



NOVEMBER 2025  
VOL. 8, NO. 4

# DESTIN Life

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Santa Rosa Beach, FL  
PERMIT NO. #11

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## Alaqua Well-Being:

### Finding Healing in the Company of Animals and Nature

BY LAURIE HOOD, ALAQUA  
FOUNDER & CEO

Tucked among the pines and pastures of Freeport, Alaqua Animal Refuge has always been a place of second chances. Every rescued animal carries a story of survival, and every visitor feels the quiet peace that comes from being near them. It is that same sense of connection that inspired Alaqua's newest initiative, Alaqua Well-Being, a program that invites people to slow down, breathe deeply, and heal alongside the animals who live there.

The idea for Alaqua Well-Being grew out of simple conversations with volunteers. When asked what brought them to the refuge, the first answer was always their love of animals. But as those talks went deeper, something more profound emerged. Many were walking through their own seasons of grief or change — the loss of a spouse, recovery from illness, divorce, or other personal challenges. Again and



again, they shared that it was the animals who gave them the courage to keep going. Watching a once-broken animal learn to trust and love again gave them hope that they could heal, too. It became clear that the refuge was helping people as much as it helped animals.

Alaqua Well-Being was born from that truth. It is built on the idea that when we care for animals and connect with



nature, we also heal ourselves. The program brings together experiences that nurture the mind, body and spirit, including meditation, art, nature walks, counseling and animal-assisted activities. It is a place where compassion becomes a practice and not just a feeling.

One of the most beloved parts of the program is Doggie Day Out, where community members can take an



adoptable dog for a few hours or an afternoon adventure. Whether it is a walk on the beach, a car ride or relaxing in the park, these outings give the dogs a break from the shelter and offer people a joyful, stress-relieving experience. Participants often say it is the best therapy they did not know they needed, and

**ALAQUA**

*continued on page 2*



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See coupon pg. 47.

## SAFE in the Panhandle

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

SAFE (Strategic Alliance to Fight Exploitation) on the Panhandle, in collaboration with Ruthlake Farm, hosts its inaugural Christmas Market at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center Nov. 21 and 22.

SAFE In the Panhandle is a local 501(c)(3) "working to end exploitation in the Florida Panhandle," says Director Marissa Osborne. The nonprofit will soon offer the only 24/7 emergency safe home for survivors on the Emerald Coast. SAFE provides free state-approved and state-mandated training for law enforcement, first responders, the hospitality industry, medical profes-

**SAFE**

*continued on page 4*



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 Community

**ALAQUA**  
*continued from page 1*

many end up adopting their new, furry friends.

Another cornerstone of Alaquia Well-Being is Humane Heroes, the refuge’s hands-on learning experience for young people. Students spend time caring for animals, hearing their rescue stories, and learning how empathy and responsibility can change lives. “We have seen kids open up in ways that surprise even their teachers,” says Alaquia founder Laurie Hood. “Animals have a way of reaching the parts of us that words cannot.”

The program also extends to senior citizens, both at the refuge and through offsite visits.



Many seniors find comfort in brushing a horse’s mane, holding a gentle cat or simply sitting quietly with a dog by their side.



These simple moments bring back memories, spark conversation and lift spirits in ways that medicine alone cannot.

For anyone seeking stillness, guided nature walks and meditation sessions on Alaquia’s trails offer a peaceful escape from the pace of everyday life. The sounds of birds, the rustle of leaves and the presence of animals create a kind of natural therapy — a reminder that calm often lives in the simplest places.



Creativity also plays a key role in Alaquia Well-Being. Art classes invite participants to express themselves and find mindfulness through painting, sketching and other forms of creative expression. Alaquia also hosts live music events that bring people together in celebration of community, compassion and the bond we share with animals.

In addition, Alaquia is developing opportunities for counseling and natural healing, connecting participants with professionals and holistic practitioners who share the belief that animals and nature can be powerful partners in emotional wellness.

What ties every part of Alaquia Well-Being together is compassion. The program reflects the refuge’s long-standing belief that empathy for animals teaches empathy for people. It is a full-circle approach to well-

ness that reminds us that healing does not always happen in a clinic, but often in the quiet moments when we simply allow ourselves to connect.

At Alaquia, rescue has always meant more than saving animals. It is about creating a refuge for all living things, people included. Alaquia Well-Being is the next chapter in that story — a reminder that kindness heals, and that sometimes, the best medicine has four legs and a heartbeat.

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Published Monthly  
Mailed FREE to the communities of  
Destin, FL (32541)

P.O. Box 1424  
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

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# Give Back This Season: Be a Local Holiday Hero

By Christopher Manson

The holidays are a season of giving—and our Destin community never falls short when it comes to generosity. From food drives and toy collections to charity runs and Christmas markets, there are countless ways to make a difference right here at home. Whether you give time, resources or simply spread the word, you can help make the holidays brighter for neighbors in need.

Each fall, **Crop Drop** volunteers gather more than 110,000 pounds of produce to be distributed to food pantries, homeless shelters and churches throughout the Panhandle, feeding 6,000 families (24,000 individuals). You or your organization can join many others such as **Rotary Club of Destin** for this year's event starting at 7:30 a.m., Saturday, Nov. 22, at Destin Methodist Church. Business and individual sponsors can email [croppdropdestin@gmail.com](mailto:croppdropdestin@gmail.com) or call 850.586.0585. To volunteer, visit [croppdrop.net](http://croppdrop.net).

In the spirit of the season, **Superintendent Mar-**



**cus Chambers (Okaloosa County School District) and Sheriff Eric Aden (Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office)** are collaborating for this year's **Angel Tree program**. The joint initiative helps ensure students in need—many of whom might otherwise miss the magic of Christmas—receive gifts, essential items and a reminder that their community cares. At the start of the school year, school staff and SROs identified students and created wish lists for community members to sponsor or fund. To sponsor a child or donate, visit <https://ocso-starcharity.com/angel-tree>.

Rev up for a great cause: the **Harley-Davidson Owners Group (H.O.G.) #3605** hosts its **46th annual Toys 4 Tots**

*Continued on page 16*

## When Gratitude Overflows

FROM PUBLISHER LORI SMITH

*“Gratitude is a quality similar to electricity: It must be produced and discharged and used up in order to exist at all.” — William Faulkner*

They say people with a thankful heart see their glass as half full, while others see it as half empty. But I've learned that gratitude isn't really about what's in the glass—it's about how we choose to see it.

As you gather with family and friends this Thanksgiving, I encourage you to make it more than a day off filled with food, football and festivities. Let it be a day of true reflection and appreciation. Think of those first Pilgrims, who could have focused on all they had lost—yet instead, they gave thanks for all they had been given: life, new beginnings, a bountiful harvest, friendship, family and a faithful God.



Our nation was built on a foundation of thankfulness, and our lives, too, can hold great promise when grounded in gratitude. Because when we live with a thankful heart, we discover that the glass isn't just half full—it's overflowing.

This season, we asked a few of our friends and neighbors what fills their glass with gratitude. Here's what they shared...

This year I'm thankful for family, friends, life and the

journey it brings!  
- Tré Baity, Toxic Freedom

So very thankful and grateful for all of those that have collectively brought The Alice to life this November.  
- Kristin Sullivan, The Alice Destin

I am thankful for my Destinities Facebook group and all the friendships and support the members give to me and one another. Such a blessing!  
- Patricia Lee, Creator Facebook group Destinities

Having grown up when phones were connected to the wall, now I walk around with a cell phone that I view as my lifeline to the world. I'm thankful to be part of a “bridge” generation that values history and innovation.  
- Barbara Palmgren, History Museum of Northwest Florida and Life Media writer



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Community

SAFE

continued from page 1

sionals, and community groups. “The goal is to educate groups on how to recognize human trafficking and how to report it.”

The for-profit Ruthlake Farm, owned by SAFE, is a 31-acre working farm that, according to Osborne, will one day—in addition to providing funding

for SAFE—join forces with other nonprofits around the world at no charge, guiding them on how to implement a business model for funding.

“We are growing satsumas, blueberries and Christmas trees, and will eventually offer a ‘you pick’ experience, a Christmas market on the property and more,” says Osborne. Currently, the farm crafts artisan soaps,

honey and pottery. Ruthlake Farm also has its own private coffee label.

Osborne says the November event will be “our big introduction of Ruthlake Farm products and its mission.” Admission is \$10 and includes a complimentary shopping bag and raffle basket entry. “The goal is to go into the market and do all your holiday shopping.” The



SAFE in the Panhandle board members Marissa Osborne, Bonnie Waters, founder Bruce Bailey, Pastor Gary Wiggins, Trei McMullen, and Phillip Poundstone.

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market will offer a variety of male, female and kid -friendly items, along with photo and letter-writing opportunities with Santa and other children’s activities.

“Choosing the (event) space was very important,” says Osborne, “and we wanted it to be convenient for the community we serve.” Ruthlake Farm will have items for sale, and all of those sales will find their way back to SAFE to further the mission.

The market has enticed many vendors to step up, and Osborne says vendor opportunities are still available. Anyone interested in sponsorship can email [support@ruthlakefarm.net](mailto:support@ruthlakefarm.net) or call (205) 478-3862. Sponsorship perks include logo placement on the event’s website, marketing materials and social media platforms; on-site recognition; and



Chase Bailey crafts away at Ruthlake Farm.

“the joy of spreading Christmas cheer.”

Osborne’s uncle, Bruce Bailey, a businessman who wished to give back to the community, founded SAFE four years ago, and Osborne jumped on board in March. “I’m at a point where I can do something I’m passionate about.” Previously, her church family provided opportunities for Osborne to serve as director of the preschool and as part of the women’s ministries, and she has numerous fundraising projects under her belt.

Osborne says trafficking is a big problem in all areas of the country. “It truly does hide in plain sight. No community is immune. Learn the signs, how to report and how to keep your family safe.”

SAFE is collaborating with The Freedom Collective of Northwest Florida to help run its safe home. Osborne calls the nonprofit “a trusted leader in emergency and stabilization care for victims of human trafficking.”

Learn more at [safeinthehandle.com](http://safeinthehandle.com) and [ruthlakefarm.net](http://ruthlakefarm.net).

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# Christmas Countdown: Santa in a Shiny Red T-Bird and More

By CHRISTOPHER MANSON

## Friday, Nov. 14 City of Destin's 19th Annual Holiday Craft Show

10 a.m.-4 p.m. & Saturday, Nov. 15 | 9 a.m.-3 p.m. | Destin Community Center

The show features more than 50 vendors—hand-crafted jewelry, wreaths, books, concessions and more. Admission is free.

Vendor booths are available for \$55 (non-residents) or \$45 (Destin residents). Space is limited; register early. Call (850) 654-5184.

## Saturday, Nov. 15 Movie Night: Will Ferrell's Immortal Holiday Classic "Elf"

Mattie Kelly Arts Center Amphitheater, Niceville | 6 p.m.

Enjoy the beloved Christmas comedy on the inflatable outdoor screen. [mattiekellyartscenter.org](http://mattiekellyartscenter.org)

## Friday, Nov. 21 - Sunday, Dec. 21 Jolly Jubilee

Destin Commons, Destin

The holiday cheer begins Nov. 21 at 3 p.m. with a joyous performance by the Cincinnati Christmas Carolers. [destincommons.com](http://destincommons.com)



## Friday, Nov. 21 Hometown Holiday Parade & Coastal White Christmas Celebration

Grand Boulevard Town Center, Miramar Beach | 5-7 p.m.

Thousands of brilliant white lights illuminate the parade featuring local nonprofits, community leaders, and more—culminating with the magical arrival of Santa Claus! Enjoy faux snow, complimentary photos with Santa, horse-drawn carriage rides, live entertainment, seasonal refreshments, and more. [grandboulevard.com](http://grandboulevard.com)

## Friday, Nov. 21 & Saturday, Nov. 22 | 4-6 p.m. 13th Annual Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights

The Village of Baytowne Wharf, Miramar Beach

A ticketed event featuring more than 30 champagnes, delicious appetizers from featured restaurants, and a choreo-

graphed "Night of Lights" show. [baytownewharf.com](http://baytownewharf.com)

## Friday, Nov. 21 & Saturday, Nov. 22 | 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 23 The Nutcracker 2025

Mattie Kelly Arts Center, Niceville | 2:30 p.m.

The Northwest Florida Ballet's 46th annual production of the classic holiday fairytale features a cast of more than 140 performers and live music from the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra under conductor David Ott. [nfballet.org](http://nfballet.org)

## Sunday, Nov. 23 Sandestin Turkey Trot | 7-11 a.m.

Baytowne Marina, Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort

Kick off Thanksgiving week with the 4th Annual Sandestin Turkey Trot 5K Fun Run and 1-Mile Fun Walk through Sandestin. Packet pick-up begins at 6 a.m., with both races starting at 7:30 a.m. Afterward, enjoy a festive post-run tailgate party at 11 a.m. featuring beer, food, prizes and NFL football on the big screen. To register: <https://www.sandestin.com/things-to-do/events/sandestinr-turkey-trot>

## Saturday, Nov. 22 Ruthlake Farm Christmas Market

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, Fort Walton Beach | 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Photos with Santa, vendors, gift wrapping, raffles, and more. Admission is \$10 and includes a shopping bag and raffle ticket. [ruthlakefarm.net](http://ruthlakefarm.net)

## Friday, Nov. 28 Grande Tree Lighting Ceremony

HarborWalk Village, Destin | 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Kick off the holiday season with caroling and festive drinks from the hot chocolate bar. [emeraldgrande.com](http://emeraldgrande.com)

## Harbor Sip & Shop: Black Friday Edition

HarborWalk Village, Destin | 5-8 p.m.

Sip, shop, and save! Check in at the white tent near the Main Stage, make a donation to CALM (Crisis Aid for Littles and Moms), and receive your commemorative wine glass. Enjoy exclusive discounts from HarborWalk Village merchants while sampling wines from event sponsors. [emeraldgrande.com](http://emeraldgrande.com)



## Saturday, Nov. 29 Santa's Arrival Parade

HarborWalk Village, Destin | 12:30-1 p.m.

Welcome the hardest-working man of the holiday season as he arrives in style in a shiny red T-Bird! Santa will be joined by the Village Brass Band, jolly elves, festive performers, and plenty of holiday surprises. [emeraldgrande.com](http://emeraldgrande.com)

## Here Comes Santa Claus

The Village of Baytowne Wharf, Miramar Beach | 6-9 p.m.

Face painting, kids' crafts, and a holiday fireworks show in the Events Plaza. [baytownewharf.com](http://baytownewharf.com)

## Saturday, Nov. 29 - Sunday, Dec. 21 Visits with Santa

HarborWalk Village, Destin | 1-4 p.m.

Get your free photo with Santa, enjoy a Reindeer Scavenger Hunt, and visit the Letters to Santa station. (Every Saturday and Sunday through Dec. 21.) [emeraldgrande.com](http://emeraldgrande.com)

## Thursday, Dec. 4 Christmas Tree Lighting

Destin Community Center, 101 Stahlman Ave., Destin | 6-6:30 p.m.

The 39th annual lighting of the Destin Christmas tree. Call (850) 654-5184 for details.

## Friday, Dec. 5 Movies on the Lawn: Holiday Edition

HarborWalk Village, Destin | 5 p.m.

Bring a blanket and enjoy a family-friendly holiday classic every Friday through Dec. 19. Free on-site parking. [emeraldgrande.com](http://emeraldgrande.com)



# The Nutcracker

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Continued on page 21

# Cali's To Do In Destin! NOVEMBER 2025

..... 5 .....

**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

**Destin Fishing Rodeo Awards** | 5:30pm

**Rock n Roll Bingo** | 6pm | Fatboys Niceville

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

**Music Bingo** | 7pm | Hooters Destin

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Kenny D's

**Karaoke** | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 6 .....

**Karaoke** | 6pm | The B Bar Niceville

**Candle Pouring Lab** | 6pm | 30A Distilling Co

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

**Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup** | 7pm | Downtown Music Hall

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Ladies Night** | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 7 .....

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

**Fire Pit Friday** | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co

**Singo Music Bingo** | 5pm | The Island Resort

**Free Beach Bonfire** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

**30A BBQ Festival** | 5:30pm | Grand Boulevard

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Island Wing Company

**Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons** | 8pm | Bric a Brac

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

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 8 .....

**Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

**Farmers Market** | 9am | Seaside, FL

**Farmers Market** | 10am | Harborwalk Village

**Cops Rock** | 11am | Fudpucker's

**Hops & Harmonies** | 3pm | Harborwalk Village

**Karaoke** | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Fireworks** | 9pm | Destin Harbor

..... 9 .....

**Destin Community Farmers Market** | 9pm-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin

**DJ Brunch** | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

**Trivia Night** | 6pm | The Wharf 850

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

..... 10 .....

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

**Trivia Night** | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

..... 11 .....

**Veterans Day on the Harbor** | 11am | Harborwalk Village

**Karaoke** | 6pm | Hooter's Destin

**Karaoke** | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

**Karaoke** | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin



**Trivia Night** | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB

..... 12 .....

**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

**Run Club** | 5:30pm | Lululemon Destin Commons

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

**Music Bingo** | 7pm | Hooter's Destin

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Kenny D's

**Karaoke** | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 13 .....

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

**Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup** | 7pm | Downtown Music Hall

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Ladies Night** | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 14 .....

**City of Destin Holiday Craft Show** | 10am-4pm | Destin Community Center

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

**Fire Pit Friday** | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co

**Singo Music Bingo** | 5pm | The Island Resort

**Free Beach Bonfire** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

**Wicked Themed Cake Decorating Class** | 6pm | Just Think Cake

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Island Wing Company

**Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons** | 8pm | Bric a Brac

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

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 15 .....

**Eco Monthly Trash Pickup** | 8:45am | June White Decker Park

**Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

**Farmers Market** | 9am | Seaside, FL

**City of Destin Holiday Craft Show** | 9am-3pm | Destin Community Center

**The Village Christmas Market** | 9am | 101 Matthew Blvd, Destin

**Kids Free Weekend** | Park Hours 9 am – 4:30 pm | Gulfarium Okaloosa Island

**Adoption Event at PetSmart** | 11am | PetSmart Destin

**Blues Brews & BBQ** | 1pm | Harborwalk Village

**Chili Cook Off & Corn Hole Tournament** | 2pm | Soundside

**Hops & Harmonies** | 3pm | Harborwalk Village

**Movie Night: Elf** | 6 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center Amphitheater | Niceville

**Karaoke** | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

..... 16 .....

**Destin Community Farmers Market** | 9pm-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin

**DJ Brunch** | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

**Trivia Night** | 6pm | The Wharf 850

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

..... 17 .....

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

**Trivia Night** | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

..... 18 .....

**Mindful Meditation** | 9am | Destin Library

**EC PRO: Social Media, Free Speech & The Workplace** | 11:30am | FWB Chamber

**Run Club** | 4:30pm | Idyll Hounds Brewery

**Karaoke** | 6pm | Hooter's Destin

**Karaoke** | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

**Karaoke** | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

**Trivia Night** | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB

**Spirit Infusion Bar** | 6pm | 30A Distilling Co

..... 19 .....

**Tourism & Hospitality Lunch** | 11:30am | Destin Chamber

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

**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

**Music Bingo** | 6:30pm | Palm Folly

**Music Bingo** | 7pm | Hooter's Destin

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Kenny D's

**Karaoke** | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 20 .....

**Bath Bomb Workshop** | 1pm | LUSH at Destin Commons

**Bourbon at the Bay** | 5:30pm | Regatta Bay

**Yoga Class** | 6pm | Destin Community Center

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

**Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup** | 7pm | Downtown Music Hall

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Ladies Night** | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 21 .....

**Jolly Jubilee** | 10am | Destin Commons

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

**Fire Pit Friday** | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co

**Free Beach Bonfire** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

**Singo Music Bingo** | 5pm | The Island Resort

**Santa's Arrival & Tree Lighting** | 6pm | Destin Commons

**Hometown Holiday Parade & Coastal White Christmas Celebration** | 5-7 pm | Grand Blvd. Town Center | Miramar Beach

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Island Wing Company

**The Nutcracker 2025** | 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

**Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons** | 8pm | Bric a Brac

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

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 22 .....

**Ruthlake Farm Christmas Market** | 8am-5 pm | Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center | FWB

**Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

**Farmers Market** | 9am | Seaside, FL

**Jolly Jubilee** | 10am | Destin Commons

**Beach Santa** | 10am | Silver Sands Premium Outlets

**Hops & Harmonies** | 3pm | Harborwalk Village

**Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights** | 4pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke** | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

**The Nutcracker 2025** | 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

..... 23 .....

**Sandestin Turkey Trot** | 7am | Baytowne Marina

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

**Destin Community Farmers Market** | 9pm-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin

**Jolly Jubilee** | 10am | Destin Commons

**DJ Brunch** | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

**The Nutcracker 2025** | 2pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

..... 24 .....

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

**Trivia Night** | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

..... 25 .....

**Karaoke** | 6pm | Hooters Destin

**Karaoke** | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

**Karaoke** | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

**Trivia Night** | 6pm | Rick's Crab Trap FWB

..... 26 .....

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

**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

**Run Club** | 5:30pm | Lululemon Destin Commons

**Prose & Pours Book Club** | 6pm | 30A Distilling Co

**Rock n Roll Bingo** | 6pm | Fatboys Niceville

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

**Music Bingo** | 6:30pm | Palm Folly

**Music Bingo** | 7pm | Hooter's Destin

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Kenny D's

**Karaoke** | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 27 .....

**Thanksgiving Buffet** | 10am | Watercolor Lakehouse

**Thanksgiving Lunch Cruise** | 11am | Sunquest Cruises – Solaris Yacht

**Free Thanksgiving Feast** | 11am-5pm | Harbor Docks

**Thanksgiving Feast** | 11am-4pm | Vintij Food & Wine

**Thanksgiving Feast** | 11am-5pm | Jackacudas

**Thanksgiving Feast** | 11am | The Henderson Resort

**Thanksgiving at the Gulf** | 11am | The Gulf Restaurant

**Thanksgiving Dinner** | 11am | Mezcal Mexican Grill

**Thanksgiving Dinner** | 12pm | Henderson Park Inn

**Thanksgiving Special** | 12pm-8pm | Hilton Garden Inn FWB

**Thanksgiving Dinner Cruise** | 6pm | Sunquest Cruises – Solaris Yacht

**Fort Comedy Open Mic Standup** | 7pm | Downtown Music Hall

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Ladies Night** | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 28 .....

**Jolly Jubilee** | 10am | Destin Commons

**Fire Pit Friday** | 4pm | 30A Distilling Co

**Grande Tree Lighting** | 4:30pm | Harborwalk Village | Destin

**Free Beach Bonfire** | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

**Singo Music Bingo** | 5pm | The Island Resort

**Black Friday Holiday Sip & Shop** | 5pm | Harborwak Village

**Karaoke** | 7pm | Island Wing Company

**Noche De Los Muertos Party** | 8pm | Skybar Destin

**Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons** | 8pm | Bric a Brac

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

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke Night** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 29 .....

**Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

**Farmers Market** | 9am | Seaside, FL

**Jolly Jubilee** | 10am | Destin Commons

**Santa's Arrival Parade** | 12:30pm | Harborwalk Village

**Hops & Harmonies** | 3pm | Harborwalk Village

**Santa's Arrival** | 6pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke** | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

**Karaoke** | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

..... 30 .....

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

**Destin Community Farmers Market** | 9am-1pm | Beall's Parking Lot, Destin

**Jolly Jubilee** | 10am | Destin Commons

**DJ Brunch** | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

**Trivia Night** | 6pm | The Wharf 850

**Movie on the Lawn: Polar Express** | 6pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Fubar

**Karaoke** | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill





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# Holidays Shine Bright at The Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Festive Fun, Sparkling Lights, and Seasonal Favorites Fill November at Baytowne Wharf

There's no better place to kick off the holiday season than The Village of Baytowne Wharf! From live music and sparkling wine to ice skating, Santa sightings and a beloved Lantern Parade, Baytowne transforms into a winter wonderland filled with cheer, lights and family fun. Bring your loved ones, grab a cup of cocoa and make lasting memories all season long with these festive November events!

## Tribute Weekend

**Friday, Nov. 7 - Saturday, Nov. 8 | 7-9 p.m. nightly | FREE**

The Village of Baytowne Wharf is thrilled to be bringing back Tribute Weekend! Rock out to the live music you know and love from these coveted tribute bands. Grab your blankets and lawn chairs and meet us on the events plaza lawn for two nights of incredible talent.

**Friday, November 7 | Departure** - the nation's most respected Journey tribute band!

**Saturday, November 8 | Face Value** - the music of Phil Collins & Genesis

## Sparkling Wine and Holiday Lights

**Friday, November 21 | Saturday, November 22 | 4-6 p.m.**

The holiday season kicks off with the 13th Annual Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights benefiting one of our local charities. Taking place on the beautifully

decorated streets of Baytowne Wharf and featuring more than 30 champagnes and delicious appetizers, stroll streets lined in twinkling lights and greenery, as you sip a variety of champagnes and taste featured menu items from various Village restaurants and eateries. Participating merchants will be decked out for the holiday season when you stop by to sample their featured bubbly and delicious appetizers. The event will end with the first tree lighting of the season and Baytowne Wharf's choreographed light show, 12 Nights of Lights.

Tickets: [sandestinwinefestival.com/sparkling-wine/](http://sandestinwinefestival.com/sparkling-wine/)

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

Dust off those skates and get in the winter spirit at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Baytowne on Ice. For those visitors who miss the cold and ice, this seasonal ice rink is the perfect opportunity to share some of your favorite holiday traditions right here on the coast. Hours vary daily. Check the schedule at [baytownewharf.com](http://baytownewharf.com). The cost is \$15 for 90-minute skate and \$3 skate rentals. Skaters must be at least 3 years of age and fit into appropriately sized skates. Children under the age of 6 must be accompanied by a parent or adult family member. Rent the rink for private parties and functions starting at \$300. Call 850-428-2736 or visit [baytownewharf.com](http://baytownewharf.com).



## Here Comes Santa Claus Saturday, November 29 | 6-9 p.m. | FREE

Here Comes Santa Claus right down Baytowne Lane! Santa's Arrival at Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin is a highlight of the season! The word on the street is Santa will be arriving in "optimal Santa" fashion with a fireworks show starting sometime between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m. Santa will visit in his sleigh that evening and on Wednesdays, **Dec. 3, 10 and 17 (6-8 p.m.)** during the Wednesday Night Concert Series - Holiday Edition, starting Dec. 3 with the Niceville High School Chorus. Don't miss your visit with Santa on one of these magical holiday nights!

Visit [www.baytownewharf.com](http://www.baytownewharf.com).



## The Polar Express Sunday, November 30 | 6 p.m. | FREE

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

## Plan Ahead! Lantern Parade

**Saturday, Dec. 6 | 5 p.m. | Events Plaza | FREE**  
**Parade begins at 5 p.m.**

Light up the night at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's annual Lantern Parade, created by artist Chantelle Rytter and the Krewe of the Grateful Gluttons. This free community celebration invites locals and visitors alike to join in the fun—and the only requirement to participate is to bring a lantern! Spectators

can enjoy the colorful procession throughout The Village.

Everyone is encouraged to create a lantern and parade alongside a dozen larger-than-life lantern puppets designed by Rytter and her Krewe. Your creativity is the best gift to your community! Get inspired on Rytter's Lantern Ideas & Inspiration page or take part in the free lantern-making workshop from 1-3 p.m. that same day at The Village.

Want to roll instead of walk? Decorate your golf cart and join the parade lineup! Afterward, meet the puppets by the Christmas tree for photos and fun.

To register your golf cart or learn more, email [baytowne@raebirdevents.com](mailto:baytowne@raebirdevents.com).

## Beach TV LIVE!

Join Beach TV LIVE during the holidays, every day year-round!





# The Power of Scent & The Invisible Detail: Why Every Celebration Needs a Signature Scent

BY KRISTIN SULLIVAN, GENERAL MANAGER, THE ALICE

When you think back on your most cherished memories, it is often not just the sights and sounds that linger, it is the scent. The smell of your grandmother’s garden roses, sunscreen from a summer vacation or the salt of the ocean air. Scent is deeply tied to emotion and memory, making it one of the most powerful (and overlooked) details you can weave into your unique events.

Couples are increasingly embracing the art of wedding scenting, curating a fragrance story that carries through every part of their celebration. From signature candles that flicker during the ceremony to subtle room diffusers in guest cottages, scent transforms a wedding into a multi-sensory experience. Long after the flowers fade, fragrance keeps the memory alive.

### Why Scent Your Wedding & Celebrations?

Scent has a direct connection

to memory, more powerful than sight or sound. Studies show that smell activates the limbic system, the part of the brain linked to emotions and recall. This means when your guests catch the same fragrance years later, they will be transported back to your celebration in an instant.

- **Memory Making:** Your chosen scent becomes a fragrance heirloom, as meaningful as your photos or your first dance song.

- **Atmosphere:** Scent can set the tone—fresh citrus for a lively welcome party, soft florals for a romantic ceremony, earthy wood notes for a cozy afterparty.

- **Personalization:** Just as you select flowers and music, fragrance becomes another way to express your story and style.

### Where to Add Scent

- **Welcome Gifts:** Set the tone as soon as guests arrive with a scented welcome. Tuck a mini candle, rollerball perfume, or sachet into gift bags, carrying your signature fragrance into their hotel rooms.

- **Getting Ready Suites:** Brides and grooms often spend hours preparing in their suites. Diffuse calming notes like lavender or chamomile to soothe nerves, or fresh citrus to energize the room. Choose a perfume or cologne to wear for the first time on your wedding day—one that becomes forever tied to “I do.”

- **Ceremony:** Line the aisle with blooms chosen not only for their beauty but also for their aroma. Think garden roses, jasmine, lilac, or eucalyptus. Add lightly scented candles or diffusers near the altar (especially in indoor settings) to create an enveloping, memorable fragrance.

- **Reception Spaces:** Carry your fragrance story into the reception with strategically placed candles on tables or reed diffusers near lounges. Opt for lighter scents during dinner (herbal or floral), saving warmer, woodier notes for the dance floor and late-night lounge.

- **Guest Cottages or Hotel Rooms:** For destination weddings or weekend-long celebra-

tions, extend the experience with pillow mists, scented soaps, or essential oil blends placed in guest accommodations. Each night feels like part of the celebration.

- **Paper Goods:** Have invitations, menus, or ceremony programs lightly infused with a signature fragrance. Guests will literally “get a whiff” of your style the moment they open their envelopes.

- **Exit & After-Party:** Send guests home with a favor that continues the memory—like a travel candle, perfume oil, or incense cones in your chosen fragrance. Even months later, lighting that candle will bring them back to your wedding weekend.

### Choosing Your Signature Scent

Selecting a wedding fragrance is a personal and thoughtful process. Consider:

- **Seasonality:** Light florals and citrus for spring/summer, richer woods, and spices for fall/winter.

- **Venue:** A garden wedding calls for different scents than a waterfront marina or ballroom celebration.

- **Story:** Choose notes that reflect your journey, using orange blossoms to honor a proposal in Florida, or lavender to recall summers abroad.

In my role prior to joining The Alice, I spent a significant period of time during the pandemic creating my own signature scents and candle line with the help from a dear friend and colleague in the UK; it was such a unique and fun experience with Helen & Moments Candle Co. These signature scents will soon be available as an option with your events and celebrations at The Alice. Couples can collaborate with fragrance houses to design a custom wedding scent, blending notes that hold personal meaning. This bespoke approach turns your fragrance into a keepsake you can return to on anniversaries.

*Continued on page 16*





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## Trends & Treasures!



### Taste the Season— Fall and Thanksgiving Fun! Smallcakes Destin: A Cupcakery and Creamery

As November rolls in, Smallcakes Destin is serving up all the cozy, fresh, festive vibes we crave—think pumpkin spice, sprinkles on top and flavors to match both Thanksgiving, Veteran's Day, Wedding Day, Birthday or really any day, all ready to bring a sweet twist to your seasonal celebrations.

In November, grab a fun, 12-pack of assorted mini cupcakes—perfect for sampling a variety of fall flavors and sharing with friends or family. Look for limited-edition Thanksgiving-themed cupcakes and custom cakes. Hosting a tailgate, reunion or holiday gathering? Smallcakes, gourmet cupcakes, cookie cakes and brownies are an ideal fit.

All month long, choose from made-from-scratch daily, fancy and creative cupcakes—a cupcake heaven on earth with unique flavors and personalities to please everyone! Specializing in rave-worthy gourmet cupcakes and memorable house-made ice cream, wedding cakes and birthday cakes—even “Pup” cakes for your furry friend. Smallcakes offers 13 signature flavors, four specialty flavors, 12 ice cream flavors, jumbo cookies, gourmet popcorn and more every single day. Or mix things up with gourmet cupcakes, cookie cakes, reunion cakes, brownies or cupcakes-in-a-jar.

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

(850) 842-9002 | [SmallcakesDestin.com](http://SmallcakesDestin.com)

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### Stacked in Style: Sparkle All Season Beyond Measure Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

It's fall—and that means it's time for LayerRING! Nothing says “holiday sparkle” like a perfectly stacked diamond ring set. Whether you're mixing dainty bands or layering bold statement pieces, Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry has the shimmer to match your style. Their cases are filled with stunning cut diamonds, emeralds, natural diamonds and other precious gemstones—each one ready to make your holidays a little more dazzling.

Specializing in diamond, gemstone and fine metal jewelry, Beyond Measure's showroom overflows with elegant bracelets, rings, necklaces and earrings—ideal for gifting (or keeping for yourself!). Owner Ashleigh Woolly is known for her eye for design and passion for craftsmanship, creating custom jewelry that's both timeless and on-trend.

One customer raved, “Ashleigh has the most fascinating jewelry! Her knowledge is extensive—they're on the cutting edge of trends and the diamonds are unbelievably sparkling! The finest customer service in the world!”

So what's on your wish list this season—a stack of gold bands, a one-of-a-kind engagement ring, or simply more reasons to shine? Whatever you're dreaming of, Beyond Measure will make it sparkle.

(850) 424-7011 | [Facebook.com/beyondmeasurejewelers](http://Facebook.com/beyondmeasurejewelers)  
[beyondmeasurejewelry.com](http://beyondmeasurejewelry.com)

### Haute Holiday Glam: Give the Gift of Gorgeous! Pure & Couture Salon

Looking for a gift that turns

heads this holiday season? Think beyond the ordinary and give the gift of transformation! At Pure & Couture, beauty is both an art and an experience—from hand-tied hair extensions that add instant volume and glam, to stunning seasonal color that makes every entrance unforgettable.

Know someone who's craving a confidence boost? Extensions are the ultimate gift—adding length, body, and brilliance to any look. Or go bold with a splash of color—because nothing says holiday spirit like rich red hues or a festive balayage glow! For the beauty lovers on your list, pair a Pure & Couture gift card with a styling session, makeup appointment or rejuvenating facial. It's also the perfect time to book your own holiday and event services—from weddings and photo sessions to airbrush makeup, blowouts, lash extensions, spray tanning, and more.

Whether you're gifting glamour or treating yourself, Pure & Couture has everything you need to shine this season. Curbside pickup and online ordering, too. Because the best gift you can give (or get!) this holiday is pure confidence and couture style.

2nd Location—Pure Collective Salon, 600 Grand Blvd., Suite 102.

(850) 424-3935  
[pureandcouture.com](http://pureandcouture.com) | [purecollectivesalon.com](http://purecollectivesalon.com)

### Signed, Sealed & Oh-So-Stylish! Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

'Tis the season for gifts that say something special! And nothing says thoughtful quite like a personalized present from

Frill Seekers Gifts. From elegant stationery sets and custom gift tags to monogrammed jewelry and note cards, these treasures turn everyday correspondence into a work of art. In true Southern style, ladies love their fold-over note cards with a monogram that makes a statement, while gentlemen prefer classic flat cards with their name printed top and center. Choose from luxurious print styles—raised thermography, letterpress or engraved—for a finishing touch that feels as good as it looks.

Start now! Personalized gifts take time to design, craft and perfect. Whether you're ordering custom monogrammed gift tags, stationery or jewelry, these timeless pieces are guaranteed to make hearts sparkle brighter than the Christmas tree.

Need to ship? Keep it simple with a Frill Seekers gift card—a chic way to let your loved one design their own monogrammed gift. Thoughtful, beautiful and uniquely theirs—because the best gifts are always signed with style. Shop online now, call or visit the shop.

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(850) 460-2700 | [FrillSeekersGifts.com](http://FrillSeekersGifts.com)

### Give a Gift of Health! CRYO850

Consider the gift of a new experience for those you love this season. Locally owned CRYO850 has added “Experiences” to their service options for as low as \$50. Try Fire and Ice for CRYO + Red Light (\$50), Chillax for Cryo + Compression (\$50), or combine all three for a Trifecta (\$75). Want more? Try the six-service Wellness Circuit Day Pass (\$99) or a Day Pass with a Friend (\$175). For muscle relief or weight loss,

Chill & Sweat offers Cryo + Cocoon Sauna Pod for full body relaxation. For respiratory health, Just Breathe offers Cryo + Dry Salt Therapy to clear the lungs and reduce infection and effects of COPD and long COVID. Fitness enthusiasts can try a Vision Body EMS Training Demo (\$50). More geared towards esthetics? Try a Cryo Express Facial to build collagen, smooth wrinkles or reduce acne.

CRYO850 also offers all individual services a la carte or via discounted Punch Cards, Passes and Memberships along with discounts for Military, First Responders and Students under 25. Located one mile east of Destin Commons.

(850) 279-4145 | [facebook.com/CRYO850](http://facebook.com/CRYO850)

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Want the secrets top sellers use to maximize profits? Local REALTOR® Brian K. Locicero reveals them all in his popular book, packed with strategies that have helped sell thousands of homes quickly and for top dollar. “I've provided an effective guide to ensure the most successful transaction possible,” Brian shares. His expertise and negotiating skills have already made a difference for clients. One Destin seller noted, “Because of Brian's efforts, we quickly sold our home and purchased a 30A beachfront property below asking price.” Sellers won't want to miss out on these proven strategies.

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## Reeling in Progress: Destin Casts Big Plans

By TAMARA L. YOUNG, PUBLIC INFORMATION DIRECTOR FOR THE WORLD'S LUCKIEST FISHING VILLAGE

If you've noticed a little extra buzz around town, there's good reason. From Joe's Bayou to Clement Taylor Park, Destin is making visible progress on projects that have been years in the making—each designed to make life in the World's Luckiest Fishing Village even better. Here's a sampling of Destin's city projects and progress:

**Joe's Bayou:** This Department of Environmental Protection project is in the permitting phase.

"If there is one thing I have learned in government, it is that state projects take time," said Mayor Bobby Wagner. A good example of this is with the Joe's Bayou upgrades. Currently in the permitting stage, Joe's Bayou will see over an acre of

improved waterfront access, upgraded piers, and more family-friendly spaces. "But once this is done, Joe's Bayou will be one of the coolest locals parks we have."

Councilwoman Terésa Herbert agreed. "The upgraded piers, boat launches, and improved parking are all much needed changes for our citizens and visitors."

**The Crosstown Connector:** Storm water drainage is being installed now, with roadway and multi-use path construction to begin in 2026. The project aims to relieve neighborhood congestion while enhancing walkability.

"Apps like Google Maps and Waze have already pushed traffic into our neighborhoods," said Wagner. "The Crosstown Connector takes that traffic off local streets and puts it behind people's backyard fences where



it belongs. And we are not just planning for cars, we are building for people."

**Batting Cages at Morgan Sports Complex:** With its renewed Children's Park, Morgan Sports Complex continues to be a gathering spot for families, and more plans are in the works. By late Fall 2025, Morgan Sports Complex will unveil one batting cage with six bays — a permanent addition designed to serve athletes young and old.

"Having fixed, permanent batting cages at Morgan's will

be a huge asset for the community of Destin as well as all visitors that come to this park," said Councilman Kevin Schmidt. "For the Destin community, having access to multiple cages at this park will allow great practice opportunities. When tournaments are hosted with visiting teams from all across the country, the upgrades will allow multiple teams a safe place to warm up before games."

**Morgan Sports Lighting:** Almost all the field lighting is complete. The lighting in the

parking lot will be next up for the project, and all lighting will be in place by late Fall 2025.

"Having the lights replaced and upgraded to new LED is monumental for every field at Morgan's, including baseball, softball and soccer," said Schmidt. Over the years, we have lost the ability to maintain and fix the aging lights, and we have had no lights on many poles, creating a not-so-great playing field. This will be a major improvement and an amazing cost savings over time."

**Pickleball:** The fastest-growing sport in America has found a home here. Four new courts, canopy-covered benches, restrooms, and parking upgrades are expected to be ready by Spring 2026.

"This project has been years in the making, and it is exciting to finally see work happening on site," said Wagner. The hardest part was starting from scratch with a brand-new facility, which meant most of the budget had to go toward the foundation and infrastructure. The silver lining is that once these first four courts and bathrooms are done, the groundwork is in place. If the community wants more courts or even new amenities like a skate park, the site is ready to expand."

**Tarpon Park:** The new beachfront park will offer 340-feet of additional public beach access, free parking with 49 standard spaces, 3 ADA accessible spaces, 29 LSV spaces, bathroom facilities, and four pavilions. The County is leading this effort with hopes to have it ready Summer 2026.

"For years, crowded beaches and legal disputes have left people asking, 'Where is the line in the sand?'" said Wagner. "The surest solution is simple. Buy back beachfront property so



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*Continued on page 33*



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# Navigating the Holidays with Confidence: Tips for Looking and Feeling Your Best



BY DR. CLARK,  
BLUEWATER PLASTIC SURGERY

The holiday season is filled with special moments — family gatherings, festive parties and countless photo opportunities. While this time of year brings joy and celebration, it can also come with added stress, late nights and the desire to look refreshed despite a busy schedule. At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we understand that confidence matters — especially during the holidays — and there are several easy ways to help you look and feel your best, without downtime or drastic changes.

Whether you want to glow for the camera, feel more comfortable in social settings or just give your skin a little extra love, here’s how we help patients shine through the season.

### Skincare That Works for the Holidays

Cooler temperatures, indoor heating and holiday stress can all take a toll on your skin. That’s why it’s important to adapt your routine and invest in products that nourish and protect.

At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we offer medical-grade skincare tailored to your skin’s needs — including products that hydrate, brighten and strengthen your skin barrier. We may recommend:

- A hydrating serum with hyaluronic acid for plump, dewy skin
- A gentle exfoliator to smooth texture before events
- Vitamin C to boost radiance and fight dullness
- A tinted SPF moisturizer to protect and perfect in one step

Even small changes in your skincare routine can give your skin a refreshed, holiday-ready appearance with no downtime.

### Quick In-Office Treatments That Deliver

If you’re looking for a bit more of a boost before a big event or family photo, we offer several minimally invasive treatments that require little to no recovery time:

**Botox, Xeomin or Daxxity:** Smooth out frown lines, crow’s feet, or forehead creases in just a few days.

**Dermal Fillers:** Restore subtle volume to areas of the face— cheeks, lips, or under-eye areas with natural-looking results that appear almost instantly.

**Laser or Light Treatments:** Gentle to aggressive laser treatments can improve skin tone, brighten complexion, and

a form of self-care that can help you show up with confidence and energy. Whether you’re prepping for holiday photos, planning a vacation or simply wanting to feel refreshed head-

ing into the new year, we’re here to support you.

Schedule a consultation at **Bluewater Plastic Surgery** to explore holiday-friendly treatments that work for your

goals and timeline. Let’s help you step into the season looking and feeling your best.



reduce redness or sun spots.

**Chemical Peels:** Light peels can refresh your complexion and reduce fine lines with just a few days of mild peeling.

**Diamond Glow or Hydrating facials:** Improve skin texture and glow with exfoliating and hydrating treatments for the season’s many close-ups.

Most of these treatments can be performed in under an hour, and results begin to appear quickly — often with no downtime at all. They’re a great option for patients who want to feel more confident without looking like they’ve “had work done.”

### A Thoughtful Approach to Self-Care

The holidays are about connection — with others and with yourself. Taking time to care for your appearance isn’t vanity; it’s

Bluewater

PLASTIC SURGERY

Steven J. Clark, MD, DMD, FACS

Board Certified Plastic Surgeon

Michelle Sasala MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner/Aesthetic Injector

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# Is Now the Perfect Moment to Make A Move in the Real Estate Market? Let's Dive In...



BY PAUL DOMENECH

## Is it a Good Time to Buy?

A good time to buy is when you are in a position to buy. Often, people think they should wait for interest rates to go down. Well, let's walk through that scenario. If you are waiting, do you think you are the only one? Most likely not. So, if the rates drop and more buyers come to the table to purchase the same home, what do you think will happen to that value? Yup, you guessed it—multiple offers drive the price up, which

then causes an increase in price and multiple offers for the next round. Not a great place to be as a buyer.

So, is now a good time to buy? If you can do it, do it now, and if or when the interest rate drops, refinance. Just make sure you have a team in your corner that will 'DOMEnate' the process, ensuring all the major items are inspected properly to avoid big-ticket expense surprises.

## Is it a Good Time to Sell?

What a great question. With interest rates being what they are and a limited pool of buyers, the correct answer is both YES and NO. I am noticing that consumers in the market to buy are leveraging their "upgrading funds" to increase their monthly payment budget. So, if your home has all the big-ticket items and features upgraded, it's a JACKPOT—perfect selling conditions with the right team that can "DOMEnate" the pro-

motion and marketing of the property.

If you don't have the means to improve the space and major items but want or need to sell, the answer is still yes, it is a good time. However, you need the right team that will be able to present and navigate the value of the property to buyers and if necessary help you with the items that need upgrading. My team has a program to help those in need get top dollar.

However, today is not the time to have the "Let's just put it on the market as is and see if someone will bite" mentality. The only bites taken for those listings are right out of the listing price. This is where we are seeing most of the drop-in prices. That's a NO-go situation.

So, plan to "DOMEnate" the market as close to turn-key, or hold tight; the time is not right.

## When Should I Refinance?

Talk to your original lender. Sadly, the mortgage industry,



like the real estate industry, has shifted, and when that happens, people tend to shift their focus to survival. A lot of promises and offers tend to shine but lose their luster in the long run. The habit of "have now and deal with later" is a culture that has been adopted by many. A good talk track from a stranger with no long-standing relationship with you can lead to a win-lose situation. So, I advise making sure you are calling your original lender or feel free to contact me for a lender that, in the end, will lead you into the future, not

have you living just for today.

Thank you for taking the time to read my thoughts. If you need anything related to real estate—from roofs to cleaning and anything in between—give me a call. I've got a guy. I'm your HOMEboy. It's what has been coined by our customers as the Domenech Effect.

*Check us out at [Thedomenechgroup.com](http://Thedomenechgroup.com) or feel free to contact me directly at 850-543-1418 or [Paul@thedomenechgroup.com](mailto:Paul@thedomenechgroup.com).*

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BY GREG DURETTE, FLORIDA  
HEALTH CONNECTOR

This is the time of year when you should review your Medicare options and make important decisions about your coverage for 2026.

Right now, we are in the Annual Election Period (AEP) for all Medicare beneficiaries. It is often referred to as the Annual Open Enrollment Period. This annual event runs from October 15th through December 7th.

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

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

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

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

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

- **Care:** Care starts with a

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Based in Niceville, Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare throughout the state of Florida. He has been in the insurance industry for over 42 years and can be reached at his office number of 850-842-2400 or mobile at 978-509-2941.*

## Simplifying Medicare Advantage v. Supplement Choices

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## Community

### GIVE BACK

continued from page 3

**Ride** on Sunday, Nov. 16, starting at Emerald Coast Harley Davidson and ending up with festivities at the Mullet Festival Fairgrounds. Toy and cash donations will benefit children served by the **Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center** (ECCAC) and **Children In Crisis** (CIC).

Kickoff & preregistration: Friday, Nov. 14, 6–9 p.m. at Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson, Fort Walton Beach.

Day-of registration: Sunday, Nov. 16, 8:30 a.m. at Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson. Fee: \$10 per person + a new toy or gift card. Kickstands up at 11 a.m. for the ride to Niceville's Mullett Festival grounds.

After-ride festivities: Bike games, best-decorated bike/auto contest, truck show, 50/50 drawing, DJ Anthony, food trucks, and 100+ prizes. Details: [emeraldcoasthd.com](http://emeraldcoasthd.com).

On Nov. 27, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., **Harbor Docks** in Destin hosts its **31st Annual Thanksgiving Feast**. Everyone is invited to dig in at "absolutely no charge," although donations



will be accepted for **Emerald Coast Food Rescue** (formerly Destin Harvest) and **Food for Thought**. Emerald Coast Food Rescue ([destinharvest.org](http://destinharvest.org)) has provided hunger relief in Okaloosa and Walton counties since 2017, its mission to bridge the gap between food surplus and local hunger. This is accomplished through daily bulk pickups from local grocery stores and same-day delivery via refrigerated trucks to feeding programs in the area.

The **Food for Thought** ([fftfl.org](http://fftfl.org)) 2025 Christmas Food Drive is Dec. 2–18. Suggested donations include instant potatoes, stuffing, cornbread mix, canned vegetables, rice, dried beans, macaroni and cheese, pasta and sauce, cereal, pancake mix, juice, and boxed milk. The nonprofit discourages glass containers and does not want expired, open, or leftover foods. "Easy open pop-top cans" are preferred. You can drop off food items for holiday meals at Food for Thought's Des-

tin (908 Airport Road) or Santa Rosa Beach (132 Market Street) pantries. Email [support@fftfl.org](mailto:support@fftfl.org) to learn more.

Support **Destin High School** and its **Holly Jolly Market** at the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's Cultural Arts Village in Destin, Saturday, Dec. 6, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The family-friendly event welcomes vendors and sponsors; email [dhshollyjolly@givesmart.com](mailto:dhshollyjolly@givesmart.com) or text DSHOLLYJOLLY to 76278. The Holly Jolly Market features local vendors, food trucks, games, face painting, live performances by students and photos with Santa.

**Walk the Bridge Destin** was founded in October 2018 and is committed to raising awareness concerning first responder and veteran suicide. The movement has since spread across the country and beyond. A **Christmas Walk the Bridge** is set for Sunday, Dec. 21, at Destin's Marler Bridge. Details are forthcoming.

**CALM** (Crisis Aid for Littles and Moms) depends on Emerald Coast communities to maintain a safe place for mothers and children in crisis situations. Donations provide shelter, provisions and guidance for women seeking a better way of life for themselves and their kids. Donations (please make checks payable to CALM Organization Inc.) can be mailed to CALM Organization Inc., 201 Redwood Ave., Niceville, FL 32578. Visit [nicevillecalm.com](http://nicevillecalm.com) for more information.

The **Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Cen-**

**ter** (ECCAC) is once again spreading Christmas cheer through its annual **Toy, Gift, and Adopt-a-Family Program** — a heartwarming tradition that ensures local children experience the joy of the season.

Each year, ECCAC's "Wish List" program connects generous individuals, businesses and organizations with children and families in need across Okaloosa and Walton counties. Donors can adopt a child or family, donate new toys and gifts, or give monetary contributions to help stock ECCAC's Toy Room. The Toy Room becomes a magical "shop" where parents can select gifts for their children — all at no cost. Donations also support ECCAC's partner agencies who serve area families year-round. "Every gift is a message of hope." How to Help: Bring new, unwrapped toys or gift cards to ECCAC's Niceville Center (401 McEwen Dr.) or DeFuniak Springs Center (336 College Ave.). Monetary donations can be made online at [ECCAC.org](http://ECCAC.org).

Make sure a child has a bed to sleep in this Christmas! Donations large and small can be made to **A Bed 4 Me Foundation** — a nonprofit providing beds for children who would otherwise be sleeping on floors or in other inadequate spaces — can help put a child into a new bed. Make your one-time or monthly donation at [abed4me.org/donate](http://abed4me.org/donate).

### POWER OF SCENT

continued from page 9

#### Beyond the Wedding

The beauty of scenting your wedding is that it extends far beyond the celebration itself. On anniversaries, lighting the same candle or spritzing the same perfume instantly transports you back to that weekend. It becomes a private, invisible thread woven into your relationship like a sensory time capsule.

A wedding is already a feast for the eyes and ears, but adding fragrance transforms it into something richer, more immersive, and more unforgettable. By thoughtfully scenting your wedding weekend, you are not only elevating the experience for your guests, you are creating a love story that can be revisited, again and again, with a single breath.

#### The Sweet Smell of Forever: How to Scent Your Wedding Weekend

##### Signature Scents by Season

- Spring: Peony, jasmine, lilac, orange blossom
- Summer: Citrus, gardenia, coconut, sea salt
- Fall: Amber, sandalwood, fig, cedar
- Winter: Pine, cinnamon, frankincense, vanilla

##### 5 Ways to Add Fragrance Without Overpowering

- Lightly scented candles except for on your reception tables; this can alter the taste of your culinary selections.
- Diffusers tucked into lounge areas
- Scented stationery (menus, programs, invites)
- A spritz of room spray in the restrooms.
- Perfumed welcome gifts (travel candles and/or rollerballs)

##### Fragrance Blending Ideas

- Fresh & bright (citrus, herbs)
- Romantic & floral (rose, tuberose, jasmine)
- Warm & elegant (amber, sandalwood)
- Bold & playful (spices, musk)
- Soft & clean (linen, lavender)

**Expert Tip:** Keep fragrance layers light and consistent. Too many competing scents can overwhelm guests. Choose one or two signature notes and let them thread through every touchpoint.



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BY DANICA LAFaire, OWNER,  
FISH WINDOW CLEANING OF  
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Hey there, Northwest Florida! As Thanksgiving approaches and the year winds down, conversations about gratitude fill the air—and with them, the question that's been making everyone scratch their head lately: to tip or not to tip?

If you've felt a little confused or even fatigued by tipping lately, you're not alone. Between iPad ads that flip around with preset options and ever-changing "expected" percentages, it's easy to feel like you're doing it wrong no matter what you choose. But I'd like to offer a refreshing perspective: gratitude first, generosity second.

Tipping, at its best, is simply a gesture of thanks — a way to acknowledge the people who make our daily lives smoother, cleaner and a little brighter. Sometimes that gratitude shows up as a few extra dollars, sometimes as a handwritten card and sometimes as a sincere "thank you, I appreciate you." Each can be equally meaningful.

### So, Who Should We Remember This Season?

The holidays bring a flurry of deliveries and behind-the-scenes work. Here are a few folks who carry a heavier load this time of year:

**Mail carriers (USPS):** Federal employees can't accept cash or gift cards, but they can accept a small non-cash gift (under \$20 value) such as snacks, coffee or a simple token of appreciation.

**Package drivers (UPS, FedEx, Amazon):** Cash or gift cards are allowed, though most companies discourage anything over \$25.

**Trash and recycling crews:** A cash tip of \$10-\$30 per worker (or a small gift if you don't see them directly) is thoughtful and appreciated.

**Yard crews, house cleaners, pet sitters and window cleaners:** A one-time bonus

equal to one service visit, or whatever fits comfortably in your budget, is always generous, but never expected.

**Teachers and caregivers:** These everyday heroes pour so much heart into the lives they touch. While many can't accept cash, heartfelt gifts go a long way — think handwritten notes from your family or child, classroom supplies, coffee shop gift cards, or a small basket of treats. For caregivers and in-home aides' rules can be different; a cash bonus or gift card that says "we see what you do" can mean more than you know. The key is the thought behind it — recognizing the quiet, consistent care they give all year long.

**911 response teams — our firefighters, officers, dispatchers, and paramedics:** These heroes can't accept tips, but a tray of cookies dropped off, a thank-you card from your family, or volunteering with an organization that supports them goes a long way in reminding them they're appreciated.

### Asking (or Offering) Gracefully

If you're unsure whether tipping is appropriate, it's perfectly fine to ask, "I'd love to show my appreciation — is there a way that's acceptable?" Gratitude shouldn't feel awkward, and a simple question opens the door for clarity.

At Fish Window Cleaning, our team doesn't expect tips — not at all. But when they do happen, the gratitude runs both ways. We've seen techs light up at a thank-you note, a kind word or a holiday cookie box just as much as a cash envelope. These gestures remind them that the work they do — often early, hot or high up on a ladder — makes someone's day brighter.

### More Ways to Show Appreciation

A "thank you" can take countless forms. You can:

- Drop off coffee or cookies to the crews that serve your neighborhood.
- Write a few handwritten notes to your regular service providers.
- Leave an online review or

tag a local business on social media.

- Shop local and support small businesses during the holidays.
- Volunteer with a community organization that supports first responders, families, or local causes.

Each one of these is an act of gratitude in motion — a reminder that appreciation

doesn't have to cost much to mean a lot.

### A Gentle Reminder

Generosity isn't measured in dollars. It's measured in mindfulness. A tip, a thank-you or even just patience during the busy season are all forms of kindness that ripple outward. Give what feels right, skip what doesn't, and never feel pressured

by screens, norms or social media lists.

This holiday season, may we all find gratitude in the small moments — the clear views, the open doors and the people who help us see a little more light in our days.



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## Game On!

Check out the local top spots to eat, cheer and high-five your way through the games.



BY SCOTT MILLER

Well, I didn't see that coming... Those six little words can spark up a whole host of conversations, especially in the world of college football. For example, to most fans, especially the southern variety, seeing Indiana University sitting with a 8-0 record and firmly entrenched as the number 2 ranked college football team in the country... well, I didn't see that coming. Ok, how about another one? Coming into the college football season this year, Penn State was a pre-season favorite, ranked number 2 or number 3 in the nation, depending on which poll you were looking at. And now, rolling into week 10, they have already fired head coach James Franklin and sit with a

record of 3 wins and 4 losses, with Ohio State poised to send them to 3-5. Well, I didn't see that coming. And neither did Coach Franklin. After all, he's been Penn State's head coach since January 11, 2014. Florida Gator fans understand—their head coach, Billy Napier, was just fired too (although not nearly as surprising as Franklin's unexpected exit). You just can't make this stuff up, folks.

So, what's the next big surprise coming our way? There are sure to be a few more before the season is over; there always are. It's part of the lure, I suppose, part of the intrigue and excitement that only college football can bring. But don't fret too much for these coaches. Once the sting wears off a bit, they will have plenty of free time on their hands to count their \$40 million and \$20 million parting gifts. That's right; Franklin collects \$40 million + to go away, and Billy Napier will receive \$20 million +. Not such a bad deal after all, in my opinion.

The 2025 season has not dis-

appointed, and we've got the entire month of November left to play before the bowl games begin. What teams will continue to rise to the top? Will the SEC do the expected and win out? Will Indiana shock the football world and pull off an unexpected National Championship victory? I can't wait to find out. Here along the Emerald Coast, we are fortunate to have some of the best sports bars and restaurants in the country right here in our backyard, ready and waiting to welcome us in, serving up some great food and cold drinks, and make every game feel like a championship. Here are a few of my favorites. So, grab your crew, claim your spot and get in on the action—I'll see you there!

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most iconic "hot spots" on the Destin Harbor. From its humble beginning shucking oysters off the deck behind a small trailer on the Destin Harbor, it has grown to four locations along our Emerald Coast, serving fresh seafood, live music and exciting water activities in the Destin area. Attention all die hard football fans, 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.

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*Continued on page 21*



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Las Vegas Raiders at Denver Broncos, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 9

Atlanta Falcons at Indianapolis Colts (Berlin), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network

Jacksonville Jaguars at Houston Texans, Noon, CBS

Buffalo Bills at Miami Dolphins, Noon, CBS

New England Patriots at Tampa Bay

Buccaneers, Noon, CBS

Cleveland Browns at New York Jets, Noon, CBS

New York Giants at Chicago Bears, Noon, Fox

New Orleans Saints at Carolina Panthers, Noon, Fox

Baltimore Ravens at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox

Arizona Cardinals at Seattle Seahawks, 3:05 p.m., CBS

Los Angeles Rams at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox

Detroit Lions at Washington Commanders, 3:25 p.m., Fox

Pittsburgh Steelers at Los Angeles Chargers, 7:20 p.m., NBC

Monday, Nov. 10

Philadelphia Eagles at Green Bay Packers, 7:15 p.m., ABC

Bye week: Cincinnati Bengals, Dallas Cowboys, Kansas City Chiefs, Tennessee Titans

Week 11

Thursday, Nov. 13

New York Jets at New England Patriots, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 16

Washington Commanders at Miami Dolphins (Madrid), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Buffalo Bills, Noon, CBS

Los Angeles Chargers at Jacksonville Jaguars, Noon, CBS

Cincinnati Bengals at Pittsburgh Steelers, Noon, CBS

Carolina Panthers at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, Fox

Green Bay Packers at New York Giants, Noon, Fox

Chicago Bears at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox

Houston Texans at Tennessee Titans, Noon, Fox

San Francisco 49ers at Arizona Cardinals, 3:05 p.m., Fox

Seattle Seahawks at Los Angeles Rams, 3:05 p.m., Fox

Kansas City Chiefs at Denver Broncos, 3:25 p.m., CBS

Baltimore Ravens at Cleveland Browns, 3:25 p.m., CBS

Detroit Lions at Philadelphia Eagles, 7:20 p.m., NBC

Monday, Nov. 17

Dallas Cowboys at Las Vegas Raiders, 7:15 p.m., ESPN

Bye Week: Indianapolis Colts, New Orleans Saints

Week 12

Thursday, Nov. 20

Buffalo Bills at Houston Texans, 8:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 23

New England Patriots at Cincinnati Bengals, 1 p.m., CBS

Pittsburgh Steelers at Chicago Bears, 1 p.m., CBS

Indianapolis Colts at Kansas City Chiefs, 1 p.m., CBS

New York Jets at Baltimore Ravens, 1 p.m., CBS

New York Giants at Detroit Lions, 1 p.m., Fox

Seattle Seahawks at Tennessee Titans, 1 p.m., Fox

Minnesota Vikings at Green Bay Packers, 1 p.m., Fox

Cleveland Browns at Las Vegas Raiders, 4:05 p.m., CBS

Jacksonville Jaguars at Arizona Cardinals, 4:05 p.m., CBS

Atlanta Falcons at New Orleans Saints, 4:25 p.m., Fox

Philadelphia Eagles at Dallas Cowboys, 4:25 p.m., Fox

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Los Angeles Rams, 8:20 p.m., NBC

Monday, Nov. 24

Carolina Panthers at San Francisco 49ers, 8:15 p.m., ESPN

Bye Week: Denver, LA Chargers, Miami, Washington

Week 13

Thursday, Nov. 27

(Thanksgiving Day)

Green Bay Packers at Detroit Lions, 1 p.m., Fox

Kansas City Chiefs at Dallas Cowboys, 4:30 p.m., CBS

Cincinnati Bengals at Baltimore Ravens, 8:20 p.m., NBC

Friday, Nov. 28 (Black Friday)

Chicago Bears at Philadelphia Eagles, 3 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 30

San Francisco 49ers at Cleveland Browns, 1 p.m., CBS

Jacksonville Jaguars at Tennessee Titans, 1 p.m., CBS

Houston Texans at Indianapolis Colts, 1 p.m., CBS

Arizona Cardinals at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, 1 p.m., Fox

New Orleans Saints at Miami Dolphins, 1 p.m., Fox

Atlanta Falcons at New York Jets, 1 p.m., Fox

Los Angeles Rams at Carolina Panthers, 1 p.m., Fox

Minnesota Vikings at Seattle Seahawks, 4:05 p.m., Fox

Buffalo Bills at Pittsburgh Steelers, 4:25 p.m., CBS

Las Vegas Raiders at Los Angeles Chargers, 4:25 p.m., CBS

Denver Broncos at Washington Commanders, 8:20 p.m., NBC

Monday, Dec. 1

New York Giants at New England Patriots, 8:15 p.m., ESPN

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## BEST PLACES

continued from page 18

night. 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. During or after the game, mosey on over to hang with the locals.

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## CHRISTMAS

continued from page 6

### Saturday, Dec. 6

#### Kick-Off for Festival of Trees Benefiting Local Charities

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

Eighteen nonprofits compete for \$8,500 in cash prizes in a tree-decorating spectacular. People's Choice and Best of Show winners will be announced. Trees remain on display through Christmas Day. grandboulevard.com

### Sunday, Dec. 7

#### Santa Paws: Bark Street Market

HarborWalk Village, Destin

Bring the whole family—four-leggers included—for festive photos, pet-friendly vendors, a DIY dog treat station, and more. emeraldgrande.com

### Saturday, Dec. 13

#### Seashells and Sleigh Bells: The 41st Annual Destin Christmas Parade

Downtown Destin, U.S. 98 | 10 a.m.

Businesses, schools, churches, and organizations are invited to enter. Cost to participate is a toy or monetary donation, benefiting local families through Destin Methodist Church. cityofdestin.com



### Sunday, Dec. 14

#### Mistletoe Market

HarborWalk Village, Destin | Noon-8 p.m.

Enjoy one-stop holiday shopping with local vendors, festive drink samples, and free gift wrapping. emeraldgrande.com

### Sunday, Dec. 14

#### Destin Boat Parade

Destin Harbor | 6 p.m.

The much-loved annual event features decorated boats cruising from Boshamp's to the Destin Bridge. Stay for fireworks and an amazing fire-spinning performance by Autumn Lyfe. emeraldgrande.com

### Friday & Saturday, Dec. 19-20 | 6 p.m.

### Sunday, Dec. 21 | 2 p.m.

#### Studio6twenty5 Presents The Nutcracker

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Step into the enchanting world of Clara, the Nutcracker and the Dew Drop Fairy in this beloved holiday tradition. Featuring dancers from the children's and adult programs. Doors open one hour before each performance. Tickets on sale soon. studio6twenty5.com

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hot or iced fresh, local Amavida coffee to espresso and lattes. 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.

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**Aj's Grayton Beach** **Kids on the Coast Foundation** **Aj's On the Bayou**

## AJ's Feeds the Community this Thanksgiving!

For the 10th year, AJ's on the Bayou will host a free community Thanksgiving meal from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and for the sixth year, AJ's Grayton Beach will do the same from noon to 5 p.m. Guests will enjoy a traditional holiday feast featuring turkey, ham, stuffing, mashed and sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, cranberry relish, garden salad, dinner rolls and assorted pies.

The annual event is open to everyone, and AJ's invites the community to gather, give thanks and share in the holiday spirit. While there is no charge for the meal, donations are appreciated and will benefit the Kids on the Coast

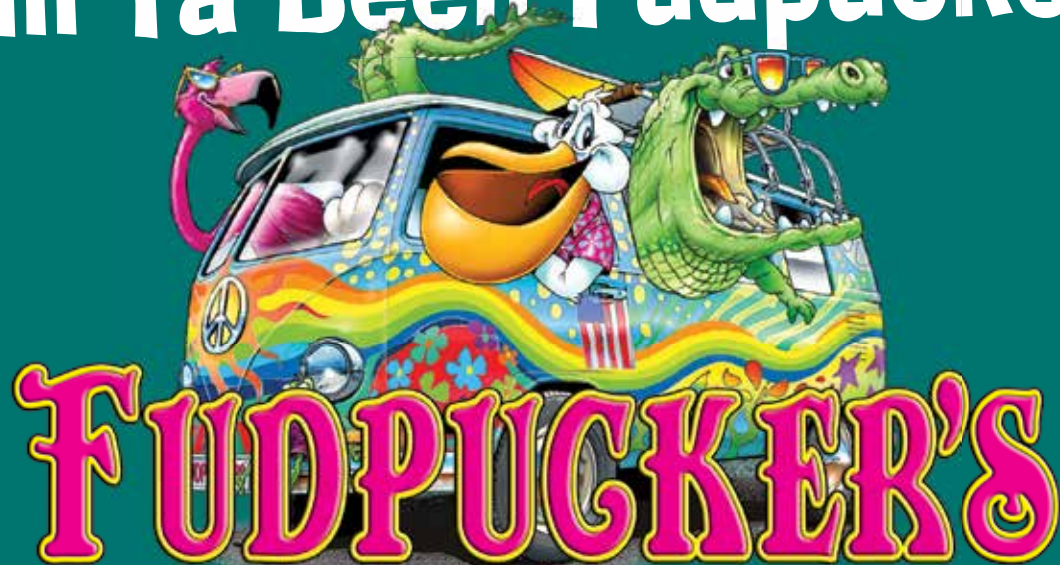


Foundation, a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting area youth and families during the holidays.

No reservations are required; guests will be served on a first-come, first-served basis.

For details, email [info@ajs-destin.com](mailto:info@ajs-destin.com). Learn more at [ajsgrayton.com](http://ajsgrayton.com) and [ajsonthebayou.com](http://ajsonthebayou.com).

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 Off the Hook

# Charting New Waters: DHS Fishing Program Is Making History

By CHRISTOPHER MANSON

Captain Mike Parker started Destin High School's fishing class when the institution opened its doors five years ago.

Today, the class enrollment numbers 150. "We're the only school in the state that offers a fishing class," he says. Students learn about safety, boat maintenance and fishing regulations, among other things. "There are lots of field trips."

Those trips include Orange Beach, Alabama's Walter Ma-



Captain Mike Parker displays a plastic scale model of one of the eight-foot reefs.

investing in a reef is allowed to participate in all phases of its creation. For Tucker Reese, a young man from the area who lost his life in a vehicle accident, the family helped design a memorial reef, witness the pouring of the concrete, and witness its lowering into the Gulf. "You can put more than a person's name on the

rine, the largest artificial reef manufacturer in the country. Walter Marine is responsible for crafting the almost 50 memorial reefs Parker and his students have created in a program that has spanned the last three years. "We were asking what kind of reefs they were building," says Parker. "They said the memorial reefs were getting a lot of interest. Divers can dive around them, and loved ones can drop ashes in that particular spot." Once the reefs are submerged, they also function as fishing habitats.

Most of the reefs that have been placed in the Gulf measure eight feet. But, now a 25-foot "super reef" for the late Charlie Kirk is being readied. It will weigh about 18 tons upon completion. "It's been poured and will be deployed by the end of November or December," says Parker.

The privately funded reef—Parker's idea—has met with little resistance from the community. "Most people are behind it and are contributing," he says. Parker informs me that he's been in touch with the Tallahassee representative from Kirk's Turning Point organization and is hoping the rep will spread the word.

The reef, the cost of which is roughly \$17,000, will be placed two miles off the coast of Henderson Beach and 70 feet deep.

The eight-foot reefs cost around \$2,000 and are made up of concrete, steel and limestone. Inside the reefs are five-foot high stacked platforms that Parker says "draw a lot more fish." Fishermen can pinpoint the GPS coordinates of the reefs at [floridagofishing.com](http://floridagofishing.com).

The reefs are available for local businesses, too. Anyone

reefs. You can place memorabilia and other things that meant something to the person," says Parker. "With the Charlie Kirk reef, we've got his logo and some of his slogans, like 'Prove me wrong.'"

Parker, a 35-year resident of Destin, spent three decades as a charter boat captain on the Silver King. "I had an idea that my fishing career was winding down, and since Destin had the largest independent charter boat fleet in the country, we needed more captains and deckhands," he says. "In offering a career course to provide that avenue, we've raised up a lot of captains and deckhands."

Captain Brandy Miles teaches with Parker and owns the Discipleship charter boat docked at HarborWalk Marina. "Her dream since she was a child was to be a charter boat captain and a teacher," says Parker. "The kids love her."

In the past half-decade, Parker has watched his fishing class grow. People are gravitating to it more and more, and parents and children are equally enthusiastic. "We have students coming down from Niceville and Crestview," says Parker. "I had someone move here from Utah because of the fishing class!" Representatives from the Florida Wildlife Commission have spoken to Parker's students about career opportunities. They, along with the fire department and the United States Coast Guard, give students hands-on training and practical learning experiences.

I tell Captain Parker I wish they had offered a class like this when I attended high school many decades ago. "That's what they all say!" he replies.

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# Top College Hoops Return to Raider Arena for Emerald Coast Classic

Tickets still available for men’s and women’s tournaments Thanksgiving week

College basketball fans will have plenty to cheer about this Thanksgiving as both the men’s and women’s Emerald Coast Classic tournaments return to Raider Arena on the campus of Northwest Florida State College. Tickets are still available at [www.emeraldcoastclassic.com](http://www.emeraldcoastclassic.com) and start at \$20 per session, which includes two games.

**Women’s Classic:  
Nov. 24-25**

The second annual women’s Emerald Coast Classic, presented by Global Sports, will tip off Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 24–25, featuring two brackets of top NCAA programs. Mississippi State, Providence, Middle Tennessee State, and Alcorn State make up the Bay Bracket, while Nebraska, Virginia, Northwestern State, and Purdue Fort Wayne compete in the Beach Bracket.

In the Bay Bracket semifinals

on Nov. 24, Providence faces Middle Tennessee State at 11 a.m., followed by Mississippi State vs. Alcorn State at 1:30 p.m. The third-place game is set for 11 a.m. Tuesday, with the championship tipping off at 1:30 p.m.

The Beach Bracket opens Monday evening with Nebraska meeting Purdue Fort Wayne at 5 p.m., then Virginia facing Northwestern State at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday’s third-place game begins at 5 p.m., with the championship at 7:30 p.m.

Mississippi State posted a 22-12 record last season, advancing to the second round of the 2025 NCAA Women’s Basketball Tournament. Nebraska went 21-12 and also reached the NCAA Tournament, while Middle Tennessee State finished 26-8 and earned a WBIT berth. Alabama and Creighton captured titles in last year’s inaugural women’s event.



**Men’s Classic: Nov. 28-29**

The tenth annual men’s Emerald Coast Classic follows Thanksgiving weekend, Friday and Saturday, Nov. 28–29. DePaul will face Georgia Tech in the semifinals at 6 p.m. Friday, followed by Drake vs. LSU at 8:30 p.m. The third-place game tips at 3 p.m. Saturday, with the

championship scheduled for 6 p.m.

LSU returns to Niceville after winning the 2021 Emerald Coast Classic, defeating Wake Forest 75–61 in the title game. “This is going to be the wave of the future for weather,” said Matt McMahon, now in his fourth season as LSU’s head

coach, who welcomes a transfer class ranked No. 16 nationally by 247Sports.

Drake enters with momentum after a school-record 31–4 season, sweeping the Missouri Valley Conference and advancing to the second round of the 2025 NCAA Tournament. Georgia Tech, under third-year coach Damon Stoudamire, finished 17–17 last year with a trip to the NIT. DePaul, guided by first-year coach Chris Holtmann, reached the College Basketball Crown tournament—its first postseason appearance since 2019.

Produced by Global Sports, which has managed 57 multi-team college basketball tournaments since 2007, the Emerald Coast Classic continues to bring national-level excitement to the Emerald Coast.

Tickets are available now at [www.emeraldcoastclassic.com](http://www.emeraldcoastclassic.com).



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# Why Seniors are Most Vulnerable in the First 30 Days After a Hospital Stay

BY TERESA HALVERSON,  
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT/COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS

After a major medical event and a lengthy stay in an acute setting, seniors often are at a loss during the transition of care. This may include the breakdown in communication and coordination between the hospital, the patient/family, and the next care provider, directly leading to preventable readmissions. The senior/caregiver often is unaware of “red flag” symptoms of a worsening condition (i.e. fluid retention in heart failure) or when to call their physician versus 911. This often leads to delayed, inappropriate or overcautious care (i.e. an unnecessary ER visit).

The transition period, particularly the first 30 days post hospital discharge, is the most vulnerable time for seniors because they shift abruptly from 24/7 acute medical care to an often-fragmented system of self-management and family care. This period is often referred to as a state of “post-hospital syndrome,” where patients have depleted physiologi-

cal reserves and are at high risk for new or worsening conditions. Some of these conditions may include:

**Deconditioning and Frailty:** Even a short hospital stay can lead to significant muscle loss, weakness, and decline in mobility, making the senior highly susceptible to falls and subsequent injury upon returning home.

**Physiological Vulnerability:** The stress of illness and hospitalization leaves the body’s immune system weakened, increasing the risk of new infections (like pneumonia or UTIs) or complications from the initial illness.

**Cognitive Decline:** Hospitalization can often trigger or worsen confusion and delirium, which severely compromises a senior’s ability to understand and follow complex discharge instructions.

**Medication Chaos:** Seniors are often discharged with an average of 3-5 new medication changes (new drugs, discontinued drugs, or dosage changes). Medication errors, a leading cause of readmission, are most

likely to occur within the first 48 hours of being home.

Hospitals work diligently with senior care facilities and health care partners to ensure that seniors are discharged with confirmed plans for support (i.e. home health, skilled nursing and rehab facilities, medical equipment and transportation). If you are being discharged from acute care and require specialized follow-on care, it is important to know your options. A skilled nursing and rehab center relies on a variety of specialists to address the patient’s acute needs following hospitalization.

Going to post-acute rehab after a hospital stay is an essential step for many people because it bridges the gap between acute medical treatment and safely returning home. The primary goal of post-acute rehabilitation is to help you regain the strength, mobility, and skills you need to live independently, while also preventing complications that could land you back in the hospital. Your treatment plan is customized to your specific condition and goals, ensuring you make

measurable progress towards independence.

## Who is Post-Acute Rehab For?

Post-acute rehab is typically recommended if you:

- Need continued medical care that can’t be safely managed at home.
- Require multiple types of therapy (PT, OT, SLP).
- Have the physical and cognitive ability to tolerate intensive therapy and are motivated to participate.
- Are recovering from a major event like:
  - Stroke or Brain Injury
  - Major Orthopedic Surgery (e.g., hip or knee replacement)
  - Major Illness (e.g., severe pneumonia, heart failure, prolonged critical illness)
  - Major Trauma or Amputation

Your hospital care team (doctors, case managers, and therapists) will assess your condition and recommend the appropriate level of post-acute care for your needs. Reasons why post-acute rehab is highly beneficial:

## Types of Medical & Rehabilitation Specialists

**Medical Specialists (Consulting Physicians):** While the primary care physician (PCP) or medical director in a skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility oversees general medical care, specialists act as highly focused resources within the interdisciplinary team.

These physicians are typically consulted on an as-needed basis for specific conditions:

**Physiatrist (Rehabilitation Medicine Specialist):** Directs the overall rehab program. They specialize in nerve, muscle, and bone injuries and aim to restore function lost due to injury or illness.

**Cardiologist:** Manages conditions like Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) and post-heart attack recovery, adjusting medications and monitoring cardiac status.

**Pulmonologist:** Treats respiratory issues such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or pneumonia recovery,

*Continued on page 31*

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# Spread Gratitude



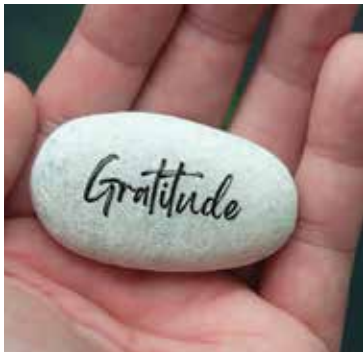
BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,  
JOURNEY BRAVELY

When did you last compare your life to someone else's and find yours lacking? When did you last have physical symptoms of stress? When did you last spend hours, days, weeks or months focused primarily on the things in your life you wish were different? Life with technology offers you piles of information to sort daily. Some information is helpful, while much of it leaves you wondering if you and your life measure up to the social media cultural standard. What do you do when you find yourself feeling stressed or your life feeling not enough?

While simple, gratitude often gets overlooked as a highly useful and practical tool for actually feeling better and feeling enough. Gratitude gets the most attention in November when you think about what you're thankful for around the Thanksgiving table. While a meaningful practice once a year, gratitude can hold a more significant space in your life that can actually change how you feel and experience the world.

Gratitude in its fuller form is a daily practice of slowing down, reflecting on what is already good in your life, savoring and celebrating the goodness, then intentionally acknowledging the goodness in some way such as writing it down, noting it in your phone, or saying it aloud to yourself or another person. Gratitude is scientifically known to potentially reduce stress, reduce blood pressure, help anxiety, help depression, improve health, increase optimism and increase happiness.

Gratitude is not designed to minimize your struggles. For example, statements like, "I should just be grateful, I don't have real problems like people who are hungry or sick" aren't helpful to caring for yourself properly. Your pain and struggle are real and it is healthy to validate and tend to the hard parts of your life. Gratitude instead offers



some balance and perspective to the struggle. Statements like, "I am really struggling with anxiety today and it is hard. And at the same time, I am also so grateful for my support system, for the sun being out today and for my pet who makes me smile," invite the goodness that exists into your processing of the hard.

Gratitude can be contagious if you let it. It has a sneaky way of taking self-focused, negative thoughts and transforming them into healthy connection with God, self and others. You begin to notice kind things others have done toward you and you begin to engage spiritual gratitude. At its best, gratitude can motivate you toward kindness, generosity and creating opportunities for others to experience gratitude.

So, how do you engage and spread gratitude?

## Ways to Practice and Spread Gratitude

**Slow down.** Set aside a time each day for 3-5 minutes. Set a reminder in your phone to help support the habit. Take a few deep breaths and say to yourself, "I am slowing down to notice the good."

**Reflect on a gratitude question.** What was good today? What am I taking for granted in my life I could be grateful for? What nature do I see around me? Who am I grateful for? What am I looking forward to? What can I celebrate today? What kind thing has someone done for me?

**Savor and celebrate the good.** Think in detail about the beauty of nature. Think about the person you are grateful for and why you enjoy them. Notice deeply what a gift it is to have all of your basic needs met.

**Record your observations.** Journal, use notes in your phone, send a thank you note, or tell someone what feels good in your life. Note how it feels inside to spend time thinking about good things.

**Spread gratitude.** Allow gratitude to motivate generosity and kindness. Watch for opportunities to create grateful moments for others. Send a kind

note, give a thoughtful gift, use loving words of affirmation, go out of your way to be helpful or meet a need, share your gifts with others.

In a time that encourages you to do more, get more, and keep up. Try engaging in the radical

rebellion of slowing down, being grateful and spreading gratitude to others. Be gracious with yourself and others as you grow in gratitude. For support along your journey, connect with us at [Journeybravely.com](http://Journeybravely.com).

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# Peace Over Perfection: Caring for Your Mental Health During and After the Holidays



BY MELANIE YOST, LCSW

The holiday season is often described as “the most wonderful time of the year.” But, for many people—especially those living with depression, anxiety or PTSD—it can be one of the most challenging. While lights twinkle and calendars fill with celebrations, many individuals quietly struggle with intensified emotions, disrupted routines and painful reminders of loss or trauma.



## Why Symptoms Flare During the Holidays

For those dealing with mood dysregulation or trauma, the holiday season often brings a perfect storm of stressors. Financial pressure, family conflict, grief and unrealistic expectations can combine to heighten anxiety and emotional distress. People living with PTSD might find the season triggers “anniversary reactions”—powerful emotional or physical responses linked to past trauma that resurface through familiar sights, sounds and memories.

Even though hospitalizations and crisis calls tend to drop briefly during the holidays, research shows that symptoms often worsen after the celebrations end. Studies have consistently found that while suicide rates are lowest in November and December, they often increase in early January. This “post-holiday rebound” reflects the emotional exhaustion, loneliness and letdown many people feel once the rush is

over and routines resume. After weeks of socializing, disrupted sleep, indulgent food and drink, and financial strain, many people experience a crash in both energy and mood. For those already vulnerable and struggling with compromised brain health, this period can intensify depression, anxiety or trauma-related symptoms. Shorter days and reduced sunlight during winter add another layer of challenge, as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) commonly peaks at this time.

## Practical Tips for Protecting Your Mental Health

Awareness and preparation can make a world of difference. Here are seven practical, research-informed ways to care for your mental and emotional well-being throughout the holidays—and beyond:

- **Acknowledge your emotions.** It’s okay if the season feels heavy or complicated. Give your-

self permission to feel what’s real rather than forcing yourself to be cheerful.

- **Simplify your schedule.** Over commitment fuels anxiety and fatigue. Choose what truly matters to you and let go of the rest.
- **Maintain your routines.** Sleep, nutrition and movement are powerful stabilizers for mood and nervous system regulation.
- **Set boundaries with compassion.** You can love people and still say no. Limit exposure to toxic dynamics and protect your peace.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to trusted friends, support groups or your care team. Connection is a protective factor against depression.
- **Limit alcohol and sugar.** Both can temporarily lift mood but often worsen sleep and emotional regulation later.
- **Plan for post-holiday care.** Schedule therapy sessions,

wellness visits, or restorative downtime in January. Think of it as a recovery plan for your body and mind.

**The bottom line:** The holidays can stir up deep emotions—and the weeks that follow can be even harder. By planning ahead, setting gentle boundaries, and caring for your emotional health through and beyond the holidays, you can create space for genuine peace, presence, and renewal.

If the holiday season feels too overwhelming, we invite you to connect with us at Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions in Destin where Brain Health is our mission, and kindness is our vibe. We are happy to help!

*Melanie Yost, LCSW is the co-owner of Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions in Destin and can be reached at 850-786-2051 to schedule a complimentary confidential consultation.*

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By Dr. Richard Chern

As the season of Thanksgiving reminds us to pause and reflect on what we're grateful for, there's no better time to appreciate the gift of health and balance. Hormones play a vital role in how we feel every day—our energy, sleep, focus and even our joy. When those hormones fall out of balance, it can be difficult to feel truly thankful for the moments that matter most.

# Finding Balance and Gratitude Through Bioidentical Hormones

## Restoring Harmony Naturally

Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT) uses hormones that are identical to those your body naturally produces. Derived from plant sources and carefully customized to your individual needs, BHRT helps restore balance in a way that feels natural and seamless.

## Benefits to Be Thankful For

Renewed energy helps you wake up ready to take on the day with vitality and purpose. Emotional balance brings steadier moods and a brighter



outlook. Restful sleep restores the body and mind. Sharper focus enhances mental clarity and motivation. And with revitalized confidence, you can feel more like yourself—inside and out.

## A Season for Renewal

Just as autumn reminds us of cycles and renewal, BHRT of-

fers a way to restore your own natural rhythm. Through personalized treatment, you can rediscover balance, vitality, and gratitude for how good life can feel when your hormones are working with you, not against you.

## This Thanksgiving, Give Thanks for You

Health is something we often take for granted until it begins to fade. With bioidentical hormones, you can nurture your well-being, reclaim your energy, and fully embrace the season with gratitude—for your body, your balance, and your life.

## Ready to Feel Like Yourself Again?

This November, make your health the first thing on your gratitude list. A simple lab panel and a thoughtful consultation can reveal exactly what your body needs—and a personalized BHRT plan can help you sleep better, think clearer, and feel more like you.

*Call The Hormone Restoration Center at 850-837-1271 to schedule your labs, consultation, and treatment. Our team will guide you step-by-step, answer your questions, and design a plan tailored to your goals. Don't wait to feel well—give yourself the gift of balance and energy now.*

# Holiday Glow: Smart Skincare for Every Age



By Krisy Anderson, Beverly Hills Day Spa

The holidays are right around the corner, and you know what that means—lots of gatherings, family photos and a little extra sparkle in our routines! This time of year, I always remind my clients (and myself!) that glowing skin is the best accessory you can wear.

But before you start trying

every new product you see on social media, let's talk about what really works—and what might not.

Let's Talk TikTok Trends. TikTok and Instagram are full of "12-step skincare routines" and "multi-mask challenges." While they may look fun, they can actually do more harm than good, especially for teens and tweens. Overloading young skin

with too many active ingredients or harsh acids can cause irritation, dryness and even breakouts.

You don't need 12 steps to have beautiful skin. You just need the right ones—simple, age-smart skincare.

**Tweens & Teens:** For younger skin, less is best. Stick with a gentle cleanser, a good moisturizer, and a daily SPF 30

sunscreen. I always say, good skincare is about balance, not trends. If you want to introduce your teen to quality products, look for clean, simple lines like Jane Iredale, which are made without parabens, synthetic fragrances, or harsh chemicals—perfect for any age or sensitivity.

**Adults (30s-50s):** As our

*Continued on page 31*

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# The Forgotten Medicine of Thanksgiving



By TRÉ BAITY

This Thanksgiving season, I want to give every family in Destin and Fort Walton something more meaningful than advice and more powerful than a product. It is a gift that does not cost anything, but has the power to change how your body

receives food, handles stress and experiences peace. It is called The Emerald Coast Gratitude Ritual Guide, and you can download it instantly using the QR code at the bottom of this page. It is my offering to our community, because I believe gratitude, when practiced intentionally, is not just a feeling. It is a biological event that can bring the body into balance and restore the mind to clarity.

Gratitude was once considered a form of medicine. Ancient cultures, including those who walked the very land we live on, believed that before the body could receive nourishment, the spirit had to be aligned. They did not use grat-



itude as decoration. They used it as activation. Modern studies now confirm what they always knew. A sincere state of gratitude can lower stress hormones, support immune function, improve heart rhythm and shift the body from survival mode into a state of repair. In other words, the state of your heart determines the strength of your health.

Look at where we live. Our beaches are not just beautiful. They are composed of nearly pure quartz crystal, which is known to carry and transmit energy. Our air is rich with salt minerals that soothe the respiratory system. Even the native yaupon holly, which still grows quietly across our coastline, was once used to bring clarity of mind and unity among people before communal gatherings. Whether we realize it or not, we are surrounded by reminders that this land is still alive and still healing.

And nature never stopped offering us tools. One of the herbs I offer on [www.toxic-freedom.com](http://www.toxic-freedom.com) is mullein leaf, a gentle yet powerful respiratory tonic that has been used for generations to

support lung function and ease seasonal breathing issues. Indigenous communities would heat mullein over fire and breathe its steam to soothe the lungs. Today, many use it as tea for the same reason. This is not alternative medicine. It is ORIGINAL medicine.

But somewhere along the way, we began to treat health as something to be earned or purchased rather than something to be aligned with. We wait until sickness appears before we take action, forgetting that healing begins in the small moments of awareness, in the way we approach our meals, in the thoughts we hold while we sit at our tables.

Thanksgiving was never meant to be just a meal. It was meant to be a moment of realignment, a pause in human striving to remember that life itself is a gift. This year, I invite

you to go deeper. To turn off the noise. To put both feet on the earth even if it is your own front yard. To take a breath before the first bite. To speak not just words of thanks, but to feel them fully enough that your body hears the message and responds.

This is what The Emerald Coast Gratitude Ritual Guide was designed to do. It is a simple five-minute practice rooted in both science and ancient tradition. It uses elements from our local environment that you can do with your family, your friends or in quiet reflection. It is entirely free, because knowledge is only powerful when it is shared.

We live in one of the most beautiful places on Earth. But true beauty is not just what we see. It is how deeply we allow it to restore us. This Thanksgiving season, may we remember. May we receive. And may we begin the process of turning peace into our new normal.

Scan the QR code on our ad to receive your free guide instantly. From my family to yours, thank you for being part of this community and for choosing to walk the path of awareness and healing.

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- Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

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## SENIORS

*continued from page 26*

often managing oxygen therapy.

**Wound Care Specialist (Physician, Certified Nurse or Certified Therapist):** Provides advanced care for non-healing ulcers, surgical wounds, or pressure injuries (bedsores).

**Neurologist:** Manages patients recovering from stroke, Parkinson's disease, or other neurological conditions.

### Importance and Impact of Specialty Care

The specialized expertise is critical because patients in a skilled nursing facility are in a transition phase, requiring complex, time-sensitive care.

#### Precision and Complex-

**ity Management:** Specialists possess a deeper knowledge of high-risk, complex conditions (e.g., managing post-operative joint infection or fine-tuning diabetes control). Their involvement ensures the patient receives care that goes beyond general medicine.

**Optimizing Rehabilitation Outcomes:** The Physiatrist and therapy specialists (PT, OT, SLP) create highly personalized, goal-oriented treatment plans. Their expertise is required to classify the service as "skilled" by Medicare, ensuring intensive, rapid functional improvement necessary for the patient to return home.

**Reducing Hospital Readmissions:** The primary goal of SNF/Rehab is to prevent the patient's condition from worsen-

ing and requiring a return to the hospital. Specialists help achieve this by:

**Early Detection:** Catching subtle changes in a specific condition (e.g., a Cardiologist spotting signs of impending CHF exacerbation).

**Aggressive Management:** Implementing swift, expert interventions for conditions like severe wounds or complex IV antibiotic protocols.

**Care Collaboration:** Specialists communicate their findings and treatment directives to the facility's interdisciplinary team (nurses, social workers, dietitians), ensuring all aspects of the patient's care plan are integrated and coordinated

### Transition to Home

Rehab is designed to prepare you for a safe discharge back to your home environment.

**Practice Daily Living Skills:** Occupational therapists work with you to practice everyday tasks in a simulated home environment, teaching you how to manage stairs, get in and out of a shower, or prepare a meal safely with your current limitations.

**Equipment and Support Planning:** The team (social worker/case manager) coordinates your transition, ordering necessary durable medical equipment (walkers, shower chairs, etc.) and arranging for follow-up services like home health or outpatient therapy.

**Family Training:** The re-

hab team can train your family members or caregivers on how to safely assist you once you get home, ensuring continuity of care.

*At Destination Health and Rehabilitation, our commitment is simple: to provide compassionate, personalized, and professional 24-hour skilled care and rehabilitation. As the area's newest facility in Destin, we work tirelessly with our specialized team to ensure every individual achieves their optimum level of independence, empowering them to transition smoothly back to their life and improve their overall quality of life." Contact our Admission's Department (850-654-4588) today for a tour and additional information on how we can help you on your road to recovery.*

*Destination Health & Rehabilitation, 195 Mattie M. Kelly Blvd., Destin. [www.DestinationHC.Com](http://www.DestinationHC.Com), (850) 654-4588.*

## HOLIDAY GLOW

*continued from page 29*

skin matures, consistency matters more than complexity. Introduce one or two effective actives, like a mild glycolic or retinol, but don't overwhelm your skin. I love adding an antioxidant serum—Vitamin C and niacinamide are two of my favorites—especially this time of year when the air is dry. And yes, sunscreen is still a must, even on cloudy days!

**Mature Skin (50+):** Hydration, hydration, hydration! Look for ingredients like ceramides, peptides, and hyaluronic acid. A rich moisturizer and eye cream can work wonders for texture and firmness. Retinol can still be your friend—just introduce it gradually. And when it comes to advanced treatments, talk to a trusted professional before diving in.

At Beverly Hills Day Spa, I use and recommend Jane Iredale exclusively—for myself and my clients. Their mineral-based skincare and makeup are infused with pure, skin-loving ingredients like aloe and bo-

tanicals that nourish rather than irritate. Tried and true, Jane Iredale products have earned the loyalty of countless happy users around the world—because they simply work.

If you're looking for the perfect holiday gift, our specially formulated Jane Iredale skincare and makeup line is a thoughtful choice for anyone on your list—from teens learning good habits to moms (and grandmothers!) who deserve a little pampering.

Come by and let's find the

products that work best for your skin. Schedule a consultation to test shades and textures and let us create a customized skincare plan to keep your glow going all season long.

Here's to a beautiful holiday season and a heart (and face!) full of gratitude and glow.

*Beverly Hills Day Spa is located at 114 Palmetto St. STE 6, Destin. Call 850-654-8544 or visit [BeverlyHillsDaySpa.com](http://BeverlyHillsDaySpa.com) to schedule your appointment.*

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 Business

# When the Connector Disconnects: Unlocking Your Co-Worker's Connectedness Superpower



BY BILL MASON,  
ROCKET FUEL COACH

We've all seen it happen —

that teammate who's usually great at seeing the big picture — the glue that holds everyone together. But every so often they suddenly seem... off. They're quieter in meetings, less engaged, maybe even distant. It's puzzling, especially when connection is normally their superpower.

One of my teammates is that person — typically amazing at bringing people together, unifying others and seeing how everything fits together. But recently, during a team meet-

ing, they seemed disconnected, almost like they were isolating themselves from the conversation. It was like watching someone with a natural gift for connection stuck in the basement of disengagement!

This is a classic case of "basement" behaviors for someone with the Connectedness strength. When they feel out of sync with the group or the purpose, they can withdraw and struggle to make those connections. But at their core, they have an amazing ability to foster

relationships, create unity, and see the value in every person and situation.

How can we help them get back to their "balcony" and shine? Here are three ideas:

**Encourage Dialogue** — Invite them to share their insights on how people or ideas connect. Giving them a platform to speak can reignite their natural ability to unify.

**Create Group Experiences** — Help them connect with others through team-building activities or shared goals.

This fosters a sense of belonging and reignites their sense of purpose.

**Acknowledge Their Impact** — Recognize when they help link people or ideas. Acknowledging their role in fostering connections can remind them of the value they bring to the team.

Let's help them get back to being the incredible connector they are! Let's talk.

*Stay strong! Fuel Your Strengths. Ignite Your Potential.*

# Holiday-Ready Interiors: Fresh Paint Sets the Stage

BY KYLE SPARKS,  
OVATION PAINTING

The holidays are all about

gathering — family dinners, festive celebrations and cozy evenings with friends. As we prepare

our homes for company, one of the most impactful updates you can make is a fresh coat of paint.

Full-room or whole-home interior projects do more than refresh walls — they set the tone for the entire season. Imagine a dining room in a warm, rich shade that makes Thanksgiving meals feel even more inviting, or a living room with crisp, clean walls that highlight your holiday décor. Fresh paint creates a backdrop that feels intentional and welcoming, giving your guests the sense that every detail was thought of.

Beyond appearances, a newly painted interior simply feels cleaner and brighter. Scuffed walls, dingy trim or faded colors can make a space feel tired, while new paint instantly lifts the mood. Pair that with the glow of candles, string lights and seasonal decorations, and you have the perfect recipe for holiday warmth.

November is also an ideal time to tackle larger interior projects. Cooler weather means better conditions for painting, and schedules are often easier to coordinate before the busier holiday rush. Whether you've just finished a remodel, want to

modernize outdated colors or are ready for a complete home refresh, this is the season to bring it all together.

As family and friends gather in your home this holiday season, give them a setting that feels just as memorable as the celebration itself.

*Ready to give your home the protection it deserves? Reach out to Ovation Painting and let's plan your refresh this fall. Call or text us at (850) 830-9668 to get started. And as a thank you to those who serve, we proudly offer a military and first responder discount by mentioning this article!*



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## REELING

*continued from page 12*

locals and visitors alike always have access. That is what Tarpon Park represents. When we secure public beaches, we are not just buying sand. We are protecting a family tradition that stretches across generations. Many visitors tell me about their first family vacations here, and now they are bringing their kids back to repeat the cycle. These are the kinds of stories that bind visitors and locals together, and keeping our beaches open ensures that cycle continues for generations to come."

**Norriego Point:** New dunes walkovers, conservation features, bathrooms, and boardwalks are nearing completion.

"It has been a long time seeing this come to fruition," said Hebert. "Hopefully by New Year's Eve, we can watch fireworks there, have picnics, and enjoy the beautiful park and views."

**Clement Taylor Park:** Fencing is up, and restoration has begun. The pier is currently being replaced board-for-board, and the new playground will be in place in Fall 2026.

"I will admit I am biased because this is my favorite park, with some of the oldest trees in Destin," said Wagner. "What I love is how this project shows we can modernize without losing the natural beauty. The new playground, restrooms, pavilions, and dock are much-needed upgrades, but the real heart of Clement Taylor is still its trees and shoreline. Nature remains the star here."

**Undergrounding Utilities:** Almost all the conduit is in for the Phase 1 project, and restoration work has begun. Phase 1 is located along U.S. Highway 98 from the Marler Bridge to Airport Road. "Undergrounding utilities is about preparing Destin for the future," said Wagner. "It makes us more resilient to storms, cleans up the look of our streets, and future proofs our infrastructure."

**Dredging:** There is an existing 100-foot-wide Army Core of Engineer channel that helps guide boat traffic in and out of Destin Harbor from the nearby East Pass. The larger boats with greater drafts that utilize Destin Harbor have requested that the City dredge the harbor channel because they are struggling to maneuver within the exist-

ing channel given the amount of boat traffic and the lack of depth within portions of the channel.

**Four Prong Lake:** Permitting is complete, and the City is working to secure funding. "Four Prong Lake shows what local government can do when we partner and find the right funding," said Wagner. "This is a nearly 3-million-dollar project, and two-thirds of that money is coming from the state. It is also a great case study for annexation. A gated neighborhood with flooding issues, and yet by working together with their HOA, the City, and outside partners, we are solving real problems while being good stewards of our local tax dollars."

**Dalton Threadgill:** The City is working with Destin Little League to install a drainage system and artificial turf on two fields. The work is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

"Dalton Threadgill holds a special place in everyone's heart in the City of Destin," said Schmidt. "The partnership that the city has with the Destin Little League (a 501c3 organization) has been in place for nearly 50 years! The fields and playing surfaces are prepped and maintained by volunteers of the league during season in partnership with the city. Having turf playing infields will allow significant savings in maintenance for all, a much better and safer playing surface, and field prep will be a breeze, and we should almost never have a cancellation due to flooded infield."

**Calhoun (446) Ave.:** The property is currently being evaluated to determine how much parking could be placed there. "While still in process, the possibility of purchasing the property could be a huge gain for the city," said Schmidt. "Threadgill park is used probably over 150 nights out of the year by families in Destin. With siblings, aunts/uncles, grandparents, and parents all coming to games as well, parking has always been an issue. During game season, you will find cars parked all around the streets, on sidewalks, under trees, etc. This not only is a problem for damage to property but a major safety issue with kids walking around. With the potential to add 70+ parking spots, it would alleviate almost every car there for that night of games. Again, game changer!"

**Mattie Kelly:** The City has a storm water outfall located at Mattie Kelly Park and Nature Walk which is a part of the Joe's Bayou Recreation Area. This storm water outfall serves the wetland area adjacent to Joe's Bayou Recreation Area and a significant area of the surrounding residential neighborhood. The outfall is undersized, and

during storm events with high water levels in the bay, the bay water will run inland through the outfall. This project should be out to bid Fall 2025.

There are, of course, more projects in motion, like the Linear Trail (a new east-to-west connector for walkers and cyclists, currently in easement negotiations) and the Shore at

Crystal Beach, for which the Development Order has been approved.

"As our schools grow and more families call Destin home, our parks, roads, facilities and beaches need to grow with them. Years from now, people will see this time as a turning point for our city," said Wagner.



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# Sean of the South: Highway Café

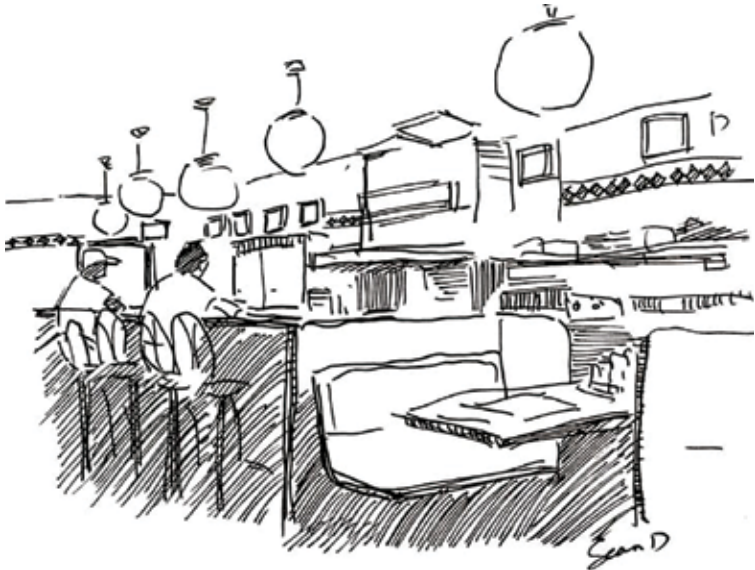


BY SEAN DIETRICH

The little boy was with his mom, sitting in a truck stop diner. The boy was bald, wearing a loose T-shirt. A large bandage showed from beneath his collar. Before the boy sat a massive meal. Bacon. Eggs. Huge glass of chocolate milk. Stack of pancakes bigger than a midsize SUV. “It feels so weird, my stitches itch,” the boy said. “Eat your pancakes,” said Mom. Mom looked tired. Her hair looked like she had slept on it. Her clothes, crumpled. “How many days was I in the hospital?” the boy asked. The mother sighed. “Twenty-six. Now eat your pancakes.”

Everyone in the little restaurant was staring at mother and son. Especially the trucker in the booth behind them, who couldn’t help but eavesdrop. Mother and son ate in silence for a while. The boy was inhaling his food while Mom nursed a mug in both hands, staring wistfully out the window. “Did they cut all the cancer out?” the boy asked. Mother was crying now. “Eat your pancakes.” She tried to hide her face but was unsuccessful. Sometimes there is nowhere to hide one’s face. The boy just watched his mother weep. “I’m worried about you, Mom.” Mom laughed through snot and tears. “You’re worried about ME?” He nodded. Things went silent for a while. That’s when something happened. The trucker from the nearby booth rose to his feet. He approached their table. He was every American truck driver you’ve ever seen. Powerfully

built, slightly round in the middle, a ring of keys on his belt, and scuffed boots. The man stood before their table, wearing a meek expression, hat in hand. The man said he couldn’t help but overhear their conversation. And, well, the man was wondering, would it be okay if he prayed for the boy, ma’am? Truthfully, Mom was a little weirded out by this request. After all, people HAD been praying for the boy back home. Friends and family had been praying around the clock, actually. Then again, one more prayer couldn’t hurt. “Thank you,” said Mom. “We’d be honored.” Mom and boy rose to their feet, per the man’s request. Whereupon the man placed both hands on the boy’s head. And as the man prayed aloud, others in the restaurant stopped eating and joined the circle. First, a waitress. Then a few guys from the bar. Then more customers. A dishwasher. A cook. Within moments, the boy



was standing at the center of a mass of hands, all resting upon his weary body. The prayer was simple. The trucker prayed the boy would be healed. After his prayer, others in the circle took turns praying. Many prayers were spoken. Tears were shed by perfect strangers.

When mother and child left the highway café that night, the boy had no idea what had just happened to him. Forty-three years later, the boy emailed me to say that he still doesn’t know what happened. But every day he’s getting closer to figuring it out. Eat your pancakes.



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# A Pastor's Ponderings: Everybody Has a Book in Them



BY PASTOR DAVE HOLLAND

Everybody's got a book in them. For many, it's just a dream. For others, it's a quiet regret that never quite goes away. Maybe it's a story you've lived through. Maybe it's wisdom you've learned the hard way. Maybe it's the kind of thing you wish someone had told you when you were young. Whatever it is—you know it's in there. And wouldn't it be great to finally get it out?

### A Song That Was Never Heard

I once knew a young woman who played the piano like heaven's choir had descended into the sanctuary. She could hear a song once and play it by ear. Her gift bloomed early—on a little plastic Sears organ tucked beside her dollhouse. She grew up. Played for church. Moved the room with her music. And one day, as we planned a special dedication service, she wrote an original song. It was... inspired. Elegant. Majestic. But she never recorded it. "I just need to put the finishing touches on it," she said. "It's not perfect yet." Years passed. Life moved on. And now, that song is gone.

### Don't Let That Be Your Story

Don't let your memories disappear with time. Don't let your grandchildren grow up without

knowing who you really were. Don't let the best parts of your life stay buried in your heart. Your story matters. Your words have weight. Your voice deserves to be heard. So... write it down. Speak it into your phone. Type it into a document. Heck—have your grandkids help you upload it. It's easier than ever today. You can do this.

### You Don't Have to Write Alone

I joined a writing group a few years ago and it changed everything. Word Weavers International has a chapter right here in Niceville. We meet on the second Saturday of each month at 9:30 a.m.—and it's fun. No, really. We use something called the "sandwich method" for giving feedback: Encouragement □ Honest feedback □ More encouragement. The result? Elec-

trifying creativity. I've seen it firsthand: Sandy is crafting an incredible novel set in her Kentucky hometown. Chris is writing historical fiction set in Renaissance Italy. Paul, a businessman, is pouring his heart into a Bible study book for everyday people. Stephanie, a veteran and mother, is writing about recovering military heroes and their road to healing. These are everyday people, just like you—writing stories that need to be told.

publish it." Here's my answer: Write it anyway. Work it. Pray over it. And trust that the right doors will open. Even if your book only reaches your kids and grandkids—what a legacy that would be.

### Your Story Is a Gift

You are a living testimony. God has brought you through so much. And someone out there needs to hear what you've learned. So, don't let perfection stop you. Don't wait for the "right time." And don't bury your story with you. Start now. Start simple. But start. Your life is worth remembering. Let's make sure it is.

*Dave Holland served as a pastor for over forty years before retiring with his wife, Jonie, here in the panhandle. He is available to preach or teach and can be reached at [davidvholland54@gmail.com](mailto:davidvholland54@gmail.com).*

### What's Holding You Back?

Every month, I write a Pastor's Pondering column. But, what are you pondering? What thoughts are stirring in your heart? What stories are waiting to be told?

Maybe you're thinking: "But I don't have anywhere to

## Immanuel Anglican Church Welcomes New Priest

Immanuel Anglican Church in Destin joyfully welcomes Fr. Rob Cornelison as its new priest — the seventh to serve since the church's founding in 1928. Fr. Rob brings more than 30 years of ministry experience spanning Anglican and United Methodist congregations, diocesan leadership, chaplaincy, and parachurch organizations. Ordained in 2014, he also serves as Director of Field Operations for Ekklesia Society, where he helped develop a trauma-healing program that has reached more than 30,000

people worldwide. Before coming to Destin, Fr. Rob was Senior Pastor at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Michigan. He and his wife, Wendy, have seven grown children, one grandchild, and are enjoying life, fishing, and exploring the beauty of the Emerald Coast. Immanuel's Sunday worship service begins at 10:15 a.m. with Holy Eucharist each



week. All baptized followers of Jesus are welcome. The church is located at 250 Indian Bayou Trail, just northwest of the Destin Dog Park.

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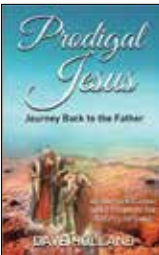
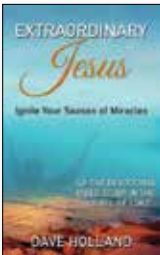
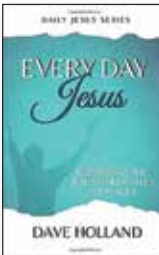
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Arts & Music



By CAMERON HUGHES

Since I was a little boy, I've always been a fan of Dolly Parton. I can remember watching Hee Haw with my grandfather as a little boy, mesmerized any time Dolly Parton came on the screen. When you hear her full story, starting with her humble childhood in Tennessee, you can see that big dreams, and chasing those dreams, have guided her. I particularly like her perspective that... "dreams build convictions because you pay the price to make sure that they come true."

In 2009 she delivered a speech where she said, "Do not confuse dreams with wishes. There is a difference. Dreams are where you visualize yourself being successful at what's important to you to accomplish. Now, dreams build convictions because you work hard to pay the price to make sure that they come true. Wishes are hoping good things will happen to you, but there's no fire in your gut that causes you to put everything forth to overcome

all the obstacles. So you have to dream more and never, ever, ever blame somebody else if it doesn't happen. That is in your department." She expounded upon that in a 2014 interview when she said, "I've always been a dreamer, and yes, I have always tried. And dreams are special things. But dreams are of no value if they're not equipped with wings and feet and hands and all that. If you're going to make a dream come true, you've got to work with it. You can't just sit around. That's a wish. That's not a dream."

Here at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, we have a lot of dreams. I'm not just talking about the dreams that Anna and I have as co-founders for our organization, I'm talking about Trenton's dream to provide for his family while producing theatre, Emily's dream to choreograph shows, and Beca's dream to create sets that put us in other worlds on our stage. The rest of our team here at ECTC... each one has dreams, each one of them backs those dreams up with action. They are passionate about what they do and whole heartedly let that passion drive their dream in service to our community.

Shirley Simpson, a dear friend who passed away last year, had a lifelong career in theater.

She was a huge fan of Emerald Coast Theatre Company and every time she came to one of our Children's Educational Theatre Productions she would say she's never seen a professional theatre company do so much for children. In her experience, she has seen theatres do children's programming "on the side." She commended us for giving the children the same quality and attention that our professional theatre programming receives.

When Taylor puts together the costumes for the children in those productions, she does it with all the passion and conviction that is built into her dreams. Ora's dreams are built into every prop. I once asked Mr. Heath, who grew up in rural Holmes County, why he is so passionate about educational theatre. He said "because theatre changed my world." Theater expanded his dreams, took him to New York City, and showed him that there was a huge world out there that he could explore.

We have more dreams here at ECTC, dreams that are cultivated through our education classes and then bloom in the future of our students. We recently caught up with Marci and Gary, the parents of one of those students we've been able to watch blossom over the years from elementary school to high school.

With pride, they shared that their daughter Alison credits her involvement at ECTC with her success in law school at Florida State University. Her professors and classmates are impressed with her ability to think quickly, improvise dialogue, and play various characters for mock trials. As a sophomore, she has been nominated to serve on the steering committee of the Trial Law Club, an honor usually reserved for upperclassmen. Richard Olivarez, Chief Marketing Officer of Ocean Reef Vacation Rentals recently sent us an email where he raved about ECTC alum Clara. He highlighted her poise, professionalism, and ability to improvise quickly as a spokesmodel for their video marketing project. He experienced first hand how Clara's training with ECTC informed her performance with the project. We also heard from Tate, another ECTC alum. He is headed off to college and is working toward a degree in Sports Broadcasting. This young man was one of our first students in our inaugural summer camp at Butler Elementary school in 2014, and stayed with us through middle and

high school. He credits his time at ECTC with helping him prepare for his chosen career path.

I see dreams coming true every day at ECTC. I see it when our 5 and 6-year-old Mini Players sing in full voice "It's Possible, anything's possible." from Seussical the Musical. I see it in our 2nd-5th grade Little and Big Players, and their full bodied expression of physical storytelling as they take the stage at the amazement of their friends and families. I see dreams come true every Saturday as eighty middle through high school Teen Players descend on our building and find a unique community where they always belong. A place that accepts them, and actually celebrates them.

All of these dreams are coming true every day at ECTC... from our Mini Players to the whole expanse of our community... and you are a part of that. Your support is the platform that we at ECTC can step up on and reach into the heavens to make dreams come true. You truly are the Heart of ECTC and we are so grateful.

# Emerald Coast Theatre Company: Dreams

Presents

**Annie**

November 28<sup>TH</sup> – December 21<sup>ST</sup>

Join Annie, Daddy Warbucks, and Miss Hannigan for this heartwarming story of finding home. With beloved songs like *It's a Hard Knock Life* and *Tomorrow*, you'll feel the magic of the holidays and the joy of generosity.

Tickets or info, call 850.684.0323 or visit [EmeraldCoastTheatre.org](http://EmeraldCoastTheatre.org)  
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## Don't Miss Events

### Chaka Khan Headlines Sinfonia's 20th Anniversary Gala

**Friday, Nov. 14 | 6 p.m. | Hotel Effie, Sandestin**

Sinfonia Gulf Coast celebrates its 20th anniversary season in style with An Evening with the Legendary Chaka Khan—a gala event set for Friday, Nov. 14 at 6 p.m. in the Juniper Ballroom at Hotel Effie in Sandestin.

“The Gala Event supports Sinfonia’s most important work in the community: bringing quality music to school children at no cost to them or their schools,” said Sinfonia Gulf Coast Founder and Music Director Demetrius Fuller. “We are thrilled to celebrate Sinfonia Gulf Coast’s 20th Anniversary of bringing the highest quality orchestra, award-winning artists and music education to Northwest Florida.”

A 10-time Grammy Award winner with 22 nominations, Chaka Khan’s legendary career spans more than five decades and includes timeless hits such as I’m Every Woman, Ain’t No-



body, Tell Me Something Good, and I Feel for You. Known for her dynamic stage presence and extraordinary range, Khan has left her mark across R&B, jazz, pop, rock and gospel genres.

General admission tickets start at \$250 per person, including valet service, cocktail reception, dinner, wine service, gratuities, cash bar, silent and live auctions, and an unforgettable live performance by the Queen of Funk herself. Tables of 10 are also available for purchase.

Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast’s community programs, including in-school musician visits, free orchestra concerts, bus transportation for students, the Sinfonia Youth Orchestra, the Arts in Medicine partnership with Sacred Heart Hospital and Link Up concerts for third- through fifth-graders in collaboration with Carnegie Hall.

Tickets: [SinfoniaGulfCoast.org](http://SinfoniaGulfCoast.org) or call (850) 460-8800.

### NFB & NFSO Present the 46th Annual Nutcracker Nov. 21–23 | Mattie Kelly Arts Center, Niceville

The Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) returns to the Mattie Kelly Arts Center for its 46th annual production of The Nutcracker—a beloved holiday tradition—on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 21–22 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 23 at 2:30 p.m.

Featuring live accompaniment by the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra (NFSO) under the direction of NFB Music Director and Conductor David Ott, this is the area’s only



full-length, live-orchestra performance of the classic ballet.

“The Nutcracker is a cherished holiday tradition for families across our region, and each year we strive to bring fresh artistry and excellence to the stage while honoring its timeless magic,” said NFB Artistic Director and CEO Todd Eric Allen. “From our talented local dancers to our world-class guest artists and live orchestra, this production represents the best of who we are.”

This year’s cast of 140 includes international guest artists and more than 100 local children. Evelyn Thai stars as Clara, joined by Tyler Ruhland as Fritz. Allen reprises his role as Drosselmeyer for the 30th time, and Lindsey White returns as the spirited Mouse Queen.

Guest artists Daynelis Muñoz and Joseph Gatti perform as the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier, with Nikolas Gaifullin and

Hannah Powell dancing as the Snow King and Queen. Powell also performs as the Dew Drop Fairy. Additional guest artists include Telmen Munkherdene as the Harlequin Doll and Lead Russian Dancer, and John Aaron Wiggins in the Arabian Pas de Trois alongside Sophia Killelea and Gaifullin.

NFB alumnus Max Murdock takes on the dual roles of Nutcracker Prince and lead Spanish Dancer, performing with company member Aaliyah Guthrie. Company member Maille Blow leads the Dance of the Reed Flutes.

Ott, a Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award nominee, will conduct the NFSO for all performances. Now in his 10th year as NFB Music Director, Ott is among America’s most-performed contemporary composers.

Tickets: \$48 adults | \$22 children (12 and under).

Purchase online at [NFBallet.org/the-nutcracker](http://NFBallet.org/the-nutcracker) or call the Mattie Kelly Arts Center Box Office at (850) 729-6000.



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Photo by: Nick Nelson



# Ask Destinites:

## People Using SNAP & Other Programs Need Help



BY PATRICIA LEE - OWNER:  
[WWW.DESTINITES.COM](http://WWW.DESTINITES.COM)

In our Facebook locals group, Destinites ([www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinites](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Destinites)), one member recently expressed concern for people who rely on SNAP and other assistance programs. These programs are in danger of being suspended due to the government shutdown. Those who need help must know where to turn. Below is the post that was shared in our

group and some of the responses it received.

**Post:**

How to help those who need help.

SNAP benefits and other programs are about to be shut off and not accessible for a portion of our community that relies on them and needs them. I'm looking for ways in which those who are able and willing to help, can.

Are there reputable food banks, charities, or anything else in the community for people who want to make sure that everyone is continuing to be able to feed their families during this time?

**Member Responses:**

- Harvest House's new location is 114 Palmetto St., Suite 1, Destin, FL 32541. Donations are accepted Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Applicants are vetted.

- The Open Door Food Pantry at Bay Baptist Church on 331 South gives away food on Saturdays beginning at 9 a.m. They take donations throughout the week—call for hours.
- Harvest House is good but only serves Destin unless that has changed. Sharing & Caring is another, but takes a little paperwork, and Catholic Charities is great for fitting various needs. Many churches offer easy grocery pickups throughout the week.
- Village Baptist Church has a food pantry and clothes closet open every Wednesday, 3:30-5:30 p.m.
- Reach out to Food For Thought and Destin Harvest.
- Emerald Coast Food Rescue! They supply food to many organizations that then distribute it to those in need.
- I would love to see Walmart, Publix, and Winn-Dixie come up with a plan to help out short-term!
- Tuesday at the Church of Christ on Beach Drive, Destin,



at 12 noon. Be in line early and get some groceries.

- You might check with local schools to see if anyone has lunch accounts that need to be paid off or added to, or if donations are needed for snacks or meals to send home with select kids.

Lots of times, these are the

kids who are missed in programs because parents didn't apply or qualify for free breakfast/lunch even though they need it. Not sure if the "backpack of food" program that sends food home weekly with kids will still continue during the shutdown?

- Compass Resorts is currently doing a food drive for Sharing & Caring's food bank in Niceville. It runs until Friday. Drop-off locations are at Palms of Destin, Silver Beach Towers, and Silver Shells.
- Dollar Tree Dinners: Is there a location a group of us could meet or have donations brought so we could make this happen?
- At Niceville Catholic Outreach (1200 Valparaiso Blvd., Niceville), we help people daily. Food is always needed. We don't ask about circumstances, religion or political beliefs. Please feel free to reach out to me if you're interested in donating to our charity.
- Path of Grace has food they can share.
- Catholic Charities.

If you are a Destin resident or in the surrounding area, I invite you to join our private, targeted group for locals and property owners at Facebook.com/groups/Destinites, which now has 12,100+ members (est. Oct. 2018). Check out our local business directory at Destinites.com, where more than 500 local businesses are already listed—and enjoy advertising in our targeted community group.

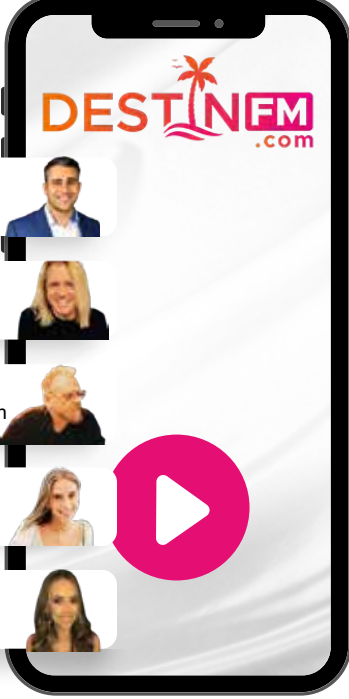
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