic inflammatory pain.

## Methods of Ketamine Administration and Side Ef-

Ketamine can be administered in four ways: sublingually, via nasal spray, intramuscular injection, or IV infusion. All methods come with three possible side effects: nausea, elevated blood pressure, and the potential for a negative psychedelic experience.

At clinics like Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions, medically supervised IV infusions are the preferred method. IV administration makes ketamine 100% bioavailable, meaning patients receive the exact dose they are given. Other methods require the body to metabolize the drug, which varies from person to person, making the actual dose received uncertain. Furthermore, IV infusions allow for immediate man-

agement of any side effects, ensuring a safer and more positive experience. At Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions, all infusions are administered in a comfortable, spa-like setting by compassionate Nurse Practitioners, ensuring client safety and well-being throughout the treatment.

# How Was Ketamine Involved in Matthew Perry's Death?

According to reports, Matthew Perry was receiving ketamine infusions from a reputable clinic, and they were helping with his depression. His last infusion occurred two weeks before his death, and was not found to be a contributing factor. Perry, however, had a lifelong struggle with substance abuse. Like many individuals with addiction, he believed that "if a little is good, more is better." With his financial means, Perry was able to find people who took advantage of his addiction by selling him injectable ketamine to use at

home without medical supervision. Tragically, he died from an overdose.

Perry's story underscores the importance of choosing a reputable clinic with established protocols and experienced medical professionals who prioritize client safety and well-being. If you or someone you care about is exploring ketamine therapy, it's essential to seek care from experienced medical professionals in a safe, clinical setting. Education, oversight and compassionate support can make all the difference.

To learn more or schedule a confidential consultation, feel free to reach out—we're here to help you navigate the path forward with clarity and care.

Melanie Yost is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and owner of Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions in Destin. She has been in the healthcare field for more than 35 years and can be reached at (850) 786-2051.

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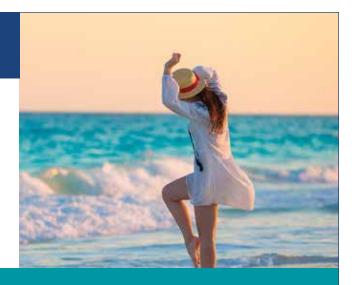
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## Mind Reading: A Relationship Myth

By Stephenie Craig, JOURNEY BRAVELY

When did you last want something in a relationship and instead of speaking up, you hoped the other person would read your mind? Maybe you wanted someone to plan a birth-

day surprise or you wanted a quiet dinner. Maybe you wanted someone to know how to show up for you in a time of loss or to know how you like to be cheered up when you're feeling low. You knew what you wanted but it felt hard to ask.

While a small group of people can be skilled at predicting what others need some of the time, most people do not possess this skill set. Largely, people learn what you need when you tell them directly. It is an unhelpful myth that mind reading is a green relationship flag or getting your needs met by asking is somehow less valuable or less connecting. In fact, waiting for someone to read your mind usually ends up producing frustration and connection disruption on both sides of a relationship. And, when you ask for what you need and the other person makes an intentional effort to meet your needs over time, they are communicating high value of you and the relationship.

You increase your chance of getting your needs met successfully in a relationship when you take time to understand your needs and tell the other person kindly and directly what works for you and what doesn't. You increase your chances of successfully meeting the other person's needs in a relationship when they communicate directly with you and you receive that communication with an open, curious attitude. Healthy, connected relationships are based on kind, direct communication about needs and desires, not on any person's ability to predict the needs of the other.

So, if mind reading isn't going to be helpful, how are you supposed to talk about your relationship needs and preferences?

#### 6 Ways to **Practice Asking** for What You **Need Directly**

Explore

Your Needs. Notice what makes you feel safe, seen, valued, connected. Notice what feels hurtful or disconnecting to you. Notice your strengths and weaknesses and try approaching relationships with an awareness that everyone brings both good and hard parts of themselves. Learning how to identify what you need might be a more involved process and might be best supported with therapy if you have trouble knowing what you need.

- 2. Introduce conversation about needs. Try saying, "I would like for both of us to understand how we can each meet one another's needs in our relationship. Are you open to talking about that?"
- 3. Communicate needs as you go by giving helpful feedback. "I feel really appreciated and cared for when you initiate plans and follow through." "I feel disconnected and hurt when you say you're going to do something and then don't follow through.'
- 4. Communicate clearly and vulnerably rather than



passively or aggressive-**1y.** Avoid statements like, "You never" or, "You don't care how I feel." Instead try describing the situation and how you experienced it. "When I initiate a conversation with you and you continue looking at your phone and don't respond to me, I feel lonely and like what I'm trying to share is not important to you."

- 5. Once you have communicated a need, follow up about how it's going. "I really appreciate the efforts you're making to prioritize quality time together in our relationship." "I communicated before that a need I have in our relationship is more quality time together. Since then, it feels to me like there isn't much change in this area. This feels important to me and I'd like to understand what is getting in the way of that happening."
- 6. Ask the other person in the relationship how they are feeling about their needs in the relationship. "How can I show up for you in this relationship in ways that feel good and supportive to you?"

Direct communication applies to various types of relationships and sets up more success and connection on both sides. Be kind to yourself and others in the learning process. Relationship communication can feel complex and being more direct takes practice. If you feel internal resistance to being kind and direct, try being curious about your fears and hesitations and seek support for healing that might be needed. Connect with us for coaching and counseling along your journey at Journeybravely.com.



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## Post-Acute Care and Long-Term Care -

## The Choice is Yours

By Teresa Halverson, Area Director of Community Rela-

Initiating discussions about long-term care is a vital step in ensuring the well-being and quality of life for your family members. We encourage families to consider the benefits of having these important conversations. It not only fosters understanding and collaboration among family members but also empowers them to navigate the complexities of long-term care with confidence. Evaluating short term post-acute and longterm care facilities for yourself or a loved one can be a challenging and emotional process. Long Term Care Facilities (aka Nursing Homes) are licensed by the State of Florida and are certified by Medicare and Med-

Did you know that long-term care facilities also offer postacute short-term care rehabilitation services? After a hospital stay, an individual may be admitted for short term rehabilitation. Individualized therapy plans are designed to cater specifically to the patient, ensuring that he/she regains mobility and independence as swiftly and effectively as possible, allowing them to return home to their daily activities and loved ones.

By discussing long-term care options early on, families can explore the various services available, including specialized therapy programs that enhance rehabilitation and recovery. Our innovative approach to therapy focuses on individualized attention, ensuring that each resident receives the support they deserve to thrive.

At Destination Health and Rehabilitation, we understand how important it is to find a place that feels like home, where compassionate care and personalized attention are at the forefront. Here are some steps to guide you in your search:

1. Assess Your Needs:
Begin by identifying the specific needs of your loved one.
Consider their medical requirements, mobility limitations and personal preferences. Understanding these factors will help you narrow down your options

and find a facility that can meet their unique needs. Get a Referral and Admission Process started.

- Ask the hospital case manager to send your clinicals to your preferred facility ASAP.
- Facilities may need to review your chart before accepting you.
- Be ready to sign paperwork on arrival (or have a caregiver assist).
- 2. Research Facilities: Look for long-term care facilities in your area, focusing on their services, reputation, and reviews. Websites, social media and word-of-mouth recommendations from friends or health-care providers can provide valuable insights. You can search online or use Medicare's Care Compare tool to find high-rated facilities near you. You'll see:
  - Star ratings
  - Rehab outcomes
  - Staffing info
  - Patient reviews
- **3. Visit Potential Facilities:** Schedule tours of the facilities you are considering. Pay attention to the environ-

ment, cleanliness, and staff interactions with residents. Trust your instincts—if a place feels welcoming and compassionate, that's a positive sign. Look for these rehab essentials:

- Physical, occupational, and speech therapy available 7 days a week
- Customized care plan from a medical team
  - Nursing care 24/7
- Quick start to therapy (within 24–48 hours)
  - Clean and well-staffed
- 4. Inquire About Personalized Care Options: At Destination Health and Rehabilitation, we pride ourselves on offering specialized nursing and therapy services tailored to various conditions. Our dedicated clinical team is committed to assisting residents in their recovery and enhancing their overall quality of life. Ask about the types of therapy available and how they can be customized for your loved one.
- **5. Evaluate Staff Qualifications:** It's essential to know that the staff is well-trained and compassionate. Ask about their

qualifications, experience and the facility's staff-to-resident ratio to ensure your loved one will receive the attention they deserve.

- 6. Understand the Costs and Payment Options: Inquire about the costs associated with the facility and what payment options are available. Understanding the financial aspect will help you make an informed decision. Many may accept commercial insurance for post-acute care (short term Rehabilitation). Long term care is normally paid by Private Pay, LTC Insurance or Medicaid. Medicare does not cover long term care.
- 7. Get Feedback from Current Residents and Families: If possible, talk to current residents and their families to gather their perspectives on the quality of care and overall environment.

Destination Health and Rehabilitation Facility is a premier skilled nursing and rehab facility ready to assist you. We are here

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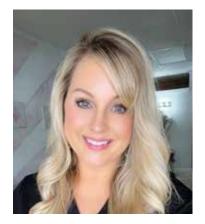
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By Krisy Whitely Anderson, Beverly Hills Day Spa Owner

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# Book Review: Letters to a Young Therapist



REVIEWED BY MICHAEL McManus, LCSW

"Letters to a Young Therapist" by Mary Pipher is an insightful exploration of the complexities of the therapeutic profession. Although this book was published years ago, it still has a wonderful message. In this collection of letters, Pipher, a seasoned psychologist, shares her wisdom and experiences with a younger colleague, offering guidance that transcends the

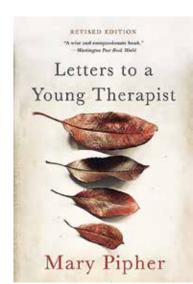
clinical aspects of therapy.

The book is structured as a series of heartfelt letters, each addressing different challenges and realities faced by therapists. Pipher's writing is both compassionate and candid, making it accessible to both seasoned professionals and those new to the field. She delves into topics such as the importance of self-care, the emotional toll of the profession, and the profound impact of the therapist-client relationship.

One of the standout features of Pipher's writing is her ability to weave personal anecdotes in with professional insights. She reflects on her own journey, revealing vulnerabilities that resonate with anyone navigating the intricacies of human emotions. This personal touch not only humanizes the profession but also serves as a reminder that therapists are, first and foremost, individuals grappling with their own lives.

Pipher's style is engaging, and her use of language is both poetic and clear, making complex ideas easy to digest. The book is filled with practical advice, encouraging therapists to embrace their authenticity and remain attuned to their own emotional landscapes while helping others.

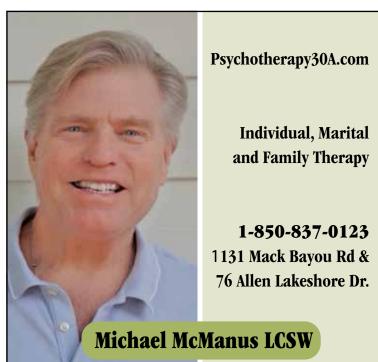
Overall, "Letters to a Young Therapist" is more than just a



guide for aspiring therapists; it is a meditation on the art of empathy, the necessity of connection, and the transformative power of understanding. Pipher's reflections serve as a beacon for anyone committed to the healing arts, reminding us that the path of a therapist is as much about personal growth as it is about aiding others. This book is a must-read for anyone in the field of mental health, as well as those interested in the profound dynamics of human relationships.

Michael McManus LCSW is a psychotherapist in private practice in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida. He and his wife, Angela raised four children and enjoy hiking, reading, yoga, biking and cooking. Michael can be reached by text or phone at (850) 837-0123 or at psychotherapy30A.com.









By BILL MASON, EXECUTIVE COACH AND FOUNDER OF ROCKET FUEL COACH

We all have that colleague who usually thrives under pressure—quick to adapt, sharp with details, a natural problem-solver. But even the strongest strengths can hit a snag. Ever noticed a typically adaptable teammate suddenly overwhelmed by too much change? Or a data-driven coworker stuck in decision paralysis? It happens—and often, it's a signal that their greatest strength is momentarily operating from the "basement" instead of the "balcony." Understanding how to spot these moments-and how to guide your teammates back to their strengths and talents-can transform how your team performs and supports one another. Let's explore how.

## When Strengths Stall: Helping Your Team **Bounce Back Stronger**

#### **Boosting Your Co**worker's Activator Power

Do you have a co-worker who's usually full of energy and ideas, but every now and then, they just seem... stuck? I've known one who, despite being a total go-getter, sometimes gets overwhelmed by the sheer number of ideas bouncing around in their head. Instead of diving in and taking action, they freeze, paralyzed by the "what ifs." It's like watching an Activator on

But here's the thing: these are classic "basement" behaviors for an Activator. When they're overwhelmed, they can get caught in indecision or overthinking, hiding their natural gift for action and drive. But underneath that, they have the potential to be a powerhouse—ready to take initiative, move mountains, and get things done.

So, how can we help them get back to their "balcony" and unleash their potential? Here are 3 ideas:

#### Give Clear Direction Help them focus on one idea at

a time. A little structure can turn that energy into clear action.

#### Celebrate Small Wins Acknowledge the progress they make, even if it's just a baby step. This can spark momentum and remind them how capable they

**Encourage Risk-Taking** -Let them know it's okay to make mistakes. Sometimes, taking action and learning as they go is the key to breaking through the

#### **Unleashing Your Co**worker's Arranger **Superpower**

Do you have a co-worker who's usually a pro at coordinating and managing multiple tasks, but every now and then, they seem to get a little overwhelmed? I've got one on my team who is usually the glue that holds everything together, effortlessly jug-

gling different projects and people. But recently, when things got chaotic, they became paralyzed by the complexity, struggling to keep it all moving forward. It was like watching a master Arranger stuck in a whirlwind of tasks!

This is a classic case of "basement" behaviors for an Arranger. When things get too complicated, they can get bogged down in the details, leading to indecision and hesitation. But at their core, they have an incredible ability to organize, prioritize, and bring harmony to complex situations.

So how can we help them get back to their "balcony" and tap into their true potential? Here are 3 ideas:

#### Break Down the Chaos -

Help them organize tasks into smaller, manageable pieces. Offering a clear structure can help them regain control.

**Empower Their Team** -Give them a sense of support by delegating tasks to others. This helps them focus on the bigger

picture without feeling alone in the details.

Celebrate Their Coordination Skills - Acknowledge their strengths in bringing order to complexity. A little recognition goes a long way in boosting confidence and motivation.

By spotting when strengths slip into the "basement," we can help teammates rise back to the "balcony," where their natural talents shine. Whether it's guiding an Activator to take bold steps or helping an Arranger bring order to complexity, small shifts in support can unlock big results. Ready to fuel your team's strengths and help them thrive even on the tough days? Let's

Bill Mason

Rocket Fuel Coach Fuel Your Strengths. Ignite Your Potential.

## **Grayton Beach:** Nice Dogs, Strange People

By Bradley Duke Daum

Editor's note: Longtime locals know the saying, "Grayton Beach -Nice Dogs, Strange People." Wellit's become part of the area's quirky charm. Here, the man behind the phrase shares how it came to be and why it still resonates today.

It was the mid-90s on 30-A Highway in Walton County. Folks were just beginning to settle back in after Hurricane Opal had turned so many lives upside

Some things never change, though—the long-time residents, the beautiful white sand beaches. I had been building custom decks for years. So, transitioning into dune walkovers

and beach structures after the storm felt like a natural fit.

During one of those restoration projects, I met Chris and Roxy Wilson. They were restoring an older building on Hotz Avenue, right across from the Red Bar. While I was there, they asked if I could build a boardwalk along the entire front of their new art gallery on the ground floor. And just like that, the Zoo Gallery was born.

As with most of my projects, I wanted to incorporate benches. Back then, very few businesses had seating out front-even the Red Bar didn't have enough places for waiting patrons. Benches added charm to the gallery and gave people a com-



fortable spot to relax.

But, with every project comes the "retired deck experts"—older men sent out by their wives to critique other people's work. In this case, even the wives joined in, offering plenty of unsolicited advice as they passed by the new

Every day, folks would walk past with scowls on their faces, tossing out comments such as,



"You're ruining the town," or, "You're going to attract homeless bums." You'd think I would have been used to criticism after building projects across the country for 20 years, but it never really gets easier.

Honestly, I think every builder should be required to take psychology classes to prepare for the public's reactions. People have an intense fear of

change, and they don't always trust what's new. Funny enough, it's usually women who stop to say what a great job I'm doing, while men stay up all night trying to figure out what I did wrong. In this case, everyone seemed equally uneasy about change.

The best visits, though, weren't from people at all—they were from the dogs. Back then, dogs roamed Grayton Beach freely. They'd stop by my project just to wag their tails, say hello, and smile. And not once did they lift their legs on my work.

That contrast—the eccentric people and the wonderful

Continued on page 46

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# Why You're Losing Business to Inferior Competitors

(And How to Stop It)



By Ross Vollmer

Let's be real, there's nothing more frustrating than knowing your product or service is the best around yet watching your less-qualified competitors land the customers you should be getting.

It happens every day here in Destin, and it has nothing to do with talent, experience, or reputation. In most cases, it all comes down to one thing:

They're more visible online.

## Being the Best Isn't Enough Anymore

In the past, a strong referral

network and a solid reputation were enough to keep the phone ringing. But today, nearly every buying decision starts with a Google search, and the businesses showing up on top are the ones winning the business.

Not because they're better.
Not because they're cheaper.
But because they're the first to be found.

If your business doesn't show up in the Google Map Pack (the top 3 listings next to the map on a local Google search) when someone searches for your service in Destin, you're invisible, no matter how good you are.

#### It Doesn't Matter How Good Your Service Is If You're Invisible

Most consumers don't scroll past the top 3 local results. And when they click, they're sizing you up fast based on your reviews, your website, and how quickly you follow up.

If your competitor has more 5-star reviews, a mobile-opti-

mized site, and a system that responds to inquiries within minutes, even if their work is just average, they'll close the deal.

Meanwhile, your phone stays quiet... and your superior service goes unnoticed.

## The Map Pack Isn't Magic. It's Strategy.

Many business owners believe that setting up a Google Business Profile and getting a few reviews is enough to rank in the Map Pack. It's not. The algorithm that controls those rankings looks at far more than just your profile.

To rank well, you need a mix of:

- Google Profile optimization (keywords, photos, service areas, categories)
- Website optimization (page speed, mobile usability, local keyword targeting, schema markup)
- Off-page optimization (citations, backlinks, review velocity, consistency across directories)

This isn't plug-and-play. It's technical, strategic, and constantly evolving. And frankly, it's more than the average business owner has the time or expertise to figure out.

## **Competing Without Help?** It's a Losing Battle

The truth is, businesses that invest in professional marketing help are outpacing those who don't — not because they're better at their craft, but because they're better at being seen.

Unless you have a dedicated digital team keeping up with algorithm changes, optimizing your content, and managing your local presence, you're going to fall behind. Not because you're doing anything wrong, but because your competitors are working with experts who

know how to do it right.

#### So, What Can You Do?

If you're serious about growth, visibility needs to be a BIG part of your business strategy. That means treating your online presence with the same professionalism you apply to the rest of your work, and knowing when to bring in help.

You've already built a great business. Now it's time to make sure the right people can find it.

Want to stop losing leads to lesser competitors? VDX Marketing is based right here in Destin and specializes in helping local businesses increase visibility and win online. Visit vdxmarketing.com to schedule a free digital audit.

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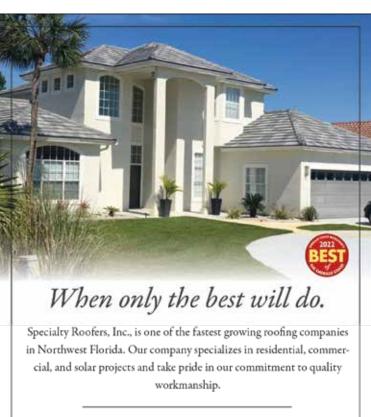
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## Sean of the South: The Whale



By Sean Dietrich

Seldovia, Alaska, sits somewhere near the top of the world. It's a nanoscopic village on the North Pacific. Population 225. Tons of fishing boats. A lot of cold, icy, Kachemak Bay water.

A few days ago, a local spotted something huge stranded on the beach. It was a minke whale. About the same length as a midsize Toyota.

The whale was struggling. Thrashing around and panting. The whale was fighting to breathe.

The passerby ran for help.

When a live whale finds itself stuck on a beach, you don't have a lot of time. Maybe 20 minutes, tops.

Dehydration is often what kills the whale. Or the whale might drown because its airway faces the tide. Often, it's suffocation that kills a stranded whale.

Remember when you were a kid, and you swam in the pool all day? Remember how when you got out of the pool, your whole body felt heavy? That's because for hours water supported your body weight while all your friends played Marco Polo, thereby traumatizing some unfortunate child so that this child would be receiving therapy for the next, say, 30 or 40 years of his or her respective adulthood. Not that I would know anything about this.

So anyway, after being buoyant all day, your little-kid muscles weren't used to supporting your weight. Once you got out of the pool, your body felt heavy.

Likewise, whales spend a lifetime in the water. Their bodies are not built to handle their own weight. When a whale lies on the beach, gravity crushes its huge frame, making it almost impossible to breathe.

The whale in Seldovia was gasping, with roughly three tons sitting on its lungs. It was dehydrating in the sun. It wouldn't

be long before the whale would just give up and die.

Each year, about 2,000 whales strand themselves on beaches and die. That number is rising. Nobody really knows why. Even fewer seem to care.

Someone in the village contacted Stephen Payton, the environmental coordinator. In his 10-year career, he had never encountered a live beached whale. He wasn't sure what to expect when a neighbor offered him a ride on a four-wheeler.

"It was really scratched up," Payton said. "You could tell it had probably been rolling around on the rocks."

When he got to the beach, he had likely expected to find a dead whale. What he found, however, was not a deceased cetaceous creature.

When Payton arrived at the shore, there was a crowd of locals who had formed a buck-

Benefiting

et brigade. They were hauling seawater from the Pacific, using five-gallon buckets, dousing the whale.

The villagers had wrapped the whale in wet towels to protect it from sun exposure. They did not leave the whale's side. Twenty minutes turned into an hour. One hour turned into six.

After a full day of caring for the animal, the tide arrived. The whale reoriented itself and swam into the water and the crowd cheered.

But the whale did not swim off into the deep. The whale stayed in local waters for days, surfacing frequently, and spouting at local villagers. Like it was saying thank you.

Now think of all the times you honestly believed you weren't going to make it. Try to remember the individuals who appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, who stood beside you

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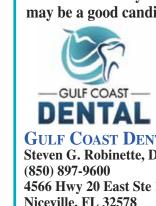
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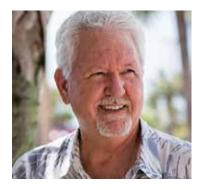


Call today





Musing



By Pastor Dave Holland

"Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.'... But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things."

— Luke 23:46, 49

Luke's Gospel repeatedly highlights the faithfulness of women. More than any other gospel writer, Luke shows how women were consistently devoted to Jesus—from Galilee to Golgotha. I relate deeply to this. I came to Christ in a church

## A Pastor's Ponderings: Women and Jesus

founded by a woman—Aimee Semple McPherson. Though she passed before I was born, her legacy raised up many men and women in ministry, including me.

Early on, I learned Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile... neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Women have always had a powerful place in God's story—and especially in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Women didn't just cheer from the sidelines. They followed, served, gave and endured. They traveled with Jesus, supported His ministry financially, and even cared for His physical needs. And when the road got hardest—when the crowds disappeared and the cross loomed—they stayed.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, not only birthed the Son of God,

but gave us the "Magnificat," a prophetic song that still echoes today. Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the Gospels more than most of the apostles. Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, helped fund Jesus' ministry. Salome, the mother of James and John, was present at key moments. So, were Mary of Bethany and her sister Martha—both women of deep faith and connection to Jesus.

Some would say to women, "Stay home, be quiet and tend the children." Yet, there were many women of various social standings who were out on the road with Christ and his disciples. They would have slept beside the road as Jesus and the disciples did. How awkward was that?

These women didn't retreat when things got messy. They followed Jesus to the cross. They were present at His death, helped care for His body, and returned to His tomb when others hid in fear. In fact, women were the first to witness and proclaim the resurrection. That's no small detail.

Where were Peter, James and John? Hiding. If you wanted to find them, you'd need a woman to point the way.

I've experienced firsthand the quiet strength and bold faith of women in ministry. When I first felt the call to serve God, it was a missionary who preached the sermon that broke my heart open. I stepped forward to the altar, unsure but hopeful. And then came Sister Conger—a woman who began weeping and wailing beside me. At first, I was annoyed. But when I looked closer, I realized: she was crying for me.

No one had ever done that before. Her prayers shattered

my pride. They were the kind of prayers that birth callings, mends hearts, changes lives. I wouldn't be in ministry today without her and the many women who prayed for me.

Behind so many pulpits, churches and callings are women. Faithful, unseen, powerful women—serving, sacrificing and crying out to God. Jesus saw them. He valued them. And He invited them to walk alongside Him

And we would do well to do the same.

Dave Holland pastored churches for thirty-eight years before retiring in Destin, Florida. 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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## **Altered Crime Scenes**

By Michael Yoder, Retired FBI Criminal Profiler

Conducting a thorough crime scene analysis is a basic principle of death investigations. The analysis involves obtaining a contextual understanding of the crime, identifying evidence suitable for use in court, and developing a hypothesis about the events that occurred. Deliberate attempts to mislead investigators can undermine the integrity of an investigation. An experienced investigator must always consider that a crime scene is not what it appears to be.

It is not common, but there are two types of people who would alter a death scene. The first group often consists of people close to the victim. Their purpose is to safeguard the reputation and dignity of the victim after death. For example, family members who come upon a dead loved one displayed in an embarrassing or compromised position may alter the scene. An

example of this is a suicide victim who, in a last act of emotion, decides to cross-dress or die nude. Many religions prohibit suicide, and for families, issues related to gender or sexual orientation can add further difficulty after such a loss. Before the police arrive, a family member may re-dress the victim or alter the crime scene to make it less controversial. They hope to protect the reputation of the victim and the victim's family and restore the dignity of the survivors.

The second type to alter a crime scene to misdirect law enforcement efforts is the offender—usually someone close to the victim. Altering a crime scene may be seen as self-preservation since those close to the victim are often primary suspects. If the perpetrator can alter the crime scene to make it seem like a third party was the offender, they can avoid being punished for the murder. A husband who spontaneously kills



## Seeking Justice

**Destin True Crime Club** 

Crime scenes may also be-

come altered through the remov-

al or addition of critical items.

Removing instruments used as

weapons in the murder or items

(that triggered spontaneous rage

in the offender) changes how the

scene is viewed and can frustrate

the progress of the investigation.

Adding or removing suicide

notes, ransom notes, or letters of

goodbye by the victim alters the

tone of the analysis. Deleting or

altering social media comments,

deleting browsing/search terms

history, erasing communications

which foreshadow displeasure of

the offender with the victim may

also be used to misdirect. Finally,

cleaning up a crime scene prior



his wife in their bedroom may want to make the crime appear to be a home robbery gone bad while he was conveniently at a different location. Or perhaps a better story involves a home intruder who sexually assaults and kills his wife while he was knocked unconscious—or he decides to move his wife's body, so it appears that she voluntarily disappeared. He is hoping he can portray himself as a victim rather than a suspect.

to law enforcement showing up may delete vital information in the overall analysis.

Ultimately, altering a crime scene is a form of lying. If a crime scene has been altered, the key question is "Why?" What is the purpose of the lie? Who benefits from the lie?" Usually,

when those answers are found, it will lead to what happened to the victim.

A good crime scene investigator looks with clinical thoroughness. Without getting emotional, they see the victim's body to determine WHAT happened. They look for clues on the body and around the crime scene to determine WHY it happened. The move from analysis to investigation to determine WHO committed the crime. Crime scene analysis is important to the investigation. An altered or staged crime scene gives a false impression and perverts the reality of what occurred.

If you're into true crime and want to learn sleuthing, join the Destin True Crime Club on Facebook. We meet monthly to research a real cold case and brainstorm next steps. It's a serious yet fun group for those passionate about solving cases. For questions or speaking requests on violent crime topics, email myoder0361@gmail.com.

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admission to multiple family-friendly venues for one full year — all for just \$49.99. It's a single pass that unlocks unlimited visits to partner attractions across the Emerald Coast and beyond.

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"I couldn't possibly give a full account of how awesome Pogo Pass is! Not only for date nights with my spouse, but it's also great for family activities with all my kids... all ages!" – Jason C

Pogo Pass has been creating

memories for over a decade and is now one of the largest entertainment passes in the country, with locations in cities like Nashville, Houston, Dallas, Phoenix, Kansas City and Las Vegas.

Use code FunLife at checkout for 50% off your pass.

See all participating venues at www.PogoPass.com.







## The Christian Capitalist College Clubs:

## Helping Students Grow in Their Faith and in Business

By RICH SANDERS

Last April, my wife Rebekah and I had a terrific visit with two professors at the Mendoza College of Business at Notre Dame University while we were in South Bend to see our son, Will, pitch for the South Bend Cubs. We talked with Dr. James Otteson and Dr. John Sikorski about the Christian Capitalist movement and learned about their efforts to prepare students to be better Christians in business. We were truly inspired by the stories they shared about the rapid growth of their academic programs. Within about thirty minutes of visiting with them and seeing the "Force for Good" banner outside the bookstore, it occurred to Rebekah and me that we should start Christian Capitalist clubs on college campuses around the nation!

These clubs serve as training grounds for the next generation of leaders who want to integrate their faith with their business efforts. Through guest speakers, community service projects, book discussions, and local outreach, students can explore how capitalism and Christianity thrive together when rooted in scriptural values. "The more we make, the more we give!"



Rebekah and Rich Sanders outside the bookstore at Notre Dame with the banner that inspired the idea of the Christian Capitalist College Clubs.

Our daughter, Caroline, a junior majoring in public relations, has a strong entrepreneurial spirit and was quick to volunteer to start the first club at the University of Alabama. She proclaimed: "Having the Christian Capitalist Club on campus gives students the opportunity to prepare for the next step of entering the workforce with Christian values."

Students at Auburn, Ole Miss, South Carolina and Notre Dame have since volunteered to start clubs at their schools. Most of the presidents were able to gather in Atlanta last Thanksgiving for a retreat to prepare for the launch of the Clubs, and several of them







Informational meetings hosted: 1 - Quinn Schaeffer, the President of the University of Notre Dame Christian Capitalist Club. 2 - Caroline Sanders, the President of the University of Alabama Christian Capitalist Club. 3 - Drew Moss, the President of the Auburn University Christian Capitalist Club.

held informational meetings at the end of the Spring semester.

The Christian Capitalist College Clubs support students in growing their careers in business, regardless of their majors or academic fields of study, and developing an ethic of hard work and generous giving to the poor and needy during their time on campus and beyond. The Clubs will work with churches, local non-profit organizations and businesses in their greater communities, giving students a chance to directly express their love of neighbor during their time in college. Students are also learning through the Clubs that they can use their faith in business after graduation, not hide

Quinn Schaeffer, the President of the Christian Capitalist Club at Notre Dame and a double-major in accounting and finance at the Mendoza College of Business, summarizes the thoughts of many of her peers: "The Christian Capitalist Club at Notre Dame is a combination of what every student in the Mendoza College of Business came to our Catholic school for: the interconnection of faith with commerce."

As the summer winds down, and college students head back to campus, if you or any students you know might be interested in joining or starting a Club at their schools, please pass along our website: christiancapitalist.life.

Rich Sanders is a pastor, small business owner, retired healthcare attorney and adjunct professor at Emory University, and former intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy, He and his wife, Rebekah, met at church in 1996, have

been blessed with three children (James, William and Caroline) and live in Destin with their large golden retriever, Cowboy.

#### WEDDING PLANNER

continued from page 7

rings; when something goes wrong, a full-service planner ensures you never even know it happened.

Design and execution are two different things. Anyone can create a Pinterest board and choose a color palette. A planner ensures the chairs are placed perfectly, the lighting is romantic, the ceremony transitions seamlessly, and that you feel supported every step of the way.

Having been on both sides, as a planner and now a venue manager, I have witnessed what a difference it makes when a seasoned, insured and dedicated professional is leading the charge. Weddings are complex, beautiful productions. And like any great production, they need a director.

Final Thoughts: At The Alice, we require every couple to hire a licensed, insured, full-service wedding planner. This is not about control, it is all about collaboration. When everyone stays in their lane, magic happens. We get to do what we do best. Planners get to work their magic. And couples? They get to fully enjoy one of the most meaningful times of their lives with confidence, joy and peace of mind.

In the world of luxury weddings, experience matters. And trust me, you'll never regret hiring the right planner partner.

Kristin Sullivan | General Manager of The Alice, a Destin, luxury waterfront venue, and an expert in destination weddings and retreats.



Arts & Music

## **Built to Last:**

## **Cadillac Willy Celebrates Silver Anniversary**

By Christopher Manson

Labor Day weekend, 2020. Guitarist Clayton Bonjean and his band Cadillac Willy played their first gig on Okaloosa Island. This month, the group commemorates its 25th anniversary with a star-studded performance—featuring members past and present—in Santa Rosa Beach.

"We were younger, obviously, and had just moved to the area," Bonjean says of Cadillac Willy's origin all those years ago. "The music scene wasn't nearly what it was now. Everyone was playing Jimmy Buffett and Matchbox Twenty." Bonjean played in bands while attending Ole Miss, and percussionist Louis Antoon was a member of the "hot" local band Salty Dog.

"I was into jam bands, and Louis was interested in doing jam stuff like Grateful Dead and Widespread Panic with the congas and timbales," says Bonjean. "I was always trying to put a band together." Prior to hooking up with Antoon, he met Patrick Wilson, who played bass guitar with Willy for 22 years. "He's retired from the band, but he still plays with us occasionally."

The other founding members were guitarist John David Sullivan, and Josh "JP" Pace, that rarity in live music—a performer who can sing and drum simultaneously. "At that first gig, JP had a five-piece drum set, but we partied so hard we lost one of his tom-toms!" Cadillac Willy's set list was pretty light at the time (Bonjean recalls playing Neil Young's "Walk On."), but Sullivan promised the venue that if they booked the band, they would fill the place up. And they did.

Following JP's departure, Tim O'Shea sang with Willy for years, and the well-traveled Charles Pagano kicked out the jams. Over the years, John Mark Turner (Blues Old Stand) and the late great Kenny Oliverio (Dread Clampitt) have collaborated with the band. Turner filled in as guitarist on a few occasions and picked up the bass guitar when Wilson went through his celebrated pedal steel phase.

About 15 years ago, drummer



Cadillac Willy's Clayton Bonjean, Louis Antoon, and Patrick Wilson in the early days.

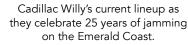
Shawn Shackelford and vocalist/keyboardist Metz Barnes both recognized by the local Beachcomber Magazine Music Awards—joined. Multi-instrumentalist Ricky Stanfield is a recent recruit. Bonjean describes him as "a big bluegrasser and an excellent banjo and mandolin player. He's been a great addition."

The current and original Cadillac Willy lineups will perform Friday, August 29, at Red Fish Taco in Santa Rosa Beach start-

ing at 6 p.m. "We'll play until around 9," says Bonjean. "We don't do 'late' gig anymore. The bands and people have all gotten older. I think the young latenight crowd is more into DJs."

He says the band will set up additional rigs to entice any and all former members and "sit-ins" to participate in the celebration. "It's going to be a great night," says Bonjean, adding that Red Fish Taco has been Cadillac Willy's main spot after building their fan base at





venues like Harbor Docks and the much-missed Funky Blues Shack. "We're booked there two Fridays a month through Christmas 2026."

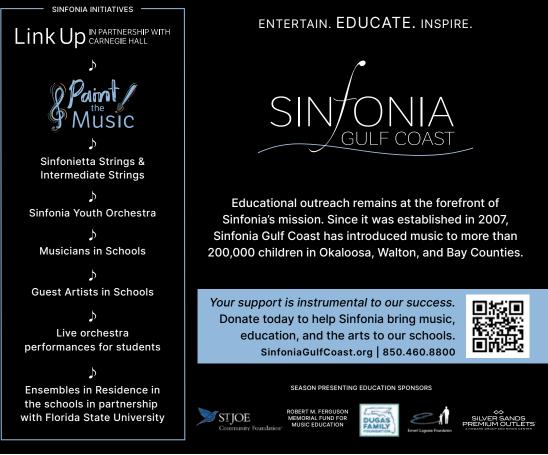
In 25 years, Cadillac Willy have never entertained the idea of calling it quits. "Louis always says, 'You can't kill Cadillac Willy," says Bonjean. "A big part of why we've been together so long is because nobody is really in

charge. Whoever books the gigs is responsible for collecting the money. Everybody is pretty laid back—nobody takes themselves too seriously. Everyone respects everyone despite different political views and lifestyles. We're all on the same page musically."

Bonjean informs me that the band has learned a lot of new songs since Stanfield jumped on board. "We can always play Widespread Panic all night, though. But we've added a lot more complex songs by the Dead and some others. We have to keep it fresh, or we get bored."

Take a deep dive into the band's classic jams and funky stuff at cadillacwilly.com.







## **Something from Nothing**

By Anna Fisher, Associate Artistic Director, Emerald Coast Theatre Company

One big regret I have, which dates back to 2016, is my lack of historical documentation. I think back to the day that Stacey Brady, ECTC board member and advocate, brought Nathanael and I to the empty, echoey 17,000 sq. ft. space that now houses Emerald Coast Theatre Company and asked "Do you think this will work?"

We laughed, and then we cried, overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the gift that we were being given from Grand Boulevard. I never dreamed of how full it would become. Full of people, full of things, full of life. I should have created a time lapse video of the curtain track being hung in the rafters and how our theatre friends and colleagues showed up to do math and hang curtains in all the right places. The space slowly began



to take shape and form—a curtained off black box area with room for 100 seats, a shop area, a small corral of desks, and a spot in the corner for the bins of costumes and props we had accumulated and stored in my Father's shed when it outgrew our garage. We finally had our own space! We could build a set and install it without loading it into our car for transport. Costume and props creation could now happen at a table in our new theatre instead of my kitchen table at home. We could strike the set and not have to load it up for two or three trips back to our garage. It was practically a life of leisure to have an actual location!

Even after the curtains were hung, the space felt massive. I was given a bright blue scooter that Christmas and I used it to get from the back where our "offices" are to the front lobby area. There came a point when I had to abandon my mode of transportation, because the growing number of cords, curtains and people had multiplied so much that there were just no more pathways

for scootering. We recently extended the green room to hold 15 people and two racks of costumes—and if everyone turns sideways and sucks in, they can maneuver around fairly well.

This past season we moved our curtains again to maximize our mainstage seating to 260 seats. We've also challenged Beca, our Resident Designer, and Carl, our Master Carpenter, to work in less and less shop space as they simultaneously build bigger and more elaborate sets for the larger shows we are producing. The resourcefulness of our production team always inspires me, because they always figure out a way to make the magic happen.

If I were to give you a tour today, you would see every inch of this incredible space in use. During the summers, we have some weeks where we simultaneously run four camps totaling almost 100 students. It is a cacophony of joy and energy and so much life happening in real

time. There are the little ones in our small dance studio, the big kids dancing their hearts out in the larger rehearsal room, the serious teens working on their murder mystery in the second stage area of the lobby, and our audition-only group singing at full volume on the main stage theatre. You would see Taylor, our Costume Designer, up on the 12 foot high rolling step ladder to pull costumes that have been hung from the ceiling while Ora, our Props Master, forges a path between the shelves of prop bins and set furniture to find that one perfect centerpiece for the show. This year we were so grateful when friends and supporters Brooks and Cari-Beth McDonald gifted the administration team a separate office space to work in for the summer. We affectionately named it "the quiet place."

Just like this once empty and echoey space, theatre is about creating something from noth-The playwright creates that first spark and ignites a firestorm of imagery, music, lyrics and emotion. We then get to build those flat words into three dimensional miracles that exist for a moment in time. Ephemeral little worlds filled with texture and life and color and structure and wood and velvet and people moving and breathing in a way that never happens the same way twice. I hope you'll join us in real time for Season 13, and see all the worlds that ECTC has made into something from nothing.









## **Around Town**



#### New Rescue Tube Installed at Tarpon Beach Access

The Rotary Club of Destin has expanded beach safety by installing another life-saving rescue tube at the newly opened Tarpon Beach access site and by thoroughly cleaning all Crystal Beach accesses, June-Decker Park, and Calhoun access this week. This latest installation continues the club's collaboration with the City of Destin and the Rescue Tube Foundation, part of the initial project in February 2025 that placed eight rescue tubes at public beach accesses across the city. The initiative, first approved by the City Council in September 2024, aims to supplement lifeguard



services with accessible safety gear at popular swimming spots.

## Tarpon Beach Park Groundbreaking

Public beach access in Destin expanded July 7 with the groundbreaking of Tarpon Beach Gulf Front Park, a partnership between Okaloosa County, the City of Destin and Trust for Public Land. Located at 3310 Scenic Hwy. 98, the park will add 340 feet of Gulf access plus free parking, restrooms and pavilions. "This is a great example of how partnerships can benefit the pub-

lic," said Commissioner Drew Palmer. Mayor Bobby Wagner added the project will help safeguard the coast "for future generations to experience and cherish." Phase II follows the Crystal Beach expansion, totaling \$26.5 million in tourism-funded improvements.

#### Sinfonia Youth Programs Open for 2025-26

Sinfonia Gulf Coast is now registering students for its 2025–26 youth music programs, including beginner through advanced ensembles and an expanded After School Beginning Strings program. Open to strings, winds, brass, percussion and piano, the programs provide mentorship, performances, Bright Futures hours and scholarships. "We believe our youth orchestra programs foster a strong sense of community," said director Margaret Gordon. Since 2007, Sinfonia's education efforts have reached more than 220,000 local children. Details and registration: SinfoniaGulfCoast.org.

## Joyner Named Business Person of the Quarter

During the Destin Chamber's July 15 Great American Cookout, Lori Joyner, Executive Director of Harvest House, was honored as Business Person of the Quarter. The Chamber's Board presents this award to leaders demonstrating vision and community impact. "I have always admired Lori and the work she does. She's a special person. People forget about the work that the non-profits in the community do... It truly is one of those organizations that is

vital to our community," said Shane A. Moody, CCE, FCCP.

Under Joyner's 15-year leadership, Harvest House has distributed more than 400,000 bags of groceries to 115,000 local families. Recently, Joyner oversaw a major relocation of the food pantry to 114 Palmetto St. after its former facility closed. Learn more at Harvest-HouseDestin.org.

## Total Wine & More Opens in Destin

Total Wine & More has officially opened its doors at 34940 Emerald Coast Parkway, bringing its massive selection of wine, beer and spirits to local shoppers. The grand opening celebration included a ribbon-cutting and preview party in late July, and opening-week specials drew big crowds. The store offers weekly tastings, events and special promotions — including \$10 off any \$50 purchase with code 2601 through Oct. 26 — a welcome addition for locals and visitors looking to explore new favorites right here in Destin.





## Ask Destinites: Destin Revised Noise Ordinance



By Patricia Lee, Owner Destinites.com

The following community concern was posted by a local in our Destinites Facebook group (www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinites).

City of Destin residents! Do you like to play music in your backyard? Having a cookout with music? Enjoy your pool with music in the background? I'm wondering how many of you like to do that. I know I do! If you haven't heard, the City of Destin has banned any sound traveling to neighbors' yards. Here are some of the ordinance rules causing concern:

- 1. Plainly Audible Standard
   Instead of using decibel meters, the ordinance now considers noise violations based on
  whether noise is plainly audible
  beyond the adjacent property boundary or zoning setback
  line.
- 2. Noise Times and Zones: Non-residential properties next to residential zones. 10 p.m. 6 a.m.: Plainly audible sound is prohibited across residential setbacks. 6 a.m. 10 p.m.: No plainly audible noise beyond 300 feet.
- 3. Quiet hours typically run from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m., consistent with county-wide standards.

\*\*\*You can consult the City of Destin's official code compliance pages or municipal code library to view the full ordinance text (Chapter 14, Article II).

Below are some responses to this post by our Destinites members: 1. I love peace and quiet at home. 2. Reminds me of the tree ordinance that was passed several years ago. It had to be retracted, because the people rose up against it. I think there should be times, but not telling people they can't play the radio in their back yard. 3. So, I guess they're gonna make the bands on the harbor shut down, because you can hear them at my house and I live off Legion and what about the fireworks? It doesn't bother me, but if they are going to put a law to fact that everybody should have to listen, what about the boom boxes in the car driving up and down our road till all hours of the evening? What's gonna be done about that? This is crazy if it bothers your neighbor you should respect and turn down, but the city to make an ordinance that you can't play your music during the day is ridiculous. We need a re-hearing, because I will definitely be there. I've complained about the water draining in my backyard during storms, the speed bumps that need to be put on our road, and they still have yet to do anything about that. But, they can vote on playing music. 4. People abuse their privileges and then whine when they are taken away. I can hear a neighbor's music and they live on another street from me. They are about a block and 1/2 away. I've never reported them, but I'm not sorry that they have to be considerate, now.

- 5. Yappy, barking dogs continuously should be included.
- 6. Omg, I just hired a local band to play for my ladies' 40th party. Not sure what to do now; lame. I mean no more wedding parties either, I suppose.
- 7. I have contacted the governor and senate to see what they say about this. If they really have the right to do this and if this is not against our constitution

If you are a Destin resident or in the close surrounding area, I invite you to join our private, targeted group for locals and property owners at Facebook. com/groups/Destinites with 11,900+ members (Est. Oct. 2018). Check out our local business directory at Destinites.com where 400+ local businesses are already listed and enjoy advertising in our targeted group.

#### **GRAYTON BEACH**

continued from page 37

dogs—inspired me to create something fun. I started printing bumper stickers and T-shirts

with a phrase I came up with out of sheer frustration: "Grayton Beach - Nice Dogs, Strange People." Locals started buying them and proudly putting the stickers on their cars. Before long, it became Grayton Beach's unofficial slogan.

A few years later, I learned about another unofficial slogan that popped up in Austin, Texas: "Keep Austin Weird." It reminded me how many people claim they invented catchphrases like these. Red Wassenich, the man who actually coined Austin's slogan, is rarely mentioned. He never sought fame or fortune from it. I know how he feels.

Sometimes it's worth enduring the criticism just to speak the truth.

And sure enough, not long after my project wrapped up, other businesses around Grayton Beach started building benches, too.

Today, "Grayton Beach Nice Dogs Strange People" still pops up on bumper stickers and T-shirts across 30A—a playful reminder of the town's free-spirited roots. It's a phrase that captures the heart of Grayton: laid-back, dog-friendly, and just a little eccentric—in the best way possible.

#### **POST-ACUTE**

continued from page 35

to support you in navigating this important decision. Our commitment to personalized care and specialized therapy services means that your loved one will receive the help they need to thrive. We invite you to reach out to us for guidance and to learn more about how we can assist you and your family through this journey. Our team provides compassionate support and expertise every step of the way.

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