



OCTOBER 2025
VOL. 8, NO. 3

DESTIN Life

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U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Santa Rosa Beach, FL
PERMIT NO. #11

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Festival of the Arts Marks 30 Years of Color, Creativity and Community



BY LORI LEATH SMITH

The first time I walked into the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation office, it felt like coming home. It reminded me of my mom—a talented artist with a gift for detail who loved bringing barns, old buildings, people, trees and landscapes to life in watercolor and pen & ink. Growing up, weekends often meant traveling to art shows, helping her set up and soaking in the creative buzz of those events. I even sold my own pet rocks (don't judge—some of you remember!) and tried my hand at leatherwork

and paint. Those early shows were my first classrooms in community—how art unites strangers in one place and somehow sends them home as friends.

Perhaps that's why today, as a Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) board member, my love of art and artists still runs deep. And the Festival of the Arts remains one of my favorite times of year. This year, we celebrate MKAF's 30th anniversary, a milestone for one of the Southeast's premier juried art festivals.

Arty Kick Off Party

The celebration begins Friday night, October 24, with the Arty Kick Off Party at 6 p.m. at the MKAF Cultural Arts Village. Guests will vibe to tunes by DJ Josh, sip curated pours from Vinuv and enjoy light bites while mingling with artists and friends in a colorful, artsy crowd. Illustrator Janae Erickson—best known for the Niceville mural, MKAF's 30th anniversary logo and her role as Sr. Director of Design at Frances Roy Agency—will be creating live digital art on the Dugas Stage,

bringing her process to life in real time.

It's also the perfect chance to learn about MKAF's new Artist Level Membership, designed to support the arts while unlocking exclusive perks. Tickets are \$50 per person and include one drink voucher, with MKAF members saving \$20. Proceeds benefit MKAF and its Arts-Reach community outreach education initiatives.

FESTIVAL OF ARTS

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Breakfast | Lunch | Espresso

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See coupon pg. 47.

Remembering Charlie

Reflections on His Ministry from Across the World



Editor's Note:

Many readers are familiar with Charlie Kirk, who was tragically gunned down on Sept. 10. What stunned us at Life Media

CHARLIE

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Community

CHARLIE

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Group was the extraordinary, world-wide impact of his ministry. The following excerpt is drawn from an editorial written by Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkuno, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, in an article from Orthodox Christianity—offering a perspective from the other side of the Christian faith tradition.

Excerpt from Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkuno, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church:

Just a week ago, the name Charlie Kirk was virtually unknown in Russia. Then, like a supernova explosion, he burst into our information space, unleashing a wave of both indignation and admiration. Some saw in him the embodiment of values they found unacceptable and reacted with open hatred and outrage toward Kirk: “How can an American (an American!) be like that?”

Others—astonished and grieved that he is no longer among the living—discovered in him an unexpected kindred spirit. Death, without a doubt, became both the chief sermon

and the pinnacle of Charles Kirk’s ministry. It also illuminated his complete image—one filled with faith, resolve and Christian love—refuting the slanders of those who read the Gospel with their soul’s eyes shut, failing to understand that the bold defense of Gospel truth is love in action.

The murderer—and all those who stood behind him—are powerless to place a final period on the existence of a man who believes in Christ. And in the hearts of millions of his like-minded followers and friends, Charlie’s martyred death breathed new, greatly multiplied life in service of their goals, thoughts, and convictions.

In an age of post-truth, relativism, and libertarianism—when reality is constructed by the media and social networks, and conformity has become the norm—truth is drowning in a sea of political correctness. Charlie Kirk dared to go against the current. He acknowledged no shades of gray, no compromises, no deals with the conscience. He couldn’t have cared less about what was fashionable, accepted, or dictated by the crowd. He allowed himself

Charlie Kirk, in his own words:

“I’m nothing without Jesus. I’m a sinner. I fall incredibly short of the glory of God. We all do. I gave my life to the Lord in fifth grade, and it’s the most important decision I’ve ever made, and everything I do incorporates Jesus Christ.”



a luxury almost unheard of in our time—to call things by their proper names, even if that meant that such a royal choice would, inevitably and without a doubt, bring a series of consequences, including the most dreadful ones.

What is especially admirable about Charlie Kirk is his willingness to go and speak about the Kingdom of Heaven, about traditional values, about con-

servative principles in the very places that seemed most unsuitable—places whose inhabitants, for the most part, do not want to hear anything of the kind. He chose a “mission field” perhaps the most important, but—as we now see—far from safe, not unlike preaching somewhere among a tribe of cannibals. University campuses, the youth culture of Generations Z and Y. But Charlie Kirk, even among

these young and often aggressive beings—so dearly loved by him in a truly Christian way, each one of whom he saw as bearing the image and likeness of God—was not afraid to be a “black sheep,” was not afraid to go against the current, was not afraid to speak the truth as he understood it, even if it frequently provoked anger and rejection.

The example of Charlie Kirk is a lesson for us.

Charlie Kirk spoke, first and foremost, about what he truly believed. His sincere passion, integrity, and conviction were contagious to young people and compelled them to think. That is precisely why he was both loved and hated—but he left no one indifferent.

The life and death of Charlie Kirk—his entire life’s work—cannot help but evoke the deepest respect. His stand against retreat and decline, against what our Orthodox elder Father John (Krestiankin) once called “the march of the destroyer,” proved, despite the confessional differences, to be strikingly resonant for many of us.

—Metropolitan Tikhon of Simferopol and Crimea

FESTIVAL OF ARTS

continued from page 1

A Celebration for All

On October 25–26, the MKAF Cultural Arts Village in Destin will transform into a kaleidoscope of creativity, color and connection. Festivalgoers can stroll through more than 100 artist tents filled with orig-

inal artwork from throughout the U.S., experience live demonstrations, enjoy continuous live music, and sample food truck fare or relax in the beer and wine garden. Street performers will bring their playful artistry, children can dive into hands-on art activities, and visitors can cast their vote for the People’s Choice Award on Saturday. Ad-

mission is free, ensuring this beloved event remains accessible to all.

“The Festival of the Arts is one of our signature events,” says Festival Producer Deb Nissley, “It’s where our mission to enhance and inspire every life through Arts and Culture truly comes alive.”

A Legacy Rooted in Community

The festival is inseparable from the story of the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation itself. Founded in 1995 in honor of Destin matriarch Mattie May Kelly, the Foundation grew out of her vision that the cultural arts should be available to everyone. A pianist, organist, composer, poet and patron of the arts, Mattie dedicated her life to learning and to lifting others. Together with her husband, Coleman, she helped pioneer Destin’s tourism and fishing industries while remaining a generous benefactor of culture and community.

Today, MKAF carries her legacy forward. Over the past three decades, the Foundation has delivered more than 160 ArtsReach programs, part-

nering with 100+ schools and agencies to bring the arts to students, veterans and individuals with special needs. Each year, more than 25,000 participants experience these programs—everything from music residencies in classrooms to therapeutic art sessions for military families. Since its founding, MKAF has touched more than 420,000 lives throughout Northwest Florida. And it’s not just individuals—more than 500 business and individual patrons continue to fuel this work, proving that when a community invests in the arts, everyone benefits.

A Showcase for Artists

Hospitality is at the heart of the Festival of the Arts. Year after year, artists return not only for the opportunity of multi-year sales, but for the experience itself. Staff and volunteers work year-round to create a warm and welcoming environment where creativity thrives. Jurying is conducted by three art industry professionals, and awards totaling \$12,000 are distributed, including Best in Show, People’s

Continued on page 43

THE GROUND UP PROJECT

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DESTIN Life

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

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Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

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The Resting Tree Opens in Niceville: A Safe Haven for Adults with Special Needs

BY LORI SMITH

On September 15, 2025, The Ground Up Project officially opened the doors to The Resting Tree, an adult day program in Niceville designed to provide a safe, supportive and enriching space for individuals with autism and other special needs.

For families across Northwest Florida, the opening marked more than just a ribbon cutting—it answered a critical question: What happens when children with autism become adults? Too often, programs end at 18, leaving families scrambling for resources and support. The Resting Tree was created to change that, offering adults ages 16–55 opportunities to learn, connect and thrive long after traditional services end.

Inside the center, participants find dedicated spaces including a Technology Room, Activities Room, Reading Room, Skills Room and Sensory Room. Programming blends skill-building with joy—arts and crafts, physical fitness, life skills and social



interaction. Local businesses and volunteers enrich the curriculum with sessions in yoga, art and financial literacy. With both half-day and full-day options, caregivers can feel confident their loved ones are in a nurturing environment designed for growth and independence.

The Resting Tree also offers peace of mind through professional oversight. A medical professional is available on site five days a week to assist participants with limited medical needs, and the program operates within the best practices of the Agency for

Persons with Disabilities.

“This is more than a day program—it’s the beginning of something bigger,” the Ground Up Project team shared. The day program represents Phase One of a broader vision: building a long-term residential community where adults with autism and special needs can live in a supportive, inclusive environment.

That vision wouldn’t be possible without the community. Sponsors, families, and volunteers rallied around the mission, donating time, resources, and



expertise to bring The Resting Tree to life. As one parent put it, the program provides not only care for their child but also “a place where they can belong, build friendships, and feel valued.”

Income from the day program will directly support this future growth, ensuring sustainability while meeting immediate needs. Families who attended the August 24 Open House described it as “a dream becoming reality” and emphasized the relief of having an option that nurtures their adult children



with dignity and purpose.

Applications are now open, though spaces are limited. To learn more, apply or schedule a private tour, visit thegroundupproject.org/theresting-tree or email therestingtree@thegroundupproject.org.

With The Resting Tree now open—a new chapter for families across Northwest Florida—adults with special needs have opportunities to belong, grow and thrive in a community that believes autism doesn’t end at 18.

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Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation Donates \$3 Million to Local Children's Charities

More than \$38 million donated to help children in need in Northwest Florida since 2005

The Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) recently donated \$3 million to 16 local children's charities following another successful year of fundraising. The funds were awarded at a private check presentation ceremony on Sept. 18 at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. Since its inception in 2005, the organization has given more than \$38 million to help children in need across Northwest Florida.

"As we bring our 20th anniversary to a close, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary vision and dedication of our founders—the foundation upon which our success has been built," said DCWAF President Karah Fridley-Young. "Their legacy has carried us to this milestone, and it now falls to us to ensure that same spirit carries forward for the next 20 years and beyond. The continued success of DCWAF is not only vital to our mission, but also essential to the well-being of the partner charities we fund. As we look ahead, a steadfast focus on sustainability will be key to securing our future and deepening our impact."

2025 Beneficiaries

Sixteen charities received funding to support programs that directly impact children and families in need:

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast – \$210,000 for fetal monitors, Giraffe warmers, and other NICU equipment.

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast – \$250,000 to provide access to a licensed mental health counselor and subsidize youth development programs benefiting more than 200 children annually.

Caring & Sharing of South Walton – \$200,000 to expand family counseling services and its Kids Specific Pantry with diapers, formula, and other essentials.

Children in Crisis – \$225,000 to provide housing, food, clothing, and care for abused, neglected, and abandoned children.

Children's Home Society of Florida (newest beneficiary) – \$150,000 to expand school-based services including tutoring, medical, and behavioral health care.

Children's Volunteer Health Network – \$175,000



to staff and maintain the Mobile Dental Clinic, serving uninsured and underinsured children.

Ellison McCraney Ingram Foundation – \$200,000 for scholarships for teens who have benefited from at least one DCWAF partner charity.

Emerald Coast Autism Center – \$200,000 to support the Phase II Learning Center, expanding programs for teens in the Transition to Work program.

Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center – \$225,000 to fund mental health therapy, case advocacy, and the CARES abuse-prevention program.

Habitat for Humanity of

Walton County – \$275,000 to build two new homes for local families.

Mental Health Association of Okaloosa and Walton Counties – \$137,000 to fund the Brain Health Program for uninsured students ages 12–21.

Opportunity Place, Inc. – \$175,000 to provide emergency housing and child-centered support for homeless families.

Point Washington Medical Clinic – \$150,000 for pediatric medications, nutrition programming, and family resources.

The Arc of the Emerald Coast – \$100,000 to renovate its children's daycare program facility for kids with developmental differences.

Westonwood Ranch – \$175,000 to provide scholarships and transportation support for students with developmental differences.

Youth Village – \$160,000

for program operations, teacher salaries, and scholarships for low-income children in VPK and after-school programs.

Building for the Future

In addition to these grants, DCWAF contributed \$93,000 to the Jumonville Family Children's Fund, a reserve established to strengthen the organization's long-term sustainability and serve as a safety net for its partner charities during emergencies.

Tickets are still available for DCWAF's upcoming Harvest Wine & Food Festival, Oct. 16–19 in WaterColor at dcwaf.org.

Looking ahead, DCWAF's signature fundraising event, Destin Charity Wine Auction Weekend, is scheduled for April 24–25, 2026. Tickets and details will be released in January.

For more information, visit www.DCWAF.org.



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Events Around Town

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Lyrics on the Harbor: Destin's First Songwriter Festival

**October 10–11, 2025 |
Heron Harbor, Destin,
Florida**

For the first time, Destin Harbor will echo with the stories behind the songs you love. The inaugural Destin Songwriter Festival transforms Heron Harbor (314 Harbor Blvd.) into two days of music, storytelling and coastal beauty.

Enjoy free daytime shows on three harbor-front stages, then ticketed evening headliners on the Main Stage. Acclaimed songwriters from across the country will share acoustic sets and the inspiration behind their hits, creating an unforgettable waterfront experience.

Tickets & Details: GA 2-Day Pass: \$60 | GA Friday or Saturday: \$35/day | VIP Table (2-Day): \$1,000. Main Stage shows require GA or VIP tickets; side stages are free.

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

Tickets: DestinSongwriters-Festival.com



bars and resorts at this popular and colorful fall festival, with live music, a photo booth and local vendors. Proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity of Walton County.

Tickets & details: thebloody-maryfest.com

Harvest Wine & Food Festival

**Oct. 16–19 | Times vary
by event | Cerulean Park,
WaterColor**

Four days. World-class wine. Unforgettable food. From Friday's sultry Harvest After Dark to Saturday's legendary Grand Tasting and elegant Sunday brunch, this is one of the Southeast's premier festivals. Proceeds benefit Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation.

Tickets and details: dcwaf.org

Fall Silent Auction for Emerald Coast Food Rescue

**Friday, Oct. 24 | 6–9:30
p.m. | Local Market,
Destin**

Bid for a cause! Help fight

hunger in Okaloosa and Walton counties while enjoying food, drinks and community fun. Proceeds support ECFR's mission to deliver 250,000 pounds of food monthly.

Details: emeraldcoast-foodrescue.org

Fleets and Eats: A Party for a Purpose

**Saturday, Oct. 25 | 6 p.m.
| Destin Harbor (Tailfins,
The Edge, Harbor Docks)**

Hop aboard tiki boats for a Lu'au-style harbor crawl with cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, and live music. Proceeds support autism services at ECAC. After-party at Tailfins!

Tickets & Details: eca-tismcenter.org

Barktoberfest

**Thursday, Oct. 30 |
4:30–6:30 p.m. | Grand
Park, Grand Boulevard at
Sandestin**

Paws down, the cutest fall fest around! Bring your pup in costume for trick-or-treating, a legendary doggie costume contest, live DJ, photo booth, and tasty bites. \$15 preregistration (\$20 day-of). Benefits Dog-Harmony. Register: dog-harmony.org

Trick or Treat Street

**Friday, Oct. 31 | 6–8 p.m.
| The Village of Baytowne
Wharf, Sandestin**

Ghosts, ghouls, and goblins

Continued on page 8

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Florida Governor's Dinner Coming to Okaloosa Island

The Republican parties of Okaloosa, Walton, Santa Rosa, and Escambia counties are joining forces this fall to host the first-ever Panhandle Governor's Dinner. The event is set for Saturday, Oct. 18, 2025, at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center on Okaloosa Island.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will deliver the keynote address, joined by Lt. Gov. Jay Collins and Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia. A VIP reception, social hour, and silent auction begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner and

the program at 6:45 p.m.

Early bird tickets are available through Sept. 21 at \$150 (general) and \$300 (VIP). Prices increase after the deadline. Proceeds benefit the four participating county Republican parties, helping fund operations, outreach, communications, and state-level participation.

Sponsorship opportunities range from \$3,000 to \$10,000, each including a reserved VIP table for 10. Silent auction donations are also welcomed, with businesses contributing items valued at \$1,000 or more

receiving sponsorship recognition. A Patriot Sponsor level of \$600 provides two VIP tickets for First Responders, Veterans, or young Republicans.

Organizers emphasize the dinner as a major fundraising opportunity to support upcoming elections and strengthen conservative leadership across Northwest Florida.

For more information, sponsorship details, or ticket reservations, visit www.OkaloosaGOP.com or email Media@OkaloosaGOP.com. Business or semi-formal attire is requested.



Cali's To Do In Destin! OCTOBER 2025

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Pumpkins & Petals | 5pm | The Boardroom Pub

Gulf Coast Boating & Fishing Seminar | 6pm | Legendary Marine

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm | Hooters Destin

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

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

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

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay

Music Match Game Night | 5pm | The Island Resort

Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys Niceville

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Music Bingo | 7pm | Hooters Destin

Wednesday Night Concert Series | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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

Destin Songwriter Festival | 12pm | Destin Harbor

Barktober Fest | 4:30pm | Grand Boulevard

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Baytowne Beer Fest | 5pm | Baytowne Wharf

The Phantom of the Theatre Murder Mystery | 6pm | Eglin Community Library

Movies on the Lawn | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

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

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Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 10am | Harborwalk Village

Book Club | 10am | Pink Coyote Dessert Co

Boo at the Zoo | 10am | Gulf Breeze Zoo

Bloody Mary Festival | 11am | The Market Shops Miramar Beach

Destin Songwriter Festival | 12pm | Destin Harbor

Fall Candle Making Class | 1pm | DeFrance Antiques

Baytowne Beer Fest – Grand Craft Tasting | 2pm | Baytowne Wharf

Rocktober Fest Concert Series | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

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

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

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Kids Fall Movie Fest | 12pm | AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

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

Trivia Night | 6pm | Beachview Breakfast & Grille

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

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ECPRO Lunch & Learn - Working Smarter, Not Harder: AI for PR Pros | 11:30am | FWB Chamber

Karaoke | 6pm | Hooters Destin

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

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

Botanical to Bar: Spirit Infusion Lab | 6pm | 30A Distilling Co

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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

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Music Bingo | 7pm | Hooters Destin

Wednesday Night Concert Series: Six Piece Suits | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

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Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Bubbly Baytowne | 5pm | Baytowne Wharf

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Movies on the Lawn | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

Haunted Destin: Walking Tour | 7pm | 154 Calhoun Ave

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Famers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Dogs & Donuts Harvest Fest | 10am | Rise 'n Ride

Adoption Event | 11am | Petsmart Destin

Harvest Wine & Food Festival Grand Tasting | 1pm | Cerulean Park, Watercolor

Rocktober Fest Concert Series | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Haunted Destin: Walking Tour | 7pm | 154 Calhoun Ave

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Fireworks | 9pm | Destin Harbor

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

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

..... 20

Bath Bomb Workshop | 3pm | LUSH at Destin Commons

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

Trivia Night | 6pm | Beachview Breakfast & Grille

Trivia Night | 6pm | Soundside FWB

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

..... 21

Mindful Meditation | 9am | Destin Library

Run Club | 4:30pm | Idyll Hounds Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | Hooters Destin

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

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

..... 22

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

Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys Niceville

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Palm Folly

Music Bingo | 7pm | Hooters Destin

Wednesday Night Concert Series: Modern Eldorados | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 23

Luke Combs Bootleggers Bonfire Concert Series | Seascape Resort

Emerald Coast Fall Bike Fest | Emerald Coast Harley Davidson

Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community Center

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 24

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Luke Combs Bootleggers Bonfire Concert Series | Seascape Resort

Emerald Coast Fall Bike Fest | Emerald Coast Harley Davidson

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

Haunted Harvest Fishing Tournament Weigh Ins | 4-6pm | Harbor Tavern

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort

Movies on the Lawn | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Fall Silent Auction for Emerald Coast Food Rescue | 6pm | Local Market, Destin

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

..... 25

Luke Combs Bootleggers Bonfire Concert Series | Seascape Resort

Emerald Coast Fall Bike Fest | Emerald Coast Harley Davidson

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

30th Annual Festival of the Arts | 9am | Mattie Kelly Arts Pavilion Destin

Putt for PAWS | 10am | Hocus Pocus: Interactive Movie | 2pm | Suds n Cinema

Halloween SPOOKtacular | 3pm | Harborwalk Village

Haunted Harvest Fishing Tournament Weigh Ins | 4-6pm | Harbor Tavern

Rocktober Fest Concert Series | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Fleets and Eats: A Party for a Purpose | 6pm | Destin Harbor (Tailfins, The Edge, Harbor Docks)

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Sip n Science: Mystery at the Museum | 6pm | Emerald Coast Science Center

Halloween Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre | 7pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Halloween Party | 7pm | Skybar Destin

Fear Factory | 7:30pm | Club LA

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Fireworks | 9pm | Destin Harbor

..... 26

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

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

30th Annual Festival of the Arts | 9am | Mattie Kelly Arts Pavilion Destin

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

..... 27

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

Trivia Night | 6pm | Beachview Breakfast & Grille

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

..... 28

Karaoke | 6pm | Hooters Destin

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

..... 29

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

Rock n Roll Bingo | 6pm | Fatboys Niceville

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Music Bingo | 6:30pm | Palm Folly

Music Bingo | 7pm | Hooters Destin

Wednesday Night Concert Series: Forrest Williams Band | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Rocky Horror Picture Show | 8pm | Suds 'n Cinema

..... 30

Barktoberfest | 4:30-6:30pm | Grand Park, Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

Yoga Class | 6pm | Destin Community Center

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 31

Destin Witch Ride | 7:30am | Destin Elementary

Destin Witch Ride Brunch | 10am | Skybar Destin

Fudpucker's Frightful Halloween Bash | 11am | Fudpucker's

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort

Fall Festival 2025 | 5pm | Cinco Baptist Church

Trick or Treat Street | 6pm | Baytowne

Halloween Party | 6pm | Pallet Bar & Grill

A Grave Affair | 6:30pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

Halloween Dinner Cruise | 7pm | Solaris Yacht

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



Festival of Arts

Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Fireworks | 9pm | Destin Harbor

..... 12

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

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

..... 13

Kids Fall Movie Fest | 12pm | AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

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

Trivia Night | 6pm | Beachview Breakfast & Grille

Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

..... 14

ECPRO Lunch & Learn - Working Smarter, Not Harder: AI for PR Pros | 11:30am | FWB Chamber

Karaoke | 6pm | Hooters Destin

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

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

Botanical to Bar: Spirit Infusion Lab | 6pm | 30A Distilling Co

..... 15

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

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Music Bingo | 7pm | Hooters Destin

Wednesday Night Concert Series: Six Piece Suits | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 16

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Bubbly Baytowne | 5pm | Baytowne Wharf

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 17

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

Singo Music Bingo | 5pm | The Island Resort

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Movies on the Lawn | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

Haunted Destin: Walking Tour | 7pm | 154 Calhoun Ave

..... 18

Famers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Dogs & Donuts Harvest Fest | 10am | Rise 'n Ride

Adoption Event | 11am | Petsmart Destin

Harvest Wine & Food Festival Grand Tasting | 1pm | Cerulean Park, Watercolor

Rocktober Fest Concert Series | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Haunted Destin: Walking Tour | 7pm | 154 Calhoun Ave

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

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

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse



EVENTS • LIVE MUSIC • FOOD

your local guide for everything

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

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

Interactive magic takes place just inches away in an intimate showroom that offers excellent table seating. The performance features sophisticated magic & smart comedy targeting adults but is family-friendly and appropriate for all ages. The show is headlined by Bart Rockett who hosted his own nationally syndicated television show for three seasons, had a co-starring role on the former NBC Drama Parenthood and headlined his own



1,000-seat theater in the tourist mecca of Branson, Missouri for nine seasons. He has appeared in 85 countries around the globe and headlined for most every major cruise line.

Rockett, who started at the age of 10, trained under Jeff Dunham and is recognized for his excellent comedy ventrilo-

quism which is featured in the show. After growing up in the South, Rockett moved to Hollywood, California where his management team is located. He produced his teens to the finals of NBC's America's Got Talent and they have gone on to do major Hollywood projects over the years. Kadan, who starred in the movie Dark Skies with award winning actress Keri Russell and on CBS's rush hour combines forces with his Sister, Brooklyn to make guest appearances in Rockett's Destin show.

Brooklyn is well known for her viral Super Bowl commer-

cial that currently has nearly 800 million views on YouTube and most recently played Hollywood superstar Bradley Cooper's daughter in a project with Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

This talented family has been vacationing in Destin for many years and now that Rockett's kids are almost grown, he is excited to be back for a long-term residency in the place his Grandparents first introduced him to as a child. Rockett shared, "For me, coming back here feels like coming home. Some of my greatest childhood memories happened on these beaches and it's my desire to

bring something unique to the area that is a fun experience for families to attend & make their own amazing memories."

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

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

EVENTS

continued from page 4

take over Baytowne! Trick-or-

treat at merchant booths, enjoy live music, and don't miss the fireworks at 8 p.m. Free admission.

Details: baytownewharf.com

11th Annual Eggs on the Beach - Big Green Egg Cooking Competition!

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

Big Green Egg fans unite! Sample unlimited bites from 20+ cook teams, including nine nonprofits, and cast your votes for the 2025 People's Choice Awards. A distinguished panel of judges features local chefs,

Big Green Egg grill masters, and celebrity talent from Netflix and Food Network. Hosted by Bay Breeze Patio, this fan-favorite foodie fest benefits Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Food For Thought.

Tickets & details: EggsOnTheBeach.com

Pirate Brew Fest

Saturday, Nov. 1 | 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Fudpucker's, Destin | FREE Admission

Ahoy, mateys! Fudpucker's

hosts the Pirate Brew Fest, a lively afternoon of food, fun, and frothy brews. Enjoy live music, games, artists and vendors, alcohol samples, and a pirate costume contest. Festivities also include a magician, mermaid, fire performer, and beer memorabilia on display. Pirate attire is encouraged—and the first 100 pirates through the gate will receive special gifts. Admission is free.

Details: PirateBrewFest.com

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abc NBC CBS
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Hallmark

Featuring:
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- London Daily Mail

"Brilliant, incredible magic, & fantastic showmanship!"
- Simon Cowell

Reservations required:
USATourTickets.LIVE

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31

A's Halloween Party

\$500

CASH PRIZE
COSTUME CONTEST

PARTY STARTS AT 9PM
21+ NO COVER
DRINK SPECIALS ALL NIGHT

WITH LIVE MUSIC BY
JO JO BEE 7PM
DJ BOOM 8PM
BLACK EYED BLONDE 9PM

116 Harbor Blvd. Destin, FL 32541
ajsdestin.com

Fall is Fabulous and Fun at The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin!

17th Annual Baytowne Wharf Beer Festival
Friday, Oct. 10, 6-8 p.m. |
Saturday, Oct. 11, 2-5 p.m.
Tickets on sale now at
baytownebeerfestival.com.



Time to roll out the barrel and discover unique suds and ales! The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin presents the 17th Annual Baytowne Wharf Beer Fest Oct. 10-11. American specialty beers from throughout the nation will be available for participants to sample and savor. The grand, craft beer tasting event on Saturday, Oct. 11, will feature more than 200 domestic and international craft beers available for sampling. For tickets, visit baytownebeerfestival.com.

Music Lineup:

Friday - Baytowne's Backyard Bash
 6-8 p.m.: Duchess
Saturday - Grand Craft Beer Tasting
 2-5 p.m.: The Typos

Alissa Steffens Vocal Studios Concert

Tuesday, Nov. 4 | 6 p.m. |
Events Plaza Stage | FREE

Join Vocal Coach Alissa Steffens and her incredible students for an unforgettable night of live music. All genres, all ages. Kids through adults will take the stage to showcase their talent in a one-of-a-kind performance. So, bring a chair or blanket, kick back, and enjoy an evening filled with music, energy, and community spirit. It's a great way to support local performers and enjoy the talents of rising stars from right here and beyond.

Alissa Steffens is a nationally recognized Vocal Coach, Performer, Professional Songwriter, and Recording Artist with deep roots in the Nashville music scene. Since relocating to the Sandestin/30A area, she's continued to work with aspiring and



professional artists across the region, the country, and even internationally. This showcase is more than just a concert — it's a celebration of creativity, hard work, and the power of music to bring people together.

Save the Date for Tribute Weekend!

Friday, Nov. 7 & Saturday, Nov. 8 | 7-9 p.m. each night | FREE!

Make plans now to be in the Village of Baytowne Wharf for Tribute Weekend. Rock out the weekend and enjoy live music from great tribute bands. Grab your blankets and lawn chairs and meet on the events plaza lawn for a jam-packed weekend of incredible talent.

Friday, November 7th | DEPARTURE

Departure has been rocking stages as the nation's most respected Journey tribute band! With stunning vocals, live performances (no tracks!), and all the hits you love, they recreate the full Journey concert experience — from the Gregg Rolie era to Steve Perry classics.

100+ shows a year. 100% live. Family-friendly. High energy.

Experience the sound, the feel, the magic of Journey — LIVE with DEPARTURE!

Saturday, November 8th | FACE VALUE

Get ready for a powerhouse tribute like no other. Face Value brings the music of Phil Collins & Genesis to life with blistering horns, dual drum kits, epic har-

monies, and a high-energy show that will have you singing every word.

From hits like "In the Air Tonight" to deep Genesis cuts, every show is a full-blown concert experience — authentic, electrifying, and unforgettable.

Touring nationally and internationally, FACE VALUE is more than a tribute. It's a celebration.

The Village of Baytowne Wharf October Events!

Wednesday Night Concert Series

Wednesdays, Oct. 8-29 | 7-9 p.m. | FREE!

This fall, sit back and relax and enjoy live entertainment. The concert series will feature local and regional talent from a variety of genres. Live music concert begins at 7 p.m. on the Events Plaza Stage.

October 8: Jarred McConnell and The High Aces

October 15: Six Piece Suits

October 22: Modern Eldorado's

October 29: Forrest Williams Band

Bubbly Baytowne

Thursday, Oct. 16 | 5-7 p.m. | FREE!

Bubbly Baytowne is back! Who's ready to sip and shop

through The Village streets? Join Baytowne for an evening full of free champagne and shopping during Bubbly Baytowne. Check in by the fountain to receive your complimentary Baytowne Wharf glass and a map outlining specific merchants to visit starting at 5 p.m.

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

Trick or Treat Street

Thursday, Oct. 31 | 6-8 p.m. | Fireworks 8 p.m. | FREE!

Calling all ghouls, ghosts and goblins to the Village of Baytowne Wharf for a spooktacular extravaganza! This Halloween, trick or treat through the Village streets and visit merchants for your favorite treat. Steve Hall will play frighteningly good tunes on the main stage. Enjoy crafts and balloon animals. Be sure to stop by Coconut Kidz to enter the costume contest and compete to win the grand prize! End the night with a spooky fireworks display at 8 p.m.

Beach TV LIVE!

LIVE from The Village of Baytowne Wharf every day! Tune into Beach TV to watch what's going on in The Village of Baytowne Wharf!

 Community

A Beacon of Hope: Crossroads Center Expands with Spiritual Health and Wellness Building

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

On Tuesday, August 26th, 2025, Crossroads Center celebrated breaking ground for its new Spiritual Health and Wellness building. Cindy Bray summarizes what defines their growth.

"I may be the Executive Director, but really, Crossroads directs me."

Since 2007, Crossroads Cen-

ter has served our community faithfully, not only through the mission to provide spiritual, medical, and dental care through God's love, but in the unwavering dedication of its Board of Directors, administration, medical providers, counselors and volunteers. Cindy recalls how Crossroads got started.

"In 2005, a mobile dental ministry visited the area, orga-

nized by Dr. Herschel Adams, a pastor who has since passed. At that time, he knew he had availability for approximately 70 appointments. On the day he arrived, however, close to 200 people were there, hoping for help.

Knowing he didn't have enough appointments, he had to tell over a hundred people that they would not receive care that day, and it broke his heart."

Dr. Adams, acknowledging the need and determined not to ignore the call, spent the next two years partnering with medical and law professionals, business entities, churches and individuals who wanted to serve their communities.

Since Crossroads opened in 2007, they have served Okaloosa and Walton counties in a way that acknowledges all the different aspects of what it takes to truly feel well – having your medical, emotional, and spiritual needs met with compassionate care.

Three branches make up Crossroads' primary services, free of charge to qualifying patients: medical, dental, and counseling. First, the medical team addresses primary and



preventative care with a focus on the management of chronic disease and medication assistance. Select specialists are also available onsite and through referrals. Next, area dentists donate their time to administer initial and comprehensive exams, cleanings, and panoramic x-rays, as well as fillings and extractions. Finally, counselors and life coaches provide Christian counseling while offering spiritual, emotional, and mental health resources. While all these are available, the patient gets to decide what they need.

It is this last branch that will be most impacted by the new building and the rooms that it will provide.

"Crossroads Center is our name because we don't just care for physical needs. In 2022, we started our counseling services. We knew that for our patients to truly move toward healing, mental health and counseling

had to be addressed. Sometimes people just need some encouragement. We currently have a licensed clinical social worker who helps our patients connect to resources, and we also have a patient liaison who is a life coach. She is a big encourager and recently helped five people gain employment. That really is our goal – keep people working and participating in their lives."

The new expansion will offer rooms with more privacy and soundproofing for counseling sessions as well as spaces to meet and conduct classes for diabetes education, nutrition, and possibly cooking classes.

"We want to equip people to make better choices and know what to do with what they learn."

Crossroads' efforts not only serve the individual, but Okaloosa and Walton counties as a whole:

- With a more robust and active population, working citizens benefit the economy.

- Ongoing care provided for their patients lessens traffic in emergency rooms.

- When patients without insurance are unable to pay the high cost of medical care, places like Crossroads help keep local healthcare costs down for everyone.

Non-profit organizations like Crossroads Center are invaluable for a flourishing community and mental health is a key component. With the Spiritual Health and Wellness building projected to open by June 2026, the center will continue to be a beacon of hope for years to come.

You can support Crossroads Center's mission through a direct donation or by volunteering, especially as a medical, dental, or mental health professional. To learn more about their current needs, or to see if you qualify to be a new patient, go to www.crossroadscenter.org.

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from Mardi Gras to Mardi Great!

CITY OF DESTIN
MARDI GRAS
OPEN HOUSE



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Post-Acute Care for Seniors: The Critical Bridge After a Hospital Stay

TERESA HALVERSON, DIR. OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The autumn season, with its rich colors and comforting traditions, offers a wonderful opportunity to enhance the post-acute care and rehabilitation experience. The landscape of post-acute senior care is rapidly evolving, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach toward personalized, technology-driven, and holistic models. As the senior population grows in our area, innovative ideas are being implemented to improve outcomes, enhance quality of life and address the complex needs of patients transitioning from acute care settings like hospitals.

Post-acute care (PAC) refers to a range of medical and supportive services provided to patients, particularly seniors, who are discharged from an acute care hospital, but aren't yet ready to return home and live independently. Following an illness, surgery or injury, a hospital stay can often be destabilizing for older adults, leading to a decline in their physical and mental functioning. PAC serves as

a critical transition to promote functional recovery, maximize independence and prevent unnecessary hospital readmissions. For seniors transitioning out of the hospital, whether to a PAC (Post Acute Care) facility or directly home, preparation and proactive management are vital for a successful recovery.

Benefits and Challenges for Older Adults

Benefits of Post-Acute Care in a Skilled Nursing and Rehab Facility:

Increased Independence: The primary goal is to help seniors regain strength and functional abilities (like walking, dressing, and eating) to become more self-sufficient.

Reduced Readmissions: Close monitoring and ongoing medical support help to identify and address potential complications early, which significantly lowers the risk of the patient returning to the hospital within 30 days.

Access to Specialized Care: Patients receive care from a multidisciplinary team, including specialized 24/7 nursing

care (i.e. wound care, IV therapy, medication management), physical therapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physicians who focus specifically on recovery. The goal is for the patient to regain strength and function and safely return home.

Understand the Discharge Plan: Meet with the hospital's discharge planner or case manager as early as possible. Get written clear instructions on all new or changed medications, wound care, activity restrictions, and signs of complications to watch for.

Complexity of Discharge Planning: The process of choosing the right setting, understanding insurance coverage, and coordinating care can be confusing and stressful. Carefully review what all post-acute hospital providers offer. It is your right to choose where you would like to go for post-hospital care. Make an informed choice.

Insurance for Post-Acute Care: Insurance coverage for this type of care is particularly through regular Medicare.

General overview of Medi-

care coverage for key post-acute care settings:

1. Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Care Insurance Coverage

Coverage: Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) covers skilled nursing care on a short-term basis for rehabilitation or skilled medical care.

Conditions for Coverage:

- You must have a qualifying inpatient hospital stay of at least three consecutive days (not counting the day of discharge).
- You must enter the SNF generally within 30 days of leaving the hospital.
- A doctor must certify that you need daily skilled nursing or rehabilitation services.
- The facility must be Medicare-certified.

Costs (in one benefit period):

Days 1-20: You pay \$0 for covered services (after meeting the Part A deductible for the hospital stay).

Days 21-100: You pay a daily coinsurance amount (which changes annually).

Days 101 and beyond: You

pay all costs.

Limitation: Coverage is limited to 100 days per benefit period and ends sooner if you no longer require skilled care. Medicare generally does not cover long-term or custodial care in a nursing home.

Medicare Advantage (Part C) Plans: These private plans must cover at least the same post-acute care benefits as original Medicare, but they may have different cost-sharing (copayments/deductibles) and may require you to use specific in-network providers. We often see a patient who has a MA (Part C) plan and still think they have regular Medicare. Be sure to check your plan as not all post-acute providers are in network or accept Part C plans. Part C Plans (MA) require an authorization by your insurance company and your care is monitored by a caseworker at the insurance agency.

Medicare Supplement (Medigap) Plans: These plans work with Original Medicare and can help pay for out-of-

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 Community



Mayor Bobby Wagner and
PIO Tamara Young, PhD

By TAMARA L. YOUNG, PhD,
PUBLIC INFORMATION DIRECTOR
AND MAYOR BOBBY WAGNER

TY: We have our annual Open House coming up on Wednesday, October 22nd from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. It's such a great way to say thanks to our community members with a free fish fry lunch and live music and of course answer any questions about projects and work being conducted. Everyone is invited! What would you like our residents to know you're thankful to them for?

BW: I'm thankful every day for the trust and patience of our

residents. Whether it's navigating construction, showing up to a town hall, or volunteering to clean up our harbor, the people of Destin are what make this community thrive. You don't just live here, you invest in our future by caring, engaging, and speaking up.

TY: Each year we choose a different theme for the Open House. This year's is Mardi Gras, so expect a lot of purple, green and gold at the Community Center! The dessert is decadent, too, with three tiers of Mardi Gras madness.

BW: That sounds like a celebration fit for Destin! Mardi Gras is about joy, tradition, and community, three things we

have in abundance here. Destin has always gathered around food and fun, from the old Destin Days festivals to the Fishing Rodeo that began in 1948. Our Open House carries on that same tradition of neighbors coming together to celebrate home.

TY: One of my favorite parts of the Open House is watching residents move around the gymnasium and talk with different City departments as well as our partners in the community, such as OCSO, DWU, WM, Destin Fire, and the Chamber. Anything you'd like to say about our partners?

BW: Our partners are essential. The City cannot de-

liver on its goals alone. From law enforcement to utilities, waste management to fire rescue, to our Chamber driving business strength, we are part of a team that works every day to keep Destin safe, clean, and thriving. Collaboration always beats competition, and Destin is proof that a rising tide lifts all boats. I am grateful for the way our partners show up for our residents, often behind the scenes, making sure life here runs smoothly.

TY: The Open House is held every October during Florida City Week. The idea is for cities to celebrate, showcase, and engage citizens in the work of municipal government. It's run through the Florida League of

Cities, which you've been heavily involved with.

BW: Florida City Week is a reminder that the best form of government is the one closest to the people. That is where trust is built, where accountability is clearest, and where neighbors can shape their own future. The Florida League of Cities champions this style of democracy, and it matches my personal vision for Destin. I believe that when decisions are made at the local level, they are not only more responsive, they are more effective. Events like our Destin Open House give our citizens the opportunity to be hands-on in our community, all while enjoying a fish fry that has been a tradition for decades.

"Reel Talk" from the City of Destin

City Open House: From Good to Mardi Gras Great!



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Debunking the Top 5 Misconceptions About Acupuncture



BY DR. LISA FORSYTHE

Despite being practiced for thousands of years, acupuncture remains one of the most



misunderstood healing modalities in modern medicine. As a licensed acupuncturist with a background in both Eastern medicine and neuro-acupuncture, I've seen how powerful this therapy can be—not just for pain relief, but for whole-body wellness. I've also heard just about every myth and misconception along the way.

Let's set the record straight.

Misconception #1:
"Acupuncture is painful."

This is the most common fear I hear, and it's almost always followed by surprise once someone finally tries it. Acupuncture needles are extremely thin—about the width of a human hair—and nothing like the hypodermic needles used for injections. Most people feel little to no discomfort when the needles are inserted. In fact, many feel deeply relaxed or even fall asleep during treatment.

Truth: Acupuncture is typically a calming, restorative experience. Some patients feel a light tingling or warmth, which is simply the body responding to the stimulation.

Misconception #2: "It's only for pain relief."

While acupuncture is well known for its ability to reduce pain—including back pain, arthritis, and migraines—its applications go far beyond that. I regularly treat patients for anxiety, insomnia, digestive issues, hormonal imbalances, immune support, and even neurological conditions like stroke recovery and PTSD.

Truth: Acupuncture works by regulating the nervous system, improving circulation, and restoring balance to the body's

internal systems. That's why it benefits both physical and emotional health.

Misconception #3:
"There's no science behind it."

This one couldn't be further from the truth. Over the past several decades, research on acupuncture has exploded. Studies have shown that acupuncture influences the brain, nervous system, and endocrine function. It can reduce inflammation, release endorphins (your body's natural painkillers) and modulate the immune response.

Major institutions like Johns Hopkins, Cleveland Clinic, and Mayo Clinic now offer acupuncture as part of integrative treatment programs for chronic pain, cancer support, fertility and more.

Truth: Acupuncture is backed by evidence-based research and is increasingly integrated into mainstream health-care systems.

Misconception #4: "It's not safe for kids, older adults, or people with medical conditions."

Acupuncture is one of the

safest medical therapies when performed by a licensed practitioner. At the Tortoise Clinic, I treat patients of all ages—from kids with anxiety or ADHD to seniors with arthritis or stroke recovery needs. We tailor every

treatment to the individual's age, condition, and comfort level.

Truth: Acupuncture is gentle and can be adapted for almost anyone, including those who are medically fragile or on multiple medications.

Misconception #5: "If I don't feel better after one session, it didn't work."

This is where the tortoise—yes, like our clinic's namesake—

Continued on page 18

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Pure & Couture Salon

Want your best game-day look? Or a touch of fall flair? Pure & Couture's certified IBE stylists specialize in prettied-up ponytails, braids, and invisible beaded extensions to add volume and length. "Adjusting to your needs and comfort with versatile styling options is our focus," says owner Adrienne Brackett. Fall hues are trending—think bronzed curls, rich reds, chocolate melts, blonde beachy bobs, even caramel swirls. Or add Balayage highlights for soft dimension or a bold new style. Pure & Couture also offers airbrush makeup, lash extensions, blowouts, spray tanning, and full hair services from cuts and trims to root touch-ups and corrective color. Don't forget gift cards, beauty products, curbside pick-up, and online ordering.

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Want the secrets top sellers use to maximize profits? REALTOR® Brian K. Locicero reveals them all in his new 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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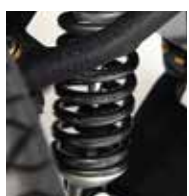
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Fill It and Fix It: How Immigration Changes Could Affect the Real Area Estate Market



By PAUL DOMENECH

In 2024, Florida’s increased immigration enforcement has already reshaped housing landscapes in Miami and Central Florida. Now, in just the last month, these changes are reaching Okaloosa and Walton County. The “fill it and fix it”

idea is straightforward: as workers who fill crucial labor roles are removed, rental units open up, and landlords may choose to sell.

Many of these individuals have long been the backbone of the local labor force, taking on jobs that others often avoid. They keep things running and, importantly, they fill many rental homes. Now that enforcement is affecting Okaloosa and Walton County, we’re starting to see vacancies rise. Landlords with empty rentals might decide it’s time to sell, adding more inventory to a market that’s already got its share of listings.

For buyers, this shift means a real opportunity. More homes on the market can translate into better chances to find a property, fix it up and make it your own. But it’s not just about buying, if you’re a seller, this is a crucial

moment to work with an agent who truly understands our local market dynamics. With the right guidance, you can stay ahead of the curve and position your property strategically to get the best possible outcome.

In short, what started in Miami and Central Florida is now at our doorstep. Whether you’re looking to buy a home in this new wave of inventory or sell your property before the market shifts further, now is the time to act. Connect with an experienced agent who can help you navigate these changes and understand the opportunities in Okaloosa and Walton County.

With both buying and selling in mind, having the right guidance can make all the difference. We are here to help you stay ahead of the curve and turn these evolving circumstances into your advantage, whether



that means finding your next home or successfully selling your current property, we are ready to advise and serve our community.

Check us out at Thedomenechgroup.com, contact me directly at 850-543-1418 or Paul@thedomenechgroup.com or contact your trusted real estate advisor.

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Mommy Makeovers:

What They Are and When to Consider One



BY DR. CLARK, BLUEWATER
PLASTIC SURGERY

Motherhood is an extraordinary journey — one filled with love, transformation and growth. However, the physical changes that occur during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding can leave many women feeling disconnected from their pre-pregnancy bodies. At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we often hear from women who say, “I love being a mom, but I just don’t feel like myself anymore.” For those looking to restore confidence and feel comfortable in their skin again, a customized Mommy Makeover may be the solution.

What Is a Mommy Makeover?

A “Mommy Makeover” isn’t a single procedure, but rather a personalized combination of surgeries designed to address the areas most commonly affected by pregnancy and childbirth. The most common procedures include:

- **Tummy tuck (abdominoplasty)** to remove excess skin and tighten weakened abdominal muscles.
- **Breast augmentation, lift, or reduction**, depending on how the breasts have changed post-pregnancy.
- **Liposuction** to sculpt and remove stubborn pockets of fat that diet and exercise alone can’t address.

These procedures are usually performed in a single surgical session, which minimizes recovery time compared to spacing them out over months. The goal is not to “snap back” to a previous version of yourself, but to help you feel empowered, confident, and at ease in your own body.

Is It Right for You?

- Ideal candidates for a Mommy Makeover are women who:
- Are finished having children (future pregnancies can impact the surgical results).
 - Are close to their target weight and committed to a healthy lifestyle.
 - Have completed breastfeeding for at least six months.
 - Are in good overall health with realistic expectations about results and recovery.

A Mommy Makeover is not about perfection — it’s about feeling more like you again. Whether it’s restoring volume to your breasts, regaining core strength, or simply being able to wear clothing comfortably, these changes can be deeply meaningful.



What to Expect

Recovery varies depending on the combination of procedures, but most women take about two weeks off work and gradually resume normal activities over 4–6 weeks. While the initial results are visible fairly quickly, final results continue to refine over the following months as swelling subsides and the body heals.

At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, we take a thoughtful, individualized approach. During your consultation, we’ll discuss your goals, medical history, and any concerns. Together, we’ll build a safe, strategic plan that supports your vision and lifestyle.

Ready to Feel Like Yourself Again?

You’ve given so much of yourself to your family. If now feels like the right time to reclaim a part of yourself, we’re here to help. A Mommy Makeover can be a powerful act of self-care — one that’s deeply personal and uniquely tailored to you.

To schedule a private consultation and explore your options,

contact Bluewater Plastic Surgery today. As a board-certified plastic surgeon, my practice is dedicated to cosmetic surgery, and I have performed thousands of procedures over the

past 25 years. My priority has always been patient safety and achieving superior cosmetic results. I believe the best measure of success comes from my patients themselves—with more

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 Community

How to Make Enrollment in Medicare Smooth and Easy



By GREG DURETTE, FLORIDA
HEALTH CONNECTOR

As with most big transitions/life elections, normalcy tends to fade and turmoil prevails. Medicare enrollment, while a big adjustment on many levels, can be relatively simple and painless—once you know how!

Most people looking to learn more about Medicare and their enrollment options could visit a local office, attend a seminar or sit down in the comfort of their home with a qualified, licensed agent among the many available avenues. This process could take several visits to become comfortable with the available choices, and it should. Even Joe Namath (not a qualified, licensed agent by the way!) would be hard

pressed to help a person feel knowledgeable and comfortable with just one phone call, despite claims to the contrary.

Well, even with those in person options available, most folks like to do a little research on their own in advance of taking any additional steps. This makes sense since the questions you have for you are far more important than what your friends and family tell what you should be thinking. Keep in mind they bring only their perspective to the conversation and likely don't know the details that make up the intimate considerations you are facing.

So, what are your options to gather the information you need to make sure you are making the right choices to make your enrollment happen as smoothly as possible?

The first step is getting in touch with someone qualified to provide you with information for your specific needs. As you approach age 65, you get bombarded with email, regular mail, TV ads and phone calls and then every Annual Election Period (October 15 – December 7) thereafter. That type of infor-

mation overload typically helps no one figure things out and, as I have been told on many occasions, tends to make things even more confusing. When it comes to Medicare, quality, individualized information trumps volume of information every time.

Let's get started on the right foot. The first thing you will need to do is apply for your Medicare Parts A & B. There are a number of issues surrounding this first step so again, it would be wise to seek out a qualified, licensed person to guide you. Also, it is best to begin this process right when you are first eligible which for most, is 3 months prior to the month in which you will turn 65.

While waiting for your Medicare card to be issued (sometimes up to 6-8 weeks), you will have the perfect opportunity to explore your other options. Those options range from (but are not limited to) simply sticking with Original Medicare (Parts A & B only) plus getting a Stand-Alone Prescription Plan (Part D) to avoid unintended, lifelong penalties or choosing between an Advantage Plan or a Supplement Plan. Each comes

with its own benefits and potential issues/considerations.

It seems like a lot because it is. However, if you take the time and are able to ignore the constant din of your telephone ringing and mailbox being stuffed, you will eventually come to understand the best choice for you and your specific set of needs.

Fast forward where you have your Medicare card in hand and have decided on the best plan choice for you. Congratulations! There is only one last step to take—actually getting enrolled. With so many enrollment options available, what is a person to do?

You can relax in knowing many insurance companies have implemented multiple options to help get you enrolled in a timely manner. The two most popular being an in-person sit down with a licensed, trained professional or telephone call to your local representative. You can meet at an office or sit back in the comfort of your own home and rest assured all will be taken care of quickly and professionally.

Some, not all, insurance agents/brokers will be able to offer you the options of not just different insurance companies from which to choose but also, help you understand the costs

and benefits of both Advantage plans and Supplement plans.

The differences can be dramatic and will have a tremendous impact on your healthcare and the ability to choose the doctors and hospitals of your choice—not to mention out of pocket costs.

Following these tips will help alleviate much of the hectic stress this major transition/continuation often causes.

As a side note, you can use this process to help eliminate the stress of comparing your existing plan to another as well as oftentimes, most companies/plans change their benefits and/or costs every year. This upcoming year looks to be a doozie!

The ability to review and make changes to your previous choices is an extremely powerful tool you have at your disposal, so long as you know how and when to use it.

Boom! Welcome to stress-free Medicare enrollment.

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

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ACUPUNCTURE

continued from page 13

has it right: healing takes time. Acupuncture is a cumulative therapy, meaning each session builds on the last. Some people feel immediate relief, but for most, noticeable improvements happen gradually over several treatments.

Truth: Consistency is key. Like exercise or nutrition, the effects of acupuncture are most powerful when practiced regularly.

So, Why Choose Acupuncture?

Acupuncture invites your body to do what it's designed to do: heal. Whether you're dealing with chronic illness, stress, fatigue, hormonal imbalance, or recovery from injury or trauma, acupuncture offers a safe, natural, and effective way to reset your system and restore balance. It's not about masking symp-

toms—it's about treating the root cause, gently and holistically.

Experience the Difference at The Tortoise Clinic

As the only Neuro-Acupuncture specialist within 300 miles of Santa Rosa Beach, I offer advanced treatments that blend classical Chinese medicine with cutting-edge neuroscience to support complex neurological conditions. And as a team, we're committed to delivering integrative, personalized care that truly listens to your story and your goals.

Curious about how acupuncture could support your health? Schedule your consultation today at TortoiseClinic.com or give us a call at 850.267.5611 and mention this article to receive \$30 off as a new patient.

At the Tortoise Clinic, healing is not a race—it's a journey. Let's walk it together.

Florida Approves \$83.3M Purchase to Expand Destin Beach Access

Florida's Cabinet, chaired by Gov. Ron DeSantis, has approved an \$83.3 million purchase of 4 acres on Destin Harbor to expand Norriego Point Beach Access and Park and block future high-density development. The Sept. 30 decision marks one of the most expensive land acquisitions in state history, aimed at both conservation and public recreation.

According to the Cabinet staff report, the newly acquired land directly abuts Norriego Point and will connect the park



to Gulf Shore Drive. While currently zoned for high-density residential use, the purchase

preserves the site for public access and prevents construction of up to 80 luxury condominiums.

Once incorporated, the park will total nearly 16 acres and include over 100 parking spaces along with new opportunities for boating, fishing, and swimming. Okaloosa County will manage the property in partnership with the City of Destin and has discussed contributing up to \$5 million toward development. The seller, Pointe Mezzanine

LLC and Pointe Resort LLC, is controlled by Louisiana businessman Robert Guidry, who purchased the parcels in 2016–17 for roughly \$8 million. The state's official purchase price of \$83,326,520 (about \$20.83 million per acre) is consistent with recent appraisals authorized by the Legislature.

Though Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia expressed concerns about the cost, he ultimately joined other Cabinet members in approving the acquisition as part of a bundled

land-deals package. Local leaders applauded the decision, calling it a direct response to public demand for more beach access and parking.

"This is a tremendous asset," said Okaloosa County Commission Chairman Paul Mixon. "The state has answered that for us."

Next steps: Okaloosa County will coordinate with the state on operations, capital projects, and rule enforcement, while assuming the docking facility lease to operate a new public marina.

Destin's Memorial Reef Stands Apart

Communities around the world have launched a range of memorials to honor Charlie Kirk, from statues on campuses to proposed coins and street-renaming efforts. In Florida, plans are underway to erect statues of Kirk on public grounds. In Utah, a fundraising campaign is underway to establish a memo-

rial on the Utah Valley University campus, where he was fatally shot. Meanwhile, efforts to erect a Kirk statue in the U.S. Capitol have also emerged, backed by members of Congress.

NFL teams across the country have observed moments of silence before games to mark his passing, while vigils, candlelight

services and campus gatherings have also become common.

These memorials share one common trait: they are static, symbolic structures on land. Destin's approach, by contrast, aims to be dynamic and life-giving.

A Charlie Kirk Memorial Reef will be constructed at Walter Marine in Orange Beach, Ala., and later deployed about two miles off Henderson Beach. Construction is scheduled to begin Oct. 14 — Kirk's birthday

— and local organizers are raising \$17,000 to fund materials, engineering and deployment.

When completed, the reef will stand 15 to 18 feet tall and weigh over 15 tons, making it far larger than typical memorial reefs, which often reach only around 8 feet in height. It will be inscribed with Kirk's name, the Turning Point USA logo and additional dedications.

Led by Capt. Mike Parker—founder of the Destin High School fishing class who

launched the memorial reef idea—the project seeks to honor Kirk in a distinctly local, aquatic way. The reef will not only commemorate his life, but also serve as a functional marine structure, enhancing habitat and biodiversity.

By combining ecological value with remembrance, the Destin reef stands apart from more conventional memorials — a submerged monument intended to live and grow, not merely to be viewed.

A Superior Mechanical Launches Hometown Heroes Comfort Club

A Superior Mechanical, a trusted veteran-owned HVAC company serving Bay County for 23 years, has announced the launch of its new Hometown Heroes Comfort Club, a special membership program providing peace of mind and savings on HVAC services. In a show of appreciation for our community's hometown heroes in Bay, Walton and Okaloosa Counties including first responders, veterans and active military, teachers, doctors and nurses, A Superior Mechanical is offering free Comfort Club membership to these individuals. All other residents can join the club for just \$99 per year.

Membership Benefits Include:

- No trip charge during normal business hours for one full year.
- No overtime fees after

hours or on holidays for one full year.

- Priority scheduling and peace of mind during emergencies.
- 5% off new installations; 10% off repairs and IAQ products.
- Exclusive access to promotions and discounts.

"We want everyone to have affordable, reliable comfort in their homes, and peace of mind that comes knowing their equipment is working well," says Jimmy Thorpe, owner of A Superior Mechanical. "Our community's heroes pour into local residents on a daily basis, keeping them safe, healthy, and well educated. This is our way of giving back to them."

Residents can sign up or learn more by visiting ASuperiorMechanical.com or calling (850) 258-3225.

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Clean Finish: 5 Small Goals to End the Year Feeling Proud



BY DANICA LAFAIRE, OWNER,
FISH WINDOW CLEANING

Hey there!

As the slightly cooler fall air moves in and the holiday season twinkles on the horizon, it's so easy to feel that end-of-year rush. We get so wrapped up in the busy schedules and the growing to-do lists, don't we?

But what if we could shift our focus? What if we saw these next few months not as a sprint to the finish line, but as a golden opportunity to reflect, reset and celebrate some awesome per-

sonal wins?

I've always believed that clarity is a game-changer—in business and in life! Just like a clear window lets in more sunshine and helps you see the world more brightly, a clear, intentional plan for the rest of the year can help you finish strong and truly enjoy all the magic of the season.

So, as a fellow business owner and neighbor who absolutely loves seeing people win, I want

to share five simple goals you can set to feel proud of yourself when the year ends.

1. Celebrate a Friend or Mentor

It's easy to get so focused on our own goals that we forget to celebrate the incredible people around us. I want to encourage you to think of a friend or mentor who has had a great year, reached a personal milestone, or simply been a positive influence in your life. Take a moment to reach out and genuinely celebrate them! This isn't about giving a big gift; a simple phone call, a heartfelt text or even a handwritten note can make their day. The act of cheering on someone you care about can bring you just as much joy and fulfillment as their success brings them.

2. Tackle That One Lingering Task

You know the one I'm talking about, right? That one personal project or chore that's been hanging around on your mental to-do list forever. It's like a foggy window pane—it just clutters your view and takes up space in your head. Well, this month, let's get it done! Whether it's organizing that one messy closet, finally framing those favorite photos, or deep-cleaning the garage, getting it done will give you a powerful boost of energy and confidence. Trust me, the sense of accomplishment is incredible.

3. Take Time for a "Highlights Reel"

Before you get swept up in the holiday hustle, set aside just an hour to reflect on your year. This isn't about focusing on what you didn't get to. Instead, let's create a personal "highlights reel" of your wins, no matter how small! Did you learn a new skill? Read some great books? Make a meaning-

ful connection? Overcome a challenge you didn't think you could? Write these things down! This simple act of celebrating yourself will help you see just how far you've come.

4. Prioritize Your Health in a Small Way

The end of the year often brings busy schedules and plenty of temptation, and it's easy to put our well-being on the back burner. So, instead of waiting for a New Year's resolution, let's set a small, achievable health goal now! It could be as simple as adding an extra glass of water each day, taking a 15-minute walk along the beach or making one healthy meal a week. These tiny, consistent habits will build up and leave you feeling more energized and ready to enjoy all the holiday festivities.

5. Protect Your Rest

Here's a big one: the holidays are not just for busy social events; they are for resting, recharging, and spending time with the people you love. You deserve a break! Make it a point to schedule your time off and commit to it. Taking a break isn't a luxury; it's essential for avoiding burnout. A well-rested mind is more productive, more creative, and ready for whatever comes next. By planning for rest now, you'll be stepping into the new year feeling refreshed and ready to take on new opportunities.

By focusing on these five goals, you can navigate the end of the year with purpose and pride. This isn't just about crossing things off a list; it's about building a strong foundation for continued success and a mindset of confidence.

As we finish this year strong, may your windows be clear, your goals achievable and your heart full.

-Stay Safe, Danica



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From Turf to Treasures: The Locals' One-Stop Shop for Premium Outdoor Living

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

The Shop at Baldwin Turf has quickly established itself as the go-to for everything outdoor entertainment and patio/garden décor for Niceville and beyond. Owner Jenny Herndon has nearly a decade of experience in fashion merchandising and sales, and Wynn, her mother, has a passion for outdoor living spaces that is evident throughout the aesthetics and environment at The Shop.

The Shop is an extension of the Baldwin Turf, a full-service lawn care and landscaping company that has been providing quality and reliable service for residential and commercial customers since 2002.

Herndon was born and raised in Niceville and spent eight years in New York after graduating from Florida State University. She returned to the area in August 2023. Her mom always dreamed of opening a store, and with Jenny's brother Matt and sister Leigh Anna managing the company's landscaping operations, it is a true blue (green?) family business. "We work together on all of the buying and curating," says Jenny. "Mom has the best eye for all things design."

"We had a vision to enhance Baldwin Turf's offerings to include outdoor products including planters, water features, furniture and décor. We saw an opportunity to offer quality services and products in Niceville. With my mom's dream to open a store and my experience in wholesale sales, we decided to go for it."

"You won't find the level of local expertise, personalized service and commitment to quality at the big box stores," Herndon says. She adds that you'll find "quality, unique and specially curated items for your home and garden, plus a friendly staff and a lovely, enjoyable shopping experience."

Herndon is excited about the fall-themed items available at The Shop. "Mums, marigolds, zinnias and fall plants are coming in gradually, as well as our POP colored pine straw," she says, the latter from the Santa Rosa Beach-based landscape company. "We have a variety of



seasonal outdoor décor, pumpkins and fun gift items sure to transition your home into the fall beautifully."

As The Shop's owner, no two days are ever the same for Herndon. "Some days include visiting clients at their homes, merchandising and working with customers in The Shop, delivering furniture or installing planters," she says. "Some days include more paperwork and assessing the products we will be

bringing in and when." Coming from a sales background, Herndon says that her favorite thing to do is work the sales floor and engage with her customers.

Herndon says The Shop brings "a unique and special shopping experience where you are guaranteed to find something you may have never seen before" to the community.

The Shop and its owner are also happy to give back. "We have hosted charity events for

Chamber of Commerce and loves to host chamber events.

The Shop at Baldwin Turf is located at 739 John Sims Parkway in Niceville. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. Call 850.842.2221 or visit baldwinturf-niceville.com/the-shop to find out more. Also, follow them on Instagram and Facebook for new products and exciting events @baldwinturf.



Guardian ad Litem, the Taylor Haugen Foundation and the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation," says Herndon. She serves as a board member for the Niceville



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Game On!



By SCOTT MILLER

Football season is here—Check out the local top spots to eat, cheer and high-five your way through the games.

October is an early benchmark month in the college football world. We have a sense of where our beloved teams stand and, yet, we still aren't really quite sure just how the rest of the season will play out. So, let's take a look at the AP rankings as of today (October, 1st). Who might be overrated, who may be getting overlooked? It's a dance we do every year. When I look at the top 20 today, I can't help but to feel for a handful of teams. Missouri is a prime example. They are 5-0 yet they

have barely cracked the top 20 sitting at #19. Georgia Tech, too, 5-0 gets them the lofty rank of #17. Vanderbilt, same thing, 5-0 ranked #16. These teams need to dig in, stay focused and keep winning if they ever expect to get to the promised land. Then there's the perennial powerhouses; teams with their lofty positions in the rankings, although already having suffered a loss this year. Penn State, Texas, Alabama, Georgia and LSU to name a few, and yet they sit somewhere between #7 and #13. With the expanded playoff system we have in place now, it's still anyone's ballgame, at least for another month or so. As diehard football fans, we don't give up on our team. We fight with them, cheer for them and watch every weekend hopeful that maybe this year is our year. It's exhilarating to say the least.

And here along the Emerald Coast, we are truly blessed. Some of the best sports bars and restaurants anywhere are ready to welcome us in, serve up 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!

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

For over 40 years, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hang out known for fresh oysters and cold beer has grown into one of the most iconic "hot spots" on the Destin Harbor. From its humble

beginning shucking oysters off the deck behind a small trailer on the Destin Harbor, it has grown to four locations along our Emerald Coast, serving fresh seafood, live music and exciting water activities in the Destin area. Attention all diehard 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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Austons on 98

Offering an amazing raw oyster bar and the best happy hour in town, Austons is the place to be and home of the 102-foot bar, including 32 beers on draft! Some of the specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail. With big screen TVs all around and football season upon us, there's no bad seat in the house. So, come by and watch the games all season long. Happy Hour daily from 3-6 p.m., \$2 off all bar drinks. Bucket Specials all day every day. Monday-Friday from 3 p.m. - 5 p.m. \$3 off a

Continued on page 25

AJ's

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MENUS AT EACH LOCATION

DRINK

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SEC Football Schedule

SEC	Aug 30	Sept 6	Sept 13	Sept 20	Sept 27	Oct 4	Oct 11	Oct 18	Oct 25	Nov 1	Nov 8	Nov 15	Nov 22	Nov 29
BAMA	@ FSU	UL-Monroe	Wisconsin	Open	@ UGA	VANDY	@ MIZZ	TENN	@ SCAR	Open	LSU	OKLA	Eastern Illinois	@ AUB
ARK	ALA A&M	ARK State	@ OLE MISS	@ Memphis	Notre Dame	Open	@ TENN	TEXAS A&M	AUB	MISS ST	Open	@ LSU	@ TEXAS	MIZZ
AUBURN	@ Baylor	Ball State	South ALA	@ OKLA	@TEXAS A&M	Open	UGA	MIZZ	@ ARK	UK	@ VANDY	Open	Mercer	BAMA
FLA	Long Island	South FLA	@ LSU	@ Miami	Open	TEXAS	@TEXAS A&M	MISS ST	Open	vs UGA	@ UK	@ OLE MISS	TENN	FSU
UGA	Marshall	Austin Peay	@ TENN	Open	BAMA	UK	@ AUB	OLE MISS	Open	vs FLA	@ MISS ST	TEXAS	Charlotte	GA Tech
UK	Toledo	OLE MISS	Eastern Mich	Open	@ S CAR	@ UGA	Open	TEXAS	TENN	@ AUB	FLA	TENN Tech	@ VANDY	@ Louisville
LSU	@ Clemson	Louisiana Tech	FLA	So. Louisiana	@ OLE MISS	Open	S CAR	@ VANDY	TEXAS A&M	Open	@ BAMA	ARK	Western UK	@ OKLA
MISS ST	@ So Miss	Arizona State	Alcorn State	Northern Illinois	TENN	@TEXAS A&M	Open	@ FLA	TEXAS	@ ARK	UGA	@ MIZZ	Open	OLE MISS
MIZZ	Central ARK	Kansas	Louisiana	S CAR	U Mass	Open	BAMA	@ AUB	@ VANDY	Open	TEXAS A&M	MISS ST	@ OKLA	@ ARK
OLE MISS	UGA State	@ UK	ARK	Tulane	LSU	Open	Washington St	@ UGA	@ OKLA	SCAR	The Citadel	FLA	Open	@ MISS ST
OKLA	Illinois State	Michigan	@ Temple	AUB	Open	Kent State	TEXAS	@ S CAR	OLE MISS	@ TENN	Open	@ BAMA	MIZZ	LSU
S CAR	Virginia Tech	S CAR St	VANDY	@ MIZZ	UK	Open	@ LSU	OKLA	BAMA	@ OLE MISS	Open	@TEXAS A&M	Coastal Car	Clemson
TENN	Syracuse	East TENN St	UGA	UAB	@ MISS ST	Open	ARK	@ BAMA	@ UK	OKLA	Open	New Mexico St	@ FLA	VANDY
TEXAS	@ Ohio State	San Jose State	UTEP	Open	Sam Houston	@ FLA	vs OKLA	@ UK	@ MISS ST	VANDY	Open	@ UGA	ARK	TEXAS A&M
Texas A&M	UTSA	Utah State	@ Notre Dame	Open	AUB	MISS ST	FLA	@ ARK	@ LSU	Open	@ MIZZ	S CAR	Samford	@ TEXAS
VANDY	Charleston So	@Virginia Tech	@ S CAR	GA State	Utah State	@ BAMA	Open	LSU	MIZZ	@ TEXAS	AUB	Open	UK	@ TENN

ACC Football Schedule

ACC	Aug 30	Sept 6	Sept 13	Sept 20	Sept 27	Oct 4	Oct 11	Oct 18	Oct 25	Nov 1	Nov 8	Nov 15	Nov 22	Nov 29
Boston College	Fordham	@ Michigan State	@ Stanford	Open	California	@ Pitt	Clemson	UConn	@ Louisville	Notre Dame	SMU	Georgia Tech	Open	@ Syracuse
California	@ Oregon State	Texas Southern	Minnesota	@ San Diego State	@ Boston College	Duke	Open	North Carolina	@ Virginia Tech	Virginia	@ Louisville	Open	@ Stanford	SMU
Clemson	LSU	Troy	@ Georgia Tech	Syracuse	Open	@ North Carolina	Boston College	SMU	Open	Duke	Florida State	@ Louisville	Furman	@ South Carolina
Duke	Elon	Illinois	@ Tulane	NC State	@ Syracuse	@ California	Open	Georgia Tech	Open	@ Clemson	@ UConn	Virginia	@ North Carolina	Wake Forest
Florida State	Alabama	East Texas A&M	Open	Kent State	@ Virginia	Miami	Pitt	@ Stanford	Open	Wake Forest	@ Clemson	Virginia Tech	@ NC State	@ Florida
Georgia Tech	@ Colorado	Gardner-Webb	Clemson	Temple	@ Wake Forest	Open	Virginia Tech	@ Duke	Syracuse	@ NC State	Open	@ Boston College	Pitt	Georgia
Louisville	Eastern Kentucky	*9/5-JMU	Open	Bowling Green	@ Pitt	Virginia	Open	@ Miami	Boston College	@ Virginia Tech	California	Clemson	@ SMU	Kentucky
Miami	Notre Dame	Bethune-Cookman	South Florida	Florida	Open	@ Florida State	Open	Louisville	Stanford	@ SMU	Syracuse	NC State	@ Virginia Tech	@ Pitt
North Carolina	TCU	@ Charlotte	Richmond	@ UCF	Open	Clemson	Open	@ California	Virginia	@ Syracuse	Stanford	@ Wake Forest	Duke	@ NC State
NC State	East Carolina	Virginia	@ Wake Forest	@ Duke	Virginia Tech	Campbell	@ Notre Dame	Open	@ Pitt	Georgia Tech	Open	@ Miami	Florida State	North Carolina
Pitt	Duquesne	Central Michigan	@ West Virginia	Open	Louisville	Boston College	@ FSU	@ Syracuse	NC State	@ Stanford	Open	Notre Dame	@ Georgia Tech	Miami
Syracuse	Tennessee	UConn	Colgate	@ Clemson	Duke	@ SMU	Open	Pitt	@ Georgia Tech	North Carolina	@ Miami	Open	@ Notre Dame	Boston College
Virginia	Coastal Carolina	@ NC State	William & Mary	Stanford	Florida State	@ Louisville	Open	Washington State	@ North Carolina	@ California	Wake Forest	@ Duke	Open	Virginia Tech
Virginia Tech	South Carolina	Vanderbilt	Old Dominion	Wofford	@ NC State	Wake Forest	@ Ga Tech	Open	California	Louisville	Open	@ Florida State	Miami	@ Virginia
Wake Forest	Kennesaw State	Western Carolina	NC State	Open	Georgia Tech	@ Virginia Tech		Open	SMU	@ Florida State	@ Virginia	North Carolina	Delaware	@ Duke
Stanford	Open	@ BYU	Boston College	@ Virginia	San Jose State	Open	@ SMU	Florida State	@ Miami	Pitt	@ North Carolina	Open	California	Notre Dame
SMU	East Texas A&M	Baylor	@ Missouri State	@ TCU	Open	Syracuse	Stanford	@ Clemson	@ Wake Forest	Miami	@ Boston College	Open	Louisville	@ California

2025 High School Football Schedule

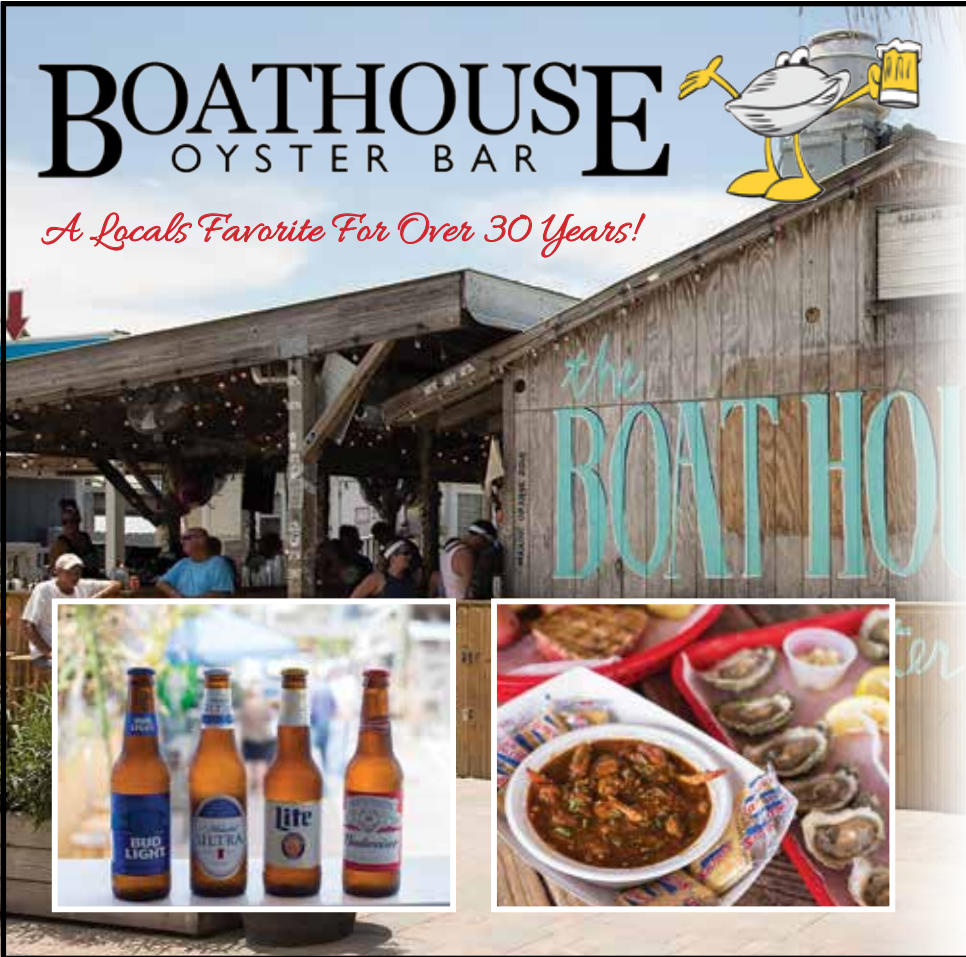
Destin Sharks:

Head Coach: E.G. Green
August 22 – vs. Northview
August 29 – vs. Baker
September 5 – Open Week
September 12 – at Pensacola
September 19 – vs. Taylor County
September 26 – at Opp (AL)
October 3 – at Pensacola Catholic
October 10 – Open Week
October 17 – at Chipley
October 24 – vs. B.T. Washington
October 31 – at Port St. Joe

Fort Walton Beach Vikings:

Head Coach: Josh Pulliam (1st Year)
August 15 – vs. Blountstown (KO Classic)
August 22 – at Tate
August 29 – at South Walton
September 5 – vs. West Florida
September 11 – vs. Washington
September 19 – at Walton
September 26 – at Rickards *
October 3 – vs. Wakulla
October 10 – vs. Arnold *
October 17 – Open Week
October 24 – vs. Choctaw *
October 31 – at Crestview

* Denotes District Game



Locals On The Harbor: July 11 @ 5pm
Air Guitar Competition: July 20 @ 3pm
w/ \$500 Prize
Slacker Olympics Fundraiser: July 26 @ 10am
w/ Road Dogg Rescue

LIVE MUSIC!

Mondays: 4pm: Cole Jordan
8pm: Roshambo
Tuesdays: 4pm: Zach Renzi
8pm: Austin Jennings
Wednesdays: 4pm: Hunter Dawson
8pm: Boathomies
Thursdays: 4pm: Flash Flood
8pm: Austin Jennings
Fridays: 4pm: Jason Findley
8pm: Airavata
Saturdays: 12pm: Joey Collins
4pm: Flash Flood
8pm: Gunner
Sundays: 12pm: Grayson Turner
4pm: Shane Curle
8pm: Shane Curle Trip

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October 2025 Pro Football Schedule

WEEK 6
Thursday, Oct. 9
Philadelphia Eagles at New York Giants, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 12
Denver Broncos at New York Jets (Tottenham), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
Cleveland Browns at Pittsburgh Steelers, Noon, CBS
Los Angeles Chargers at Miami Dolphins, Noon, CBS
San Francisco 49ers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Noon, CBS
Seattle Seahawks at Jacksonville Jaguars,

Noon, Fox
Dallas Cowboys at Carolina Panthers, Noon, Fox
Los Angeles Rams at Baltimore Ravens, Noon, Fox
Arizona Cardinals at Indianapolis Colts, Noon, Fox
Tennessee Titans at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Cincinnati Bengals at Green Bay Packers, 3:25 p.m., CBS
New England Patriots at New Orleans Saints, 3:25 p.m., CBS

Detroit Lions at Kansas City Chiefs, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Oct. 13
Chicago Bears at Washington Commanders, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Buffalo Bills at Atlanta Falcons, 7:15 p.m., ABC
Bye Week: Houston Texans, Minnesota Vikings

Week 7
Thursday, Oct. 16
Pittsburgh Steelers at Cincinnati Bengals, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video

Sunday, Oct. 19
Los Angeles Rams at Jacksonville Jaguars (Wembley), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
New England Patriots at Tennessee Titans, Noon, CBS
Miami Dolphins at Cleveland Browns, Noon, CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at Kansas City Chiefs, Noon, CBS
Carolina Panthers at New York Jets, Noon, Fox
New Orleans Saints at Chicago Bears, Noon, Fox
Philadelphia Eagles at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox
New York Giants at Denver Broncos, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Indianapolis Colts at Los Angeles Chargers, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Washington Commanders at Dallas Cowboys, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Green Bay Packers at Arizona Cardinals, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Atlanta Falcons at San Francisco 49ers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Oct. 20
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Detroit Lions, 7 p.m., ESPN
Houston Texans at Seattle Seahawks, 10 p.m., ESPN+
Bye week: Baltimore Ravens, Buffalo Bills

Week 8
Thursday, Oct. 23
Minnesota Vikings at Los Angeles Chargers, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Oct. 26
New York Jets at Cincinnati Bengals, Noon, CBS
Chicago Bears at Baltimore Ravens, Noon, CBS
Miami Dolphins at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, CBS
Cleveland Browns at New England Patriots, Noon, Fox
New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles, Noon, Fox
Buffalo Bills at Carolina Panthers, Noon, Fox
San Francisco 49ers at Houston Texans, Noon, Fox
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at New Orleans Saints, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Dallas Cowboys at Denver Broncos, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Tennessee Titans at Indianapolis Colts, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Green Bay Packers at Pittsburgh Steelers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Oct. 27
Washington Commanders at Kansas City Chiefs, 7:15 p.m., ABC
Bye Week: Arizona Cardinals, Detroit Lions, Jacksonville Jaguars, Los Angeles Rams, Las Vegas Raiders, Seattle Seahawks

Week 9
Thursday, Oct. 30
Baltimore Ravens at Miami Dolphins, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 2
Indianapolis Colts at Pittsburgh Steelers, Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at New England Patriots, Noon, CBS
Chicago Bears at Cincinnati Bengals, Noon, CBS
Los Angeles Chargers at Tennessee Titans, Noon, CBS
San Francisco 49ers at New York Giants, Noon, CBS
Carolina Panthers at Green Bay Packers, Noon, Fox
Denver Broncos at Houston Texans, Noon, Fox
Minnesota Vikings at Detroit Lions, Noon, Fox
Jacksonville Jaguars at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., Fox

New Orleans Saints at Los Angeles Rams, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Buffalo Bills, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Seattle Seahawks at Washington Commanders, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 3
Arizona Cardinals at Dallas Cowboys, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye Week: Cleveland Browns, New York Jets, Philadelphia Eagles, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Week 10
Thursday, Nov. 6
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

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BEST PLACES

continued from page 22

dozen raw oysters. Auston's on 98 is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and features its own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce." View full menu at austonson98.com. (850) 842-3200
125 Poinciana Blvd.,
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Austonson98.com



Boathouse Oyster Bar

Oysters, live music and a local vibe, the Boathouse is where the locals go with live music every night. Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, the Boathouse specializes in 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. Mu-

sic schedule subject to change. Follow on Facebook for updates. During or after the game, mosey on over to hang with the locals. (850) 837-3645
288-B Harbor Blvd., Destin
Boathouseoysterbardestin.com

Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Hey football fans, Tailfins Waterfront Grill is calling YOU! That's right y'all, Destin's favor-

ite season is here and there's not a better place in Destin to come and watch your team play.

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast before the game? Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast from 8-11 a.m., seven days a week. Enjoy a classic breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mimosas and bloody marys. Enjoy some of your favorite food and drinks, scrumptious early bird dinner specials Monday to Friday, 4-6 p.m. Happy hour from 4-6 p.m. Monday through

Friday, featuring \$24 domestic bottle buckets, \$7 house wines and well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas. Live music on the docks. Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than 70 big screen TVs showing all college football games and Sunday Ticket. (850) 842-3333
On the Harbor in Destin,

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2025 College Football Game Day Highlights

Week 7

Saturday 10/11

Georgia @ Auburn (TBA) ESPN
Ohio St. @ Illinois 11 a.m. FOX
Pittsburgh @ Florida St. 11 a.m. ESPN
Florida @ Texas A&M (TBA) ESPN
Alabama @ Missouri 11 a.m. ABC
Oklahoma @ Texas 2:30 p.m. ABC

Week 8

Saturday 10/18

Missouri @ Auburn (TBA) ESPN
LSU @ Vanderbilt (TBA) ESPN
Mississippi @ Georgia (TBA) ESPN
Tennessee @ Alabama (TBA) ESPN
Miss. St. @ Florida (TBA) ESPN
Fla. St. @ Stanford 9:30 p.m. ESPN
Penn State @ Iowa (TBA)
USC @ Notre Dame 6:30 p.m. NBC

Week 9

Saturday 10/25

Auburn @ Arkansas (TBA) ESPN
Texas A&M @ LSU (TBA) ESPN
Texas @ Miss. St. (TBA) ESPN

Alabama @ S. Carolina (TBA) ESPN
Tennessee @ Kentucky (TBA) ESPN
Wisconsin @ Oregon (TBA)
Stanford @ Miami (TBA)
Ole Miss @ Oklahoma (TBA)

Week 10

Saturday 11/1

Penn St. @ Ohio St. (TBA)
Kentucky @ Auburn (TBA) ESPN
Oklahoma @ Tennessee (TBA) ESPN
Georgia @ Florida 2:30 p.m. ABC
Vanderbilt @ Texas 11 a.m. ESPN

Week 11

Saturday 11/8

Auburn @ Vanderbilt (TBA)
LSU @ Alabama (TBA)
Indiana @ Penn State (TBA)
Florida St. @ Clemson (TBA)
Syracuse @ Miami (TBA)
Georgia @ Miss. St. 11 a.m. (TBA)
Navy @ Notre Dame 6:30 p.m. NBC

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\$5

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Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

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shop the Fudpucker's gift shop for unique gifts and merchandise!

Fudpucker's is going all out with its Pirate Brew Fest on Saturday, Nov. 1, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Expect a lively afternoon of food, fun and games, plus live music, artists, vendors and plenty of drink samples. Highlights include a pirate costume contest, beer memorabilia displays, a magician, mermaid and even a fire performer. Pirate attire is highly encouraged, and the first 100 swashbucklers through the gate will score special gifts. Admission is FREE.

(850) 654-4200

20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy.

Destin

fudpucker.com

Café Destin

Looking for dining the entire family can enjoy? Looking for a place to work with free WiFi while enjoying your cup of coffee? For breakfast and lunch, Café Destin offers an expanded menu serving breakfast staples such as pancakes, waffles with Nutella, omelets, eggs benedict, biscuits and gravy and more. For a lighter take, it also has a variety of fancy toasts (avocado, salmon and more), along with pastries and muffins. For lunch, choose from a variety of burgers, sandwiches and salads. You will love the full-service coffee shop, offering everything from hot or iced fresh, local Amavida coffee to espresso and lattes. And there are diverse fresh fruit



smoothies and a variety of tantalizing teas. Check out the special kids menu, too. Indoor and outdoor seating on the large covered patio are both available. Book after-hours for pri-

vate events or special occasions. Open for breakfast and lunch every day, 7 a.m.-2 p.m.

(850) 424-6777

985 US-98 E, Destin

cafedestin.com

Coastal Protein & Energy Powers Up Destin

Destin has a new spot for fueling up with healthy energy, and the buzz is already building. Coastal Protein & Energy has opened at 501 Harbor Blvd., Suite F in Norred Plaza, offering a fresh lineup of clean energy teas, protein shakes, smoothies, waffles, and more.

Cali Hlavac, who officially

took over the shop July 1, said she's thrilled to bring this wellness-minded concept to the heart of the Harbor. "I was excited to purchase Coastal Protein & Energy to become a healthy staple in the community," she said. "We are a great option for anyone who is health-focused or looking for alternative



options for energy or getting enough protein."

The shop is a sister store to Poppy's Protein in Niceville and Dream Coast Nutrition in Fort Walton Beach, offering



Get your energy without the mid afternoon crash!

We offer clean energy drinks (teas), protein coffee, protein shakes, protein waffles, smoothie bowls and more.

Stop in, order online ordering via square or text your order to 850-904-9738

501 Harbor Blvd, Suite F, Destin
Norred Plaza off Hwy 98



the same recipes and products that locals already love. Guests can enjoy energy teas made with tea concentrate, vitamins B and C and stevia—plus add-ins like aloe, collagen or protein. Protein shakes are crafted to be both delicious and healthy, with mostly sugar-free ingredients and under 250 calories each.

For those who need a morning or afternoon boost, the protein coffee packs a punch: 30 grams of protein, 160 milligrams of caffeine, and just 200 calories. "It's a great way to get your energy without the mid-afternoon crash," the owner added.

Coastal Protein & Energy is open now in Destin, and online ordering is available through Square or by texting 850-904-9738.

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 Off the Hook

Rotary Club of Destin Expands Rescue Tube Project Across Okaloosa County

The Rotary Club of Destin has expanded its Public Rescue Tube (PRT) Project which began with installations in the City of Destin earlier this year, to now include additional locations throughout Okaloosa County beaches. Phase 1 of this countywide expansion, which is being done in partnership with the Rotary Club of Fort Walton Beach, will place 26 new rescue tubes at public beach access points. Already, 16 tubes are fully spon-



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sored by local businesses and individuals, leaving only 10 sponsorship opportunities available at the time of this printing. Each \$500 sponsorship covers the cost of the rescue tube, installation and five years of maintenance, with the sponsor's name/logo featured on the tube's signage for that period.

"These tubes are already making a difference at Destin beach accesses," said Rotary project co-chairs Dion Moniz and Wayne Bernheisel. "Now, we are excited to expand this proven program across more parts of Okaloosa County, making our beaches even safer for residents and visitors."

The Facts Behind Rescue Tubes

- 600+ stations are already in place across the U.S. and Canada.
- 200+ successful rescues have been made using these tubes.
- Every known rescue with a tube has been successful.
- No rescuer has ever been injured while using a Rescue Tube.

Why Rescue Tubes Work

According to the World Health Organization, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional death worldwide, claiming approximately 236,000 lives each year. It is also the #1 cause of death for children ages 1-4. Florida recorded 465 accidental drowning deaths in 2023, many in areas without lifeguard protection.

Rescue tubes provide flotation for both the victim and the bystander attempting a rescue, dramatically reducing the risk of a double tragedy. A 25-year study by the Hawaii Department of Health found that rescuer deaths fell from 60% to

13% after PRTs were installed; in areas without tubes, there was no reduction in rescuer deaths, while in areas with tubes there was a 100% reduction in rescuer deaths.

District-Wide Safety Effort

The Destin initiative is part of a larger regional effort led by Rotary Clubs and partners to protect swimmers across Northwest Florida. Rescue tubes have already been installed or approved in the following areas: Navarre (16), Perdido Key (4), Pensacola Beach (5), Panama City Beach (10), Bay County (10), Destin (9), Freeport (2), Eglin AFB (2) and Walton County (58). With Okaloosa County's planned 26 new installations, the Emerald Coast is quickly becoming one of the most rescue-ready beach regions in the country.

Affordable & Sustainable

While each PRT station costs roughly \$245 to install (tube, signage, post, hardware), the \$500 sponsorship fee ensures long-term sustainability. Rotary members and volunteers inspect the stations every 4-6 weeks, before peak tourist seasons and after major storms. Annual community "work parties" handle larger repairs, and signage includes a public phone number for reporting damage or missing equipment.

"This is a hands-on way to save lives in our community," Moniz said. "We encourage local businesses and individuals to join us in this important effort."

For more information or to sponsor a Rescue Tube, please complete the PRT Sponsor Form [HERE](#) or contact Dion Moniz with the Rotary Club of Destin at dmoniz@handfirm.com or (850) 814-3598.

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The Alice Marina & Micro Resort: Where Luxury and Lifestyle Meet The Bay!

BY KRISTIN SULLIVAN, GENERAL MANAGER, THE ALICE

On any given evening in Destin, the bay glitters with boats sliding across the horizon, the air tinged with salt and the sound of gulls and herons echoing above. For many locals and visitors, boating is more than a pastime, it is a way of life. Now, with the opening of The Alice Marina & Micro Resort on Calhoun Avenue, that lifestyle is easier, more luxurious, and more accessible than ever before.

A Marina Designed for Modern Coastal Living: Imagine finishing work on a Friday afternoon, driving just a few minutes down the road, and stepping onto your boat as the sun begins to set over Choctawhatchee Bay. Or picture waking before dawn on Saturday, fishing rods loaded, as you head toward the Gulf while the water shimmers with pink & orange in the sunrise. For boaters, these are the moments that matter most, and The Alice Marina

was intentionally designed to make them seamless.

The marina offers long-term slip rentals, each equipped with thoughtful amenities that combine practicality with peace of mind. Every slip includes water hookups, shore power, and private dock boxes for storage. Remote-controlled lifts ensure easy access, while webcam surveillance, gated dock access with FOB entry, and dock lighting provide safety and security around the clock. Two fish cleaning stations perfectly placed, private fenced-in parking, and city-certified fire hydrants onsite reflect the level of detail invested into the space.

Slip sizes accommodate a variety of vessels, from 7,000 lb. lifts to 22,000 lb. options, with monthly rates starting at \$1,500. But beyond the numbers, the real draw of The Alice Marina is the lifestyle it enables.

Adding to the convenience, The Alice Concierge team is on hand to stock your boat with provisions before you even ar-



rive. Fresh Gulf shrimp for a boil, a BBQ platter for your day of cruising, or even full spreads for entertaining onboard can all be arranged. It is boating without the hassle and luxury anchored in service.

As a tenant, marina members are more than just boat owners, they are part of a community. They receive first access to all public events hosted on the property, from concerts on the lawn to elegant wine dinners, cocktail-making classes, and outdoor movie nights. For those who love both the water and a sense of connection, The Alice creates the perfect blend.

From Marina to Milestone Moments: The marina is only one piece of the story. The Alice Micro Resort has

quickly become one of the most sought-after event destinations in Northwest Florida.

Picture exchanging vows against the backdrop of the bay, with palm trees swaying, boats bobbing gently nearby, and the golden light of sunset illuminating the sky. Unlike traditional beach weddings, The Alice offers waterfront beauty without the crowds. Its atmosphere is both serene and sophisticated, more private estate than public shoreline.

Couples can choose from a variety of settings: expansive lawns perfect for large gatherings, custom-built tree bars that bring character to cocktail hours, or the marina dock itself for ceremonies framed by the water. Each detail has been designed with photography and guest experience in mind, creating a setting where every angle feels timeless.

Boutique Accommodations That Feel Like Home: Weddings here are not just events, they are weekend long

experiences. As a very family orientated company, the goal was always to create space to gather and spend as much time together celebrating. The Alice offers eight boutique guest cottages, each blending cozy charm with modern amenities. I describe them as “straight out of a Hallmark movie,” with just the right balance of comfort and home.

For couples, the cottages offer an unmatched convenience: families and friends can stay on property, share morning coffee by the pool before the big day, or gather late into the night around the firepit without needing to leave. For out-of-town guests, it is a chance to enjoy Destin’s world-class beaches, restaurants, and nightlife while remaining steps away from the celebration.

This setup transforms weddings from a single day into a multi-day experience—an escape that feels both personal, private, and luxurious.

Continued on page 40





Step into the charm of old Destin with this beautiful waterfront venue. Vintage elegance meets coastal serenity, offering breathtaking sunsets and a peaceful retreat by the Bay.

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Contact Kristen at inquiry@the-alice.com | (850) 460-0425

www.the-alice.com  



October Means One Thing: Rodeo Time!

For 77 years, the Destin Fishing Rodeo has reeled in anglers, families, and festival-goers for a month-long, fun celebration on the Destin harbor. From weigh-ins behind A.J.'s to kids' parades, movie nights and even Halloween on the Harbor, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Whether you're fishing, cheering from the docks, or just soaking up the waterfront vibes, the Fishing Rodeo is a Destin tradition you won't want to miss!

77th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo

OCTOBER 1-31

Join us all month long for the 77th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo! Daily weigh-ins are held behind A.J.'s from 10 a.m.–7 p.m.

Destin 5K Rodeo Run Sunday, October 5

Kick off at picturesque Clement Taylor Park on Choctawhatchee Bay. This scenic run winds through historic Destin neighborhoods and ends back at the park. Proceeds benefit the Miss Destin Scholarship Fund.

Info: kimmymeyers@yahoo.com.

Kid's Wagon Boat Parade Sunday, October 5 | 4 p.m. | A.J.'s Seafood & Oyster Bar

A free, family-friendly Destin Fishing Rodeo tradition! Elementary school children decorate wagons to resemble boats—pirate ships, charter boats, bathtubs—whatever their imagination dreams up. No registration required.

Kids Fall Movie Festival Monday, October 13 | A.J.'s

School's out, and A.J.'s has the perfect solution— a FREE movie on the JumboTron! Kids enjoy hot dogs, popcorn and snow cones. Details at www.ajs-destin.com.

Bruce Cheves Day Thursday, October 16 | A.J.'s Docks

Celebrate Destin's beloved weighmaster, Bruce Cheves, with stories and laughter on the docks.



Ring of the Bell Thursday, October 16 | 5 p.m.

Held annually on Bruce Cheves Day, this special ceremony honors the lives and legends of those we lost this year.

Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation Day Saturday, October 18

Children from foster care enjoy a day of fishing, marine education and fun. Sponsored by The New Florida Girl's American Spirit, Fish Florida, A.J.'s

Seafood & Oyster Bar, Pilot Company, Zup-Med Memphis and Destin Realty.

3rd Annual Miss Destin Mingle Saturday, October 25

Former Miss Destins return for a reunion and harbor cruise, celebrating the newest member of their club with photo ops at the weigh-in.

Halloween on the Harbor Friday, October 31

Destin's largest Halloween party! Wear your costume and join Rodeo captains, anglers, Miss Destin, judges and volunteers for spooky fun on the harbor.

NOVEMBER

77th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo Awards Wednesday, November 5 | 5:30 p.m. | A.J.'s

Celebrate this year's lucky anglers, captains and mates as they receive prizes at a festive, casual gathering downstairs at A.J.'s.

77TH ANNUAL

2025

DESTIN FISHING RODEO

A detailed illustration of a large fish, likely a snook, with a long, pointed snout and a patterned body. The fish is shown in profile, facing right.

WEIGH-INS DAILY 10A-7P
OCTOBER 1 – 31
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Golf Series: Teeing It Up to Fight Cancer at The Raven Golf Club



BY BARBARA PALMGREN

As I write columns about our area golf courses, often describing the physical challenges of the layout of the course itself, I am reminded that these acres of green represent more than opportunities to enjoy a sport. They are opportunities for the community to help non-profits and charities in a special way.

I have several friends who are fighting battles with cancer. I personally understand what it feels like to have the doctor tell you that you have cancer. I know what it's like to be hooked

up and injected with bags of chemical during chemotherapy. I know what it's like when the doctor tells you that you are in "remission." I know.

What I don't know is what a parent must feel when their precious child is diagnosed with cancer. How do they feel? How do they explain this to their child? What do they do? Where do they go?

So, when I read in Destin Life that there was a golf tournament to support this fight against cancer, I knew I had to learn more about this cause.

On Friday, September 12 at The Raven Golf Club over 70 golfers responded to play golf in the 2nd Annual Golf4TheCure- Gulf Coast Tournament. I reached out to Scott Erby, co-sponsor with Kellyanne Bartleson to tell me more. Hosted at The Raven Golf Club at Sandestin in Miramar Beach, Florida, golfers were sure to enjoy the outing in perfect autumn weather.



Scott shared the background for this unique fundraiser that began with a devastating experience no parent should have to face.

In 2009, Scott's young son, Cooper, just 4 years old, was diagnosed with a rare brain stem tumor- Ependymoma. Over the next three years, thanks to groundbreaking research and care at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, with 64 radiation treatments and 10 months of chemotherapy, Cooper was cured. Today, Cooper, 21 years old, is pursuing his undergrad-

uate degree at the Business School at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Inspired by his journey, Scott and others founded Golf4TheCure in the Westhaven community of Franklin, Tennessee. Did you know that September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month? Yes, the focus every year in September is on curing childhood cancer. This golf nonprofit raised over \$1 million dollars from 2009-2016 for St. Jude. At St. Jude Children's Research Hospital families never receive a bill for treatment, travel housing or food.

To continue raising awareness and support, Golf4TheCure Gulf Coast was launched in 2024 with the Sandestin community.

The tournament was organized in 2 person and 4 person teams. Winners of the two-person teams were as follows:

Danny and Marlo Thomas team: Brian Giacone and Steven Ross with a score of 59

Ronald McDonalod team: Jake Gonzales and Chase Pfohl with a score of 67

Make a Wish team: Raz Cu-parencu and Shannon Merritt with a score of 71

Brain Tumor Research team: Jon Creinin and Jon Lovett with a score of 78

The first place four-person team winners of the St. Jude's Heroes with a score of 57 was Liz Sibley, Brady Smith, David Smith and Pete Reichel.

In my golf articles I usually share photos or winners or folks hitting difficult shots. Today, I want to leave the reader with a photo that says more than words can ever say. It's the lighting of the lanterns ceremony at the end of the tournament. Each lantern honors a cancer survivor or someone who has lost their life to cancer.

A special month indeed. The fight to eradicate cancer especially for children is one that must continue until a cure is found.

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Wellness



By STEPHENIE CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

When were you last wronged, hurt or offended by someone? Think about the intense moment of offense and try remembering how it felt and what you wanted to do next. Maybe you

Leading With Love

wanted to use snarky words to put them in their place. Perhaps you wanted to justify your rightness and their wrongness. Or, you may have judged them from a place of self-righteousness. Maybe you labeled the person as bad and less valuable. And, maybe, most of all, you decided to see them as your enemy.

Labeling others as enemies is easy and comfortable, because it allows you to feel right and to avoid self-examination. When you label someone as “them” or your enemy, you view them as a villain and yourself as a victim; a victim of their behavior, a victim of their values, a victim of their choices, a victim of their decisions. Initially, labeling someone as an enemy feels intoxicating.

You feel justified, good, right and have the illusion of standing on higher moral ground. However, eventually, seeing yourself as a victim creates insidious results. You begin to feel resentful, bitter, vengeful, powerless, depressed and hateful.

In many cases, embracing victimhood results in you becoming a different version of a villain. You may find yourself feeling justified in “an eye for an eye” perspective toward your proclaimed enemies because,

after all, their bad behavior justifies your poor response. Labeling others as enemies gives a false sense of permission to treat others poorly without taking accountability for living out your own values. Making others into enemies most often stirs up fear, hatred and defensiveness, rather than stirring love, compassion, confidence and kindness.

While it’s an undeniable reality you will encounter, people who challenge your values and sensibilities, ultimately you are responsible for how you show up in the world. Someone else’s behavior or attitude does not determine yours, even when you see them as an enemy. You have the empowered ability to be in charge of your attitude and behavior regardless of how anyone else is showing up. So, how do you walk away from making enemies easily and lead with love instead?

7 Ways to Lead with Love Even When It’s Hard

Notice. Notice who you see as an enemy. Who is hard for you to love? Why? Be curious within yourself about why you are bothered by the other person. Focus less on the other person’s behavior and more on what is happening inside of you

in response to them.

Self-examine. Reflect on your own struggles. Where are you being unforgiving, unkind, judgmental, self-righteous, envious. Remember your own imperfection before you judge others harshly and label them as enemies. Imagine the grace you would like to receive from others in your areas of weakness when you consider your approach toward others.

Remember our shared humanity. Being human isn’t easy and can be a painful struggle. Often those you see as enemies are hurt people struggling with wounds they don’t know how to resolve. Try preceding your judgement with understanding and compassion.

Remember your values. Do you value love, forgiveness, justice, goodness, kindness? Consider how you can align your treatment of others with your values in the way you hope others would apply them to you.

Love anyway. Try walking in the way of love toward others, even those who feel like enemies. Do something kind when you want to retaliate. Be generous when you want to punish. Walk away when you want to say something unkind. Pray for people who challenge you. Practice radical love even when it is hard to do so. In loving this way, it will become more clear to you how loved you are by God. Also, it is hard to demonize others when you are busy loving them.

Engage your power. You are not a victim of anyone, no matter how difficult the other person is for you. You have been given the power to determine how you want to live and treat people. Use your power wisely and for the greater good.

Release. Release your perceived right to hold grudges and hatred toward others. Clinging to bitterness poisons you and the world around you.

We live in a cultural moment that encourages us to see enemies around every corner. Consider trying something different. Instead, remember the best chance of inspiring change in others and the world is to embody a loving, joyful approach to your values while inviting others to come along. Connect with us at Journeybravely.com for support along your journey.

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Kindness: Powerful Medicine for Healing the Mind and Body



BY MELANIE YOST, LCSW

In today’s fast-paced medical environment, the focus is often on medications, procedures, and technology. Yet one of the most powerful tools in promoting healing is not found in a medication bottle - it’s the simple, human act of kindness. Research shows that compassion, empathy, and genuine care are not only beneficial for emotional well-being but can also have measurable effects on physical health.

People who experience kindness in medical settings report lower levels of anxiety, stress,

and emotional distress. Feeling “seen and heard” by their healthcare providers fosters a sense of safety and trust, essential for healing.

Studies have shown that empathetic communication before procedures can significantly reduce patient anxiety, while supportive interactions during painful treatments can even lessen perceived pain. This effect is not just psychological: it triggers physiological responses that calm the nervous system and promote recovery.

Kindness also has measurable effects on the body. Compassionate care can reduce stress-related cortisol levels, stabilize heart rate and blood pressure, and enhance immune function. These biological responses help the body focus on healing rather than coping with stress. Moreover, patients who perceive their providers as caring and attentive are more likely to follow treatment recommendations, take medications consistently, and attend follow-up



appointments. In other words, kindness improves compliance, which in turn supports better long-term health outcomes.

Neuroscience helps explain why kindness is so powerful. Positive, compassionate interactions can trigger the release of oxytocin, the “bonding hormone,” which fosters trust, peace, and social connection. Neuroimaging studies show that empathetic behaviors activate reward centers in the brain, providing both the giver and the receiver

with feelings of satisfaction and well-being. This “care effect” demonstrates that kindness is not just a social nicety—it is deeply rooted in human biology. The benefits of kindness extend beyond individual interactions. Hospitals and clinics that prioritize compassionate care report higher patient satisfaction scores, reduced complaints, and even lower rates of staff burnout. Healthcare providers who are supported by their employer to practice empathy and kindness experience increased job satisfaction and resilience, creating a virtuous cycle: happier, healthier staff deliver better care, which in turn supports patient well-being.

Kindness in healthcare is powerful medicine. It lowers

stress, enhances mood, reduces perceived pain, improves treatment compliance, and supports faster recovery. It strengthens the bond between patient and provider, fostering trust, hope, and resilience. In a world where the human element often takes a back seat to technology, kindness remains a timeless, life-affirming intervention—one that heals not only the patient but the provider, the community, and the broader culture of care.

If you’re ready to experience care where compassion and science work hand in hand, we invite you to connect with us at Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions in Destin. Healing is our mission, and kindness is our vibe—come see the difference it can make.

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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Caregiving for a Loved One with Alzheimer's: Tips for a Compassionate Journey

By NICOLE LESSON

Brook Batson and her family recently moved to Freeport, FL from Tennessee to help take care of her Father-in-law who has Alzheimer's.

They moved in with her mother-in-law to assist her in taking care of her husband.

"He is mobile but gets very confused," Batson said. "Thankfully, he does remember myself, my husband, Danny and my kids. Once we knew what was going on, we wanted to come before there was a crisis."

Batson shares what she wants people to know about Alzheimer's and other dementia.

"This is a disease, not just age appropriate behavior, yes some behaviors are age appropriate but if they can't manage a ma-

jority of their daily activities on their own, it's more than aging," Batson said.

According to research from the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, more than 1,500 Walton County residents age 65 and up are living with the disease. Florida has the second highest prevalence of Alzheimer's in the U.S, with more than 580,000 Floridians living with the disease supported by 870,000 unpaid caregivers.

For more than 17 years Brook worked in senior care, both assisted living and memory care. Her passion for helping families through their journey with dementia has now hit her own family. She offers this advice.

"Find a support group, go to the alz.org website, call an



assisted living facility as some have memory care daycare, surround yourself with those who understand what you are going through," she said. "Manage it as a family, as it takes a village."

For many, caregiving can be overwhelming and individuals in the role often report experiencing higher rates of stress. According to the Alzheimer's Association 2025 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report, 66% of Florida caregivers

reported at least one chronic health condition, 29% reported having depression and 14% reported being in poor physical health.

Practicing self-care is vital to ensure both the caregiver and the person being cared for can have the best quality of life. Services like respite care, adult day care, and support groups can ease the challenges of caregiving. Many of these are available at low or no cost to Floridians through state and local programs. For more information, call the Alzheimer's Association free, 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.

Walk to End Alzheimer's®, an event held across Florida to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's, has been a place

of support for Batson. She is the new Community Engagement Chair for the Walk to End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast-Ocala County.

"At the Walk you will meet people, companies and vendors that understand exactly what you are dealing with," she said. "You are going to walk away with information you didn't have."

Join others impacted by Alzheimer's for the 2025 Walk to End Alzheimer's Emerald Coast Okaloosa County on Saturday, November 1 at Northwest Florida State College in Niceville. Registration starts at 9 am with the ceremony at 10 am, followed by the Walk. Register your team today at Alz.org/EmeraldCoastOCWalk.



By KRISY ANDERSON

As the seasons shift, I always reflect on what self-care really means. It's more than a bubble bath or day off—though those are lovely! True self-care is intentionally protecting your well-being—emotionally, mentally, financially, physically, so-

cially and spiritually. Fall is the perfect season to reset and recharge before the holidays.

Emotional & Mental: Give yourself permission to pause. Journaling, meditation, or even saying "no" can be powerful. Find ways to laugh—watch something funny, listen

to uplifting music, or color like a kid again. Cooler evenings invite us to slow down and reflect.

Financial: Heading into the holidays, overspending is easy. Review your bills, set a budget, and make even small contributions to savings. Knowing your credit score and setting simple

goals—short-, medium- and long-term—can ease stress.

Physical: The crisp fall air is an invitation to move. Take a walk outdoors, enjoy seasonal produce or sip warm teas. Think of food as fuel, not comfort, and

Continued on page 37

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Make Destin Healthy Again



By TRÉ BAITY, TOXIC FREEDOM

Four years ago, I was in heart failure, kidney failure and liver failure. Doctors had me on 22 prescriptions, but it wasn't the drugs that saved me. It was the herbs. Nature didn't just cover my symptoms; it helped my body rebuild. That's why I write this today, because I know too many of our neighbors are suffering not only from illness, but from the side effects of medica-

tions that sometimes create new problems.

Now, let me be clear; we are not saying "stop taking your prescriptions." What I am saying is this: education and nature are the keys to true healing. And, as a community, we can learn from one another and grow stronger together.

Most of what we know about medicine started with plants. Aspirin came from willow bark.

Heart medicine from foxglove. Nature was the blueprint. Labs simply copied it.

And here in Destin, that blueprint is under our feet.

Our beaches are famous for their sugar-white sand. That sand is almost pure quartz crystal, carried here over millions of years from the Appalachian Mountains. Quartz is so unique, it powers our watches and electronics. Walking barefoot on our

beaches isn't just calming, it's a grounding reminder of the natural energy beneath us. Some studies even suggest "grounding" might help reduce stress and improve sleep; tons of research is steadily being conducted on this fact.

Our plants hold their own wisdom. Yaupon Holly, a native evergreen, is the only caffeineated plant in North America. Long before energy drinks, tribes brewed its leaves for stamina, focus and purification rituals. It still grows quietly in our neighborhoods today.

This isn't trivia, it's empowerment. When you know where true health begins, you start to see Destin differently. The sand, the trees, the plants—they're not background scenery; they're part of the story of resilience.

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Michael McManus LCSW

Book Review: Hour of the Heart

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL
McMANUS, MSW LCSW

Irving Yalom's "Hour of the Heart" isn't your typical therapy manual—it's a raw, almost confessional dive into what makes human connection tick, even when time's running out. Picture this: a ninety-three-year-old psychiatrist, facing his own mortality, decides to ditch long-term therapy for intense, one-session encounters. Each chapter feels like Yalom's pulling you into a dimly lit room, where he's just finished a profound sixty-minute talk with someone on the edge - a grieving widower, a suicidal teen, even a celebrity hiding behind a facade. What's gripping is how Yalom leans into vulnerability, sharing his own fears of aging and irrelevance.

Take the story of Mark, who breaks down after Yalom ad-

mits he's scared of losing his mind; that raw honesty flips the dynamic, turning the session into a mutual rescue. Yalom's style is deceptively simple, even conversational, like he's sitting across from you over coffee, but it's packed with insight. He nails why here and now matters: in one hour, you can unearth a lifetime of buried pain if you dare to be real. The book stumbles slightly with repetition; those existential themes circle like vultures, but it mirrors life's stubborn loops, so it works. At its core, it's about the fleeting magic of being seen, not fixed. Yalom proves that you don't need months to change a life; one genuine moment can do it. If you've ever craved deeper connections, this'll hit you like a quiet epiphany. Highly recommend.

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- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
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- Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

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Wellness

Pain in the Foot



BY KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTH ARCHITECT

Over the last couple months, I have talked to friends and acquaintances that have shared their struggle with Planter Fasciitis. Maybe you or someone you

know is dealing with this ‘pain in the foot.’

The plantar fascia (noted as pf) is a fibrous tissue that connects the toes to the heel along the bottom of the foot. This thick band can become over-stretched or have excess strain due to repetitive stress, which can lead to chronic degeneration or small tears in the fascia fibers where it connects to the heel bone. In addition, ultrasounds often show calcifications and a thickening of the pf.

The cause is not fully understood, but has been connected to activities such as running, ballet and other types of dance, age, weight or occupation.

The pain experienced most often shows up first thing in the morning when the foot first touches the floor and is localized in the heel. This is due to overnight inactivity and the pf stiffening (like a sore muscle). Choosing to avoid walking on the foot can eventually lead to problems in the foot, knee, hip or back.

There are several therapies that can aid in the healing process:

- **Stretching:** Take time before letting your feet hit the floor to slowly stretch. Place your ankle over your knee, pull the toes up until you feel the stretch. Holding that position gently massage the pf for a few minutes. This will help the pf to relax relieving some of the sharp pain one experiences after a period of inactivity.
- **Calf Stretch:** Standing in front of a wall bend the knee on the good foot a step back on the affected foot. Slowly move the injured foot from the balls of the foot to placing the heel on the ground. This stretches both the calf and the pf. If you can't place your heel on the ground due to the pain, bring the leg in a bit to lessen the ‘stretch.’
- **Ice the foot** after stretching or if your pf begins to act up

due to over-activity.

- **Athletic Tape:** Learn how to properly apply from a professional such as a physical therapist to support your pf during your active times.
- **Night Splints:** This over the counter product keeps the pf in a stretched position while you sleep which can lessen the pain experienced upon rising.
- **Orthotics:** These can support your pf during the day.
- **Boot, Cane, Crutches:** These can be helpful with severe cases or to allow the inflammation to decrease before adding other treatments.
- **Steroids:** The use of steroid injections can offer temporary relief. However, multiple shots are not recommended as they can weaken the pf and possibly cause it to rupture.
- **Plasma Injections:** Platelet rich plasma from your own blood can be injected to promote healing. An ultrasound is used to aid in precise needle placement.
- **Extracorporeal Shock Wave Therapy:** This is for chronic plantar fasciitis when other therapies have failed. Sound waves are directed at the area of the heel pain to stimu-

late healing. This therapy hasn't been shown to be consistently effective even though some studies have shown promising results.

- **Ultrasonic Tissue Repair:** A minimally invasive technology where ultrasound imaging is used to guide a needlelike probe into the damaged pf tissue. The probe tip vibrates rapidly to break up the damaged tissue which is then suctioned out.
- **Surgery:** When all else fails. The surgery entails detaching the pf from the heel bone.

There are so many fall festivals coming our way. If you don't want to miss your favorite ones, be sure to include breaks throughout your day to stretch and massage your pf and don't forget your orthotics. Taking care of our feet allows us to have a more active and fun life. Even if you have healthy feet, a good foot massage from time to time couldn't hurt.

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Unlocking Your Co-worker's Hidden Strengths



By BILL MASON,
ROCKET FUEL COACH

Every team has those moments when a usually dynamic teammate suddenly seems “off.” Whether it’s the strong communicator who goes quiet or the driven competitor who loses steam, these dips are often signs of “basement” behaviors—when a strength temporarily turns into a struggle. Recognizing these moments and knowing how to respond can help your colleagues rise back to their “balcony,” where their natural talents shine brightest. Here are two common examples and how you can help.

Unlocking Your Co-worker's Communication Superpower

Do you have a co-worker

who’s usually the life of the conversation but, every so often, becomes unexpectedly quiet? I’ve got one on my team who’s typically amazing at sharing ideas, rallying the team, and sparking discussions. But recently, during a critical meeting, they just sat there—silent and disengaged. It was like watching a Communication pro stuck in the basement of hesitation!

This is a classic case of “basement” behaviors for someone with the Communication strength. When they’re feeling unsure or overwhelmed, they can shut down and struggle to express themselves. But at their core, they have an amazing ability to captivate an audience, simplify complex ideas, and bring energy to any conversation.

How can we help them get back to their “balcony” and shine? Here are 3 ideas:

Create a Safe Space – Encourage open dialogue and ensure they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without judgment. A little encouragement can reignite their natural voice.

Ask for Their Insights – Involve them early in discus-



sions, giving them the chance to contribute. This can help them feel empowered to speak up.

Celebrate Their Storytelling – Acknowledge when they share an idea clearly or engage others in meaningful ways. Positive reinforcement boosts their confidence to keep communicating!

Unlocking Your Co-worker's Competitive Edge

Do you have a co-worker who’s normally driven to be the best, but every now and then, seems to get discouraged by the competition? I’ve got one on my team who’s typically all about pushing boundaries and striving for excellence. But recently, when another team member delivered a strong result, they seemed to shut down and lose their spark. It was like watching a natural competitor stuck in the basement of self-doubt!

This is a classic case of “basement” behaviors for someone with the Competition strength. When they feel outmatched, they can become discouraged or overly focused on comparisons instead of celebrating their own success. But at their core, they have an amazing ability to rise to the challenge, elevate performance, and inspire others to strive for greatness.

How can we help them get back to their “balcony” and shine? Here are 3 ideas:

Reframe the Challenge – Encourage them to focus on their own progress rather than comparing to others. Highlight their personal growth and victories.

Celebrate Their Wins – Acknowledge their achievements, no matter the size. Rec-

ognition can fuel their competitive spirit and remind them of their own capabilities.

Foster Healthy Competition – Create an environment where competition is seen as a way to elevate everyone’s game, not just to win. This can turn their drive into motivation for the whole team.

At the end of the day, whether it’s Communication or Competition, every strength has both a balcony and a basement. By encouraging safe spaces, celebrating wins, and reframing challenges, we can help our teammates rise to their best. Let’s help them get back to their powerful, dynamic Communication style—and let’s help them tap into that competitive fire and keep striving for excellence.

Stay strong, Bill Mason, Rocket Fuel Coach

Fuel Your Strengths. Ignite Your Potential. Let’s talk! Contact me at (850)-855-3430 or Bill@RocketFuelCoach.com.

SELF CARE

continued from page 34

don’t underestimate the most important tool: sleep. Let your body truly rest.

Social: Self-care also means reconnecting—with yourself and others. Make a list of activities that bring you joy and follow through. Schedule coffee with a friend or plan a cozy family night. And yes, it’s still okay to turn off the electronics for a while.

Spiritual: As days grow shorter, nurture your spirit. Light a candle, read something uplifting, pray, meditate, or sim-

ply be still. Whether it’s quiet time alone or attending services, spiritual balance grounds everything else.

My Journey: Owning Beverly Hills Day Spa has been part of my own self-care journey. I purchased the spa in 2007 from my mentor, Betsey Beebe, and my dream was to create a place where people not only looked beautiful, but felt beautiful inside and out. It hasn’t always been easy, but I know it’s my calling. Along the way, I’ve built friendships and relationships that make it all worthwhile.

As a mom of two, I understand the stress of busy sched-

ules. That’s why I’m passionate about helping others see self-care as a necessity, not a luxury.

Fall Invitation: This fall, I encourage you to carve out time for yourself—whether it’s journaling at sunrise, walking at sunset or enjoying an afternoon of pampering. Come see us at Beverly Hills Day Spa and let us help you relax, recharge and feel like a star.

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Why the Off-Season is the Best Season for SEO

By ROSS VOLLMER,
VDX MARKETING

As October arrives, Destin shifts gears. The summer crowds thin out, the beaches grow quieter, and many local businesses finally catch their breath after months of nonstop activity. For

some, this slower season is a welcome chance to scale back, regroup, and conserve resources. But for the business owners who want to gain a real competitive edge, the off-season is actually the best time to double down on marketing, especially search en-

gine optimization (SEO). Unlike paid ads that can drive immediate clicks, SEO is more like planting seeds for the future. It takes consistent work over time to earn those higher rankings on Google, and results don't happen overnight.

On average, it takes three to six months to see measurable movement. That means if you wait until next spring to "turn on" your SEO strategy, you'll be too late to capture the peak traffic that drives revenue in Destin. By starting in the fall, you're giving your business enough lead time to climb the rankings before tourists flood the area again.



But SEO isn't just about preparing for next summer, it's also a powerful way to keep momentum going right now. Thousands of visitors who discovered Destin this year are still searching online for the businesses they loved, whether it's a favorite restaurant, charter boat, or boutique. Many will plan ahead for their next trip, and others will continue buying products or booking services online. If your business maintains strong SEO and stays visible, you're turning those one-time visitors into repeat customers, creating year-round revenue instead of seasonal spikes.

Another reason to focus on SEO during the off-season is that your competitors may not be doing the same. Many local businesses cut back on marketing once the busy months are over. That creates an opportunity gap. With fewer competitors investing in digital visibility, it becomes easier for your business to move up the rankings and secure those coveted spots on Google. When everyone else tries to ramp up again in the spring, they'll be fighting uphill, and you'll already be ahead.

Local SEO in particular can make a huge difference. When someone searches for "seafood restaurant near me" or "Destin charter boat," the results that appear in the Google Map Pack (the three highlighted listings at the top of search results) often get the majority of clicks. Appearing there means more phone calls, more bookings, and more foot traffic. Off-season is the perfect time to build that

visibility by collecting reviews, updating your business information across directories, posting fresh content, and optimizing your Google Business Profile. It's also an ideal moment to review your website itself: refreshing content, fine-tuning for SEO, or even investing in a full website re-vamp to ensure everything is current, mobile-friendly, and ready to impress when the next wave of customers arrives. These efforts don't just strengthen your online presence, they also build trust with both search engines and customers.

The truth is, the businesses that thrive in Destin are the ones that use the slower months to prepare for the busy ones. SEO is an investment that compounds over time, and starting now ensures you're not left scrambling later. Think of it as getting your boat in order before the next big wave of customers arrives. When spring comes, you'll be ready to ride the momentum instead of playing catch-up.

So, while the off-season may feel like a time to ease off the gas, it's actually the best time to take action. By committing to SEO now, Destin business owners can gain the freedom to focus on serving customers when it matters most — knowing their marketing is already working for them behind the scenes.

Ready to make the most of the off-season? VDX Marketing helps Destin businesses grow year-round with SEO, web design, and digital marketing strategies that deliver results. Learn more at vdxmarketing.com.



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BY SEAN DIETRICH

I woke up looking for God. I always look for Him in the mornings. Sometimes, however, He’s hard to find. Sometimes He hides.

I went through my morning routine. I made the coffee. Let the dogs out to pee.

I turned on the TV news.

The TV headlines are shocking. Mostly, about wars, rumors of war, and celebrity mating habits. The news anchor doesn’t smile as he recites talking points.

I feel sorry for Newsguy. Even HE looks sorry he has this job as he talks about the shootings in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Evergreen, Colorado; and the killing of Charlie Kirk in Utah.

I pour coffee. I go to my laptop. Time to do some writing. I have deadlines. Open web browser.

The computer is bombarding me with more news. I skim headlines.

Today’s headlines are nothing like the newspaper headlines of yore. They are click-bait, weirdly worded, as if their sole purpose is to get me to click and nothing more. As if the organization behind each headline doesn’t give a flying fig whether I read the actual story, as long as I click the title.

“Click me,” I hear the headline whispering. “Come on, handsome. You know you want to. Just click me. Me love you long time.”

Here are some actual headlines I read:

“7 Products I Stopped Buying Once I Realized They Were Silently Killing Me.”

“Study Shows Hugging Can Cause Cancer.”

“Pamela Anderson Speaks Out; She Has A Lot To Get Off Her Chest.”

That’s not to mention all the stories about AI. Robots, robots, robots. If ever there was a trending topic in the news world, it’s the rise of AI.



Humanoid robots with water powered muscles. Robot humanoids being developed to possibly become law-enforcement officers. Humanoid robots expected to be operating within most American homes by the year 2042.

In the same vein, there are throngs of articles about “smart glasses,” and all they can do, and all they WILL be able to do, and how someday most humans on the globe will be sophisticated smart-glass-wearing people who let their household humanoid robots do everything from cut the grass to follow them into their bathrooms to wipe their own noses.

Smart glasses, the headlines tell me, are all about AR (altered

reality), which is widescale technological integration of digital content with the real world. AR. How inspiring.

So within the next decade, according to the headlines, we will all be lying on our sofas, blissed out, lost within a half-digital hallucinatory trip. Our children will grow up making swiping gestures in the air as though they are playing on giant invisible iPads.

I haven’t been awake for 30 minutes, and already I need an Alka Seltzer.

Namely, because I’m starting to feel like a stranger on this planet. A stranger in my own society. I want to weep. I want to cry. I want to tell my fellow humans to “Wake up!” I don’t understand where the future is leading us. And I don’t understand why everyone seems to WANT to go there.

Soon, I feel almost sick to my stomach. How did this happen to us? How did we become a race of tech-junkies who let AI do everything from read our news, to fight our wars?

What happened to our hu-

man spirit? What happened to our unique genius for creativity? Where are our Michelangelos and Monets?

How about our human capacity for kindness? Where’d that go? Where are the Ghandis, Saint Franceses, Mother Teresas, and Fred Rogerses of our time? Have we let ourselves become so numbed by the opioids of technology that we have suffocated our saints?

And what about the lessons we were put on earth to learn individually? Lessons of compassion, forgiveness, bravery, and unconditional love? Will we ever find God in a world like this one? Do we even WANT to find Him? Or is “God” becoming a dirty word? Will our future’s children even be aware that there IS a God within the next 100 years? Will they even care, or will humanity be too smart for such archaic beliefs?

Then it hits me.

I quietly turn off my TV. I shut off my phone. I close my laptop screen.

And, just like that, I found God.



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A Pastor's Ponderings: Paradise Found



BY PASTOR DAVE HOLLAND

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43

The girl's twisted posture revealed a lifelong struggle. A birth injury had left Sally with cerebral palsy, and she spent her days in a wheelchair. Yet, her radiant smile lit up every room she entered. The first time I met her at church, her head bobbed as she looked up at me, but her eyes sparkled like fireworks, and we became instant friends.

Sally came to worship whenever her health allowed. During her teen years, hospital stays became more frequent. We all celebrated when a young man invited her to the senior prom. She looked beautiful that night, her trademark smile shining in every photo. Not long after, her mother admitted her to the hospital for the last time.

I stood with her family around her bed in intensive care. We

prayed, and I sensed something like the flutter of a butterfly pass near my shoulder. Sally slipped away. I believe Jesus welcomed her home that very moment—free at last to dance, her smile lighting up heaven.

Many people comfort themselves with the thought that everyone goes to a better place when they die. But Scripture tells a different story. Jesus was crucified between two criminals at Calvary. Both saw His grace as He prayed for those who nailed Him to the cross. Both heard His words to the Father. Yet their responses could not have been more different.

One thief hurled insults, demanding rescue. Suffering did not soften his heart, instead, it hardened his unbelief. He lost paradise.

The other thief recognized the truth. In his pain, he confessed his guilt and acknowledged Jesus' innocence: We are punished justly, for we are get-

ting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. His heart turned in repentance and faith. He understood that Christ's kingdom was not of this world and pleaded, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

That simple prayer brought a breathtaking promise. Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise. Even in His agony, the Savior assured him of eternal life.

The Greek word for "paradise," *paradeiso*, carries the meaning of "garden." In Revelation 2:7, it describes the place where the tree of life grows in heaven. Humanity's story began in a garden and, through Christ, ends in a restored one.

The two criminals portray the choice every person faces. One rejected Christ and died in despair. The other believed, and God greeted him with eternal joy. Not everyone will respond with faith, but those who do re-

ceive the same promise: immediate fellowship with the Lord in a restored garden.

The astronomer Copernicus once prayed, "I do not ask for the grace you gave to St. Paul; nor can I dare ask for the grace that you granted to St. Peter; but the mercy which you did show to the dying robber, that mercy, show to me."

Like the repentant thief, we can find mercy, peace and assurance in Christ. Paradise lost in Eden is now paradise found in heaven—flung open by the Savior who died to bring us home.

Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring in Destin. This devotional is from his book "Easter Jesus," coming out in February 2026. You can get a copy of his books from his website, DaveHolland.org, or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach at churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidHolland54@gmail.com.

THE ALICE MARINA

continued from page 29

Adventure Meets Celebration: What makes The Alice truly distinctive is how it integrates its marina into the celebration experience. Few venues can offer couples the chance to arrive at their ceremony by boat or send guests on a sunset cruise after dinner. Rehearsal dinners aboard a luxury yacht, paddleboarding adventures or pontoon boat raft-ups for the wedding party, or a champagne sail the morning after are all part of the possibilities.

And for couples dreaming of a show-stopping finale? The

Alice's location makes it possible to launch a private fireworks display from a barge just off the marina. With advanced planning and the help of their preferred vendors, the night sky can light up as the perfect exclamation point to an unforgettable evening.

Packages for Every Story: While The Alice excels at hosting grand celebrations of up to 350 guests, it also offers intimate packages for smaller moments. Engagement proposals, vow renewals, and micro-weddings are available Sundays through Wednesdays, starting at \$750. These packages include essentials like an officiant, bou-

quet, boutonniere, cake, and champagne toast, with options to add professional photography, videography, and live music.

For proposals, the team specializes in creating surprise backdrop from romantic dock-side dinners to carefully staged photo opportunities ensuring that the "yes" is as unforgettable as the love story itself.

The Heart of Destin's New Era: For decades, the creators of The Alice have collaborated with top industry professionals to create exceptional water-related memories on the Emerald Coast. Its expansion into the marina & event space

represents more than just convenience for boaters, it is the blending of lifestyle, luxury, and community.

For locals, it is a place to dock their boats securely while enjoying an elevated experience. For couples, it is a destination wedding without ever having to leave Destin. And for visitors, it is an introduction to what makes the Gulf Coast so unique: natural beauty paired with a warm sense of belonging.

In many ways, The Alice

Marina & Micro Resort embodies what modern coastal living is all about. It is not just a marina. It is not just a wedding venue. It is a gathering place, a sanctuary, and a stage for life's best moments, whether those moments unfold on the water, under the stars, or in the arms of the people you love most.

For slip rentals, event inquiries, or wedding packages, call 850-460-0425 or email Kristin@The-Alice.com.



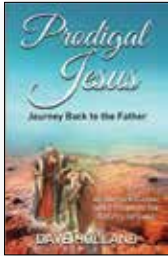
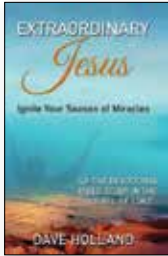
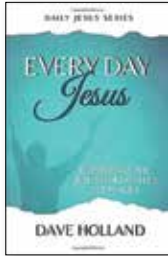
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BY MICHAEL YODER, RETIRED
FBI CRIMINAL PROFILER

One of the most under-rated investigative techniques – but highly effective – is to canvass an area when a person is missing and murder is strongly suspected. The concept is to identify the perimeters of a neighborhood and then put that neighborhood under a dome of law enforcement supervision. Ideally, all entry and exit points are to be monitored until law enforcement checks the inner perimeter.

The neighborhood canvass and the roadblock canvass are two types of canvassing that work in tandem. The neighborhood canvass consists of several two-person law enforcement teams, armed with a customized questionnaire, and tasked to visit each residence in the neighborhood. The purpose of each team is to identify every person that resides in that household. All individuals eligible for interview complete the questionnaire as required by law enforcement authorities.

The customized questionnaire consists of questions to determine identifiers such as name and date of birth, and to determine if the resident has any knowledge about the missing person. This could be as simple

as a resident noting odd actions or behaviors in someone close to the missing person, or a car that seemed out of place. The questionnaire can also be to identify transient occupants such as overnight visitors, commercial or construction workers in the area, or even late party goers. Finally, the questions can help uncover anything out of the ordinary that occurred around the time of the disappearance.

The key to an effective and thorough neighborhood canvass is to assign a strict supervisor to oversee the operation. The supervisor inspects each team's results for thorough completion. If a listed resident was not interviewed, the team must return to interview everyone. Only when this occurs AND the residence is searched should the canvass supervisor accept the results of the team's efforts. The supervisor should read the answers to the questionnaire to note oddities and then can report final completion of the neighborhood canvass to the chain of command.

The purpose of a cursory search, which is conducted concurrently with the questionnaire, is to perform a visual inspection of all areas within a residence that could potentially serve as locations for concealing a body. When a murder occurs, how to dispose of a dead body can be problematic, especially if the neighborhood is swarming with law enforcement during a

well conducted canvass. The offender may try to avoid a search or wait out the heat of the initial actions of law enforcement, hoping they will leave. However, if law enforcement is thorough, the body will be discovered.

The roadblock canvass happens once law enforcement has identified all entrance/exit points in an area of interest. As vehicles leave or enter, officers request consent to search the vehicle. They can also use a modified questionnaire to determine if the occupants are permanent or temporary residents or are in the neighborhood for work.

The canvass method is intrusive to the occupants of the neighborhood. However, if law enforcement can explain that the purpose of the canvass is to find the victim and to solve a major crime, most people will be understanding and gracious.

Most people abhor the thought of violent crimes in their neighborhood and want to cooperate with the police to solve these crimes.

For law enforcement, the thought of being on a canvass team sounds boring and rote. After all, they will be spending their time talking to innocent people who have no idea what occurred. However, a thorough and professional attitude towards accomplishing this seemingly dull directive gives the investigator valuable information as they rule out theories and focus on finding the victim and ultimately a killer.

If you are requested to respond to an inquiry from neighborhood canvassing teams, please be aware that your cooperation contributes to the effectiveness of law enforcement investigations. Your honest re-

sponses and openness to allow your residence to be searched may lead to solving a violent crime. Failure to cooperate may allow a murderer to remain at large and in your neighborhood.

I have personally witnessed the effectiveness of thorough canvassing operations. I have also witnessed information received during a canvass leading directly to the discovery of the victim and the identity of the killer. It works!

If you're interested in true crime and want to learn sleuthing skills, join our Facebook group, Destin True Crime Club. We meet monthly to research a real cold case and brainstorm next steps. It's a serious yet fun group of passionate case-solvers. For questions or to request a talk on violent crime issues, email me at myoder0361@gmail.com.

Canvassing: Destin True Crime Club

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 Business

NWFSC Opens New School of Nursing

Ribbon Cutting Marks a Major Milestone for Healthcare Education

On September 4, Northwest Florida State College celebrated a proud new chapter with the ribbon cutting of its state-of-the-art School of Nursing building on the Niceville campus. Community leaders, alumni, and supporters joined NWFSC President Mel Ponder and Dean of Health Sciences Dr. Charlotte Kuss for tours of the new 64,000-square-foot facility.

“This expansion is more than bricks and mortar—it’s a bold investment in the future of healthcare in our region,” said President Mel Ponder. “With over \$34 million dedicated to growing our nursing program, we’re doubling enrollment and equipping students with the most advanced technology available.”

The project was made possi-



ble through \$13 million in state education construction funds and a \$21.8 million Triumph Gulf Coast grant awarded in 2023. Inside the new facility are immersive learning spaces, including virtual reality labs and high-fidelity simulation suites, giving students hands-on train-

ing in a safe, real-world environment.

“This new building is a reflection of the incredible caliber and vision that guides our nursing program,” said Trustee Chair Rhea Goff. “This will allow our faculty to do even more for students’ learning experienc-

es, ensuring they are prepared better than anyone for their field.”

NWFSC’s nursing program already outperforms state and national benchmarks. In 2024, the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program achieved a 98.65% pass rate on the

NCLEX-RN exam, compared to Florida’s average of 84.1% and the national average of 90.6%. Retention rates are also strong, with 94.3% of students completing the program, far above the statewide average of 77.2%.

With the new facility now open, the college is poised to double nursing enrollment by 2026, helping to meet the growing demand for skilled healthcare professionals across Northwest Florida.

To learn more about the health sciences programs at Northwest Florida State College, visit www.lookatmenow.nwfsc.edu.

Exterior Painting Before Winter: Protecting Your Home from Coastal Weather

BY KYLE SPARKS,
OVATION PAINTING

Living on the Emerald Coast is a dream, but our homes face tough conditions. Salt air, hu-

midity, and intense sunshine can take a toll on exterior paint, leaving siding, stucco and trim faded or peeling. Fall is the perfect time to get ahead of it.

Cooler weather allows paint to cure evenly, and lower humidity means fewer interruptions in the process. Tackling an exterior project now not only boosts curb

ed in coastal areas, but high-traffic spots—doors, shutters, and trim—may need attention sooner.

The beauty of painting in the fall is that crews can work efficiently without battling summer’s heat or the unpredictability of spring rain. By the time warmer months arrive, your home is already looking sharp and well protected.

If your exterior is showing signs of wear, now is the time to act. Don’t wait until peeling paint or water damage makes repairs more extensive. A fresh coat today means peace of mind tomorrow.

Call to Action: 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 simply mentioning this article.



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FESTIVAL OF ARTS

continued from page 2

Choice, Awards of Excellence, Awards of Merit and Judge’s Recognition Awards.

For artists, it’s more than a weekend—it’s a stage to share their life’s work and connect with collectors who appreciate it. For the public, it’s an accessible way to experience museum-quality art outdoors in our own paradise.

Membership: Fueling the Mission

Becoming a member of MKAF means more than access to events; it means fueling a mission that changes lives. Membership levels—from the \$75 Art Nouveau tier (for those 35 and under) to the \$500 Impresario tier—offer benefits such as early admission to Concerts in the Village, discounts on Festival merchandise and season passes. But the real benefit is knowing that membership dollars help sustain programs like Arts for All Abilities, Warrior Arts and Arts Empower—programs that create safe spaces, provide therapeutic experiences and inspire



growth for thousands in our region.

Volunteers: The Heart of the Festival

It takes an army of helping hands to bring the Festival of the Arts to life, and volunteering is one of the most rewarding ways to be part of it. Opportunities include everything from setting up tents and greeting guests at the main entry to assisting artists, helping in the children’s tent or staying for breakdown on Sunday evening. High school seniors can even earn community service hours while participat-

ing. “All volunteers are welcome to arrive early or stay after their shift to enjoy the festival,” says Volunteer Coordinator Stephanie Shea. “It’s a wonderful way to both give and receive.”

More Than a Festival

Beyond the art tents, food trucks and live music, the Festival of the Arts symbolizes something larger: the weaving together of a community that values creativity as an essential part of life. In our area—a place already blessed with white sand and emerald waters—the arts



bring depth, connection and meaning. They remind us that beauty isn’t just found in landscapes, but in the resilience of a child with special needs learning through paint, in the courage of a veteran rediscovering expression through the arts, and in the collective joy of friends and family gathering under tents, sharing culture, laughter and hope.

As a MKAF board member for several years, I hope you’ll join us for our 30th Annual Festival of the Arts. I say this not just as a publisher and writer, but as someone who believes

in what this event stands for. Browse these amazing artists from all over. By supporting them, you’re also supporting those who need help right here in our community.

This October 25–26, at the MKAF Cultural Arts Village in Destin, come for the art, stay for the memories and leave knowing you’ve been part of a tradition that for 30 years has helped transform not just canvases and clay, but lives. We appreciate you and look forward to seeing you all there!

For more information, visit mkaf.org.



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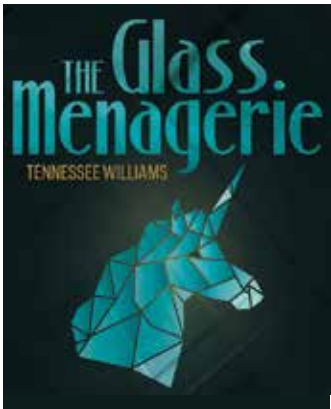
Arts & Music

Fragile Dreams, Heavy Expectations: Why The Glass Menagerie Still Speaks to Us Today

By CAMERON HUGHES

There’s something about The Glass Menagerie that stays with you after the curtain falls. Tennessee Williams’ classic play feels both intimate and universal, showcasing the raw struggles of family, the reality of dreams, and the weight of expectations we all carry. It’s a story that hits close to home, not through flashy moments, but through the honest feelings we usually bottle up to ourselves.

This is why The Glass Menagerie is such a powerful addition to ECTC’s thirteenth season. It’s not simply a play about a family in the height of the Great Depression; it’s a reflection of the weight of societal pressures and expectations we all carry. Tom feels the pull between family obligations and his own ambitions, Amanda



shows the distance that parents go to protect and guide their families, even while wrestling with their own disappointments and “what ifs”. These “what ifs” highlight the tragedy of Amanda’s character but also a universal challenge of balancing love, guidance, and the limits of control as both a parent and a partner. Laura shows a univer-

sal vulnerability of not measuring up in a world that often feels overwhelming. For so many of us today, the path to success feels steeper than ever. College degrees are the expectation, yet the job market is tougher. Social media makes it feel like everyone else is thriving in extravagant cars and on vacation in the Maldives, adding a new layer of comparison. Many people feel like they’re running out of time to “figure it out,” and the weight of those expectations can be overwhelming in an everchanging world.

The characters feel trapped in their circumstances, but their aspirations for something greater is universal. We’ve all experienced moments where our dreams feel out of reach, where we’re torn between what we owe to others and what we

owe to ourselves. That’s what makes The Glass Menagerie such a timeless piece of theatre. It’s a story that mirrors our humanity, reminding us of both our fragility and our resilience even in the toughest of times. In recent years, we lived through COVID-19 lockdowns where the entire planet hit the pause button. It forced us to slow down, to reevaluate priorities, and to confront our own dreams and fears in a way we never expected. Like the characters on stage seeking escapism, we’ve experienced uncertainty, longing, and the quiet hope that something better lies ahead all while looking for outlets to make things feel as normal as we could. And it’s why I think this season at ECTC is so special. Each show holds up a mirror to the human experience. The ups and downs,

the struggles and triumphs, the dreams and nightmares.

Here at ECTC, we believe storytelling is a bridge that connects us all, no matter where we come from or what we’re going through. Just like Laura’s glass menagerie, they reflect our vulnerabilities, our dreams, and the strength we find in community. That’s why The Glass Menagerie isn’t just another play on the ECTC stage, it’s an invitation to see ourselves more clearly.

About Cameron Hughes

Cameron is the Marketing and Sponsor Relations Manager at Emerald Coast Theatre Company. He grew up on 30-A, graduating from Florida State University in 2023 with a Bachelor’s in Marketing and an M.B.A in 2024. After becoming a first generation master’s graduate, Cameron returned to the Emerald Coast in search of a valuable way to contribute to his community, thus landing him at ECTC.

POST-ACUTE

continued from page 11

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The specific coverage and out-of-pocket costs can be complex. You should always check directly with the Medicare program or your specific insurance

provider (Medicare Advantage, Medigap, or private plan) to understand the current coverage rules, facility network status and anticipated costs before receiving post-acute care.

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From Pen and Paper to the Canvas of Life

By TAMARA L. YOUNG

When Bradley Vander Veen was a restless little boy, life didn't hand him the easiest beginning. With his father in prison and his mother working long hours to keep the family afloat, Bradley had energy to spare and nowhere to put it. Trouble found him often at school—until his second-grade substitute teacher had an idea.

Instead of discipline, she handed him a pen and paper. "Art was a way to express myself and have people focus positive attention on me," Vander Veen recalled. That small act of encouragement changed the trajectory of his life.

In third grade, Bradley won his first art competition with a self-portrait. In high school, he began leaving his mark on walls — through four murals. His favorite, a World War II D-Day tribute, tested his skill. "It challenged me using only gray scale and working on shadow placements," he said.

Now 32, Vander Veen's art has found a new home in Destin. His heavy acrylics and flow-



ing pours echo the rhythms of the sea. With several currently on display at the Destin Library, his paintings capture a world of marine life, landscapes, and playful perspectives.

"My work is a collection of places, animals, and experiences," he explained. "It's about understanding the planet's environments and transforming them into a unique outlook of fun and creativeness, giving people a reminder of life's simple pleasures that our planet offers daily."

One signature element of his work is the way he incorporates repurposed materials. Seashells, sand, and recyclables aren't just objects to him—they're textures, memories, and reminders of shared responsibility. "We're not the only animals using the water," he said. "I hope it inspires people to clean up after being at the beach."

While his canvases continue to draw attention, Vander Veen also runs a full-time remodeling business—painting, power washing, and tackling nearly every task "except roofs and pools." Art, though, remains a passion. He welcomes commissions and is currently at work on a custom mural for Café Bienville in Niceville.

Vander Veen holds a bachelor's degree in Museum Studies and Gallery Practices from the University of Colorado, a program steeped in the care, conservation, and curation of cultural works.

For Destin locals and visitors alike, his pieces can be viewed through the end of 2025.

Among the color, the grit, and the movement of the pieces lies something even more profound—the reminder that creativity can change a life.



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Ask Destinites: State Legislators Preserve Public Access & Prevent Construction of Large Condo Development In Destin

This month in our Destinites Facebook group for locals (www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinites) was the following post and discussion. You may view the post and replies in their en-

tirety, on the group page.

Florida state legislators initiated a budget provision to consider spending \$84.5 million to purchase a waterfront parcel at the end of Gulf Shore Drive in Destin. The primary reason for the potential purchase was to preserve public access to the water and prevent the construction of a large, private condominium development.

As of late September 2025, Florida's state cabinet did approve purchasing about 4 acres of waterfront property in Destin for roughly \$84 million. The deal was bundled with other state land acquisitions, and one cabinet member expressed objections, but ultimately approved the package.

quest the specific budget language. The proposed purchase aligns with broader local efforts to expand and protect public beach access points.

Budget process and next steps.

The \$84.5 million provision was included in the 2025-26 state budget by Senate negotiators.

While Governor DeSantis did not initiate the request, the final budget, including this provision, was approved by the legislature and then signed by the governor.

Some local resident, group member responses:

1. From what I understand, they couldn't get the permit to put a condo there because the ground would not support it. Why are we wasting this much money on that small piece of property?
2. I thought the condo project was canceled because the ground was too soft to build on. If that's the case we (taxpayers) are WAY over paying for this. Who else is the developer going to sell it to? I smell a rat in this deal.
3. Any chances they would turn it into paid public? Like a pay to park spot for that beach area or turn the point into a paid beach zone to make up for that 84.5 mil? How does Destin plan to get that money back; it's not common for Destin to spend without a certainty of a return. I'm all for no more condos being built, but I am curious how this may affect the locals in positive and negative ways.
4. It sounds a lot like a bail-out to me.
5. How would 300 families

- logistically enjoy this parcel? There isn't enough parking for 300 cars down there.
6. Yeah, I don't think anyone in Destin would want 300 cars down there - but we do want the land.
 7. Waste of taxpayers' money with no parking.
 8. Maybe - but would rather have the state funds here versus spent in another location of Florida - also even though Holiday Isle is **not** a gated community they are letting the City know they are having trouble with getting to their homes (mostly summer & NYE) - so more parking might just jam up the area for both resident and "park goer"- not sure unless someone takes data of course & then that's still only a few months a year - maybe need volunteers to help manage parking & have an active readout near Gulf Shore Dr. & Hwy. 98 when parking is FULL.
 9. No more condos!
 10. I'm interested in how the \$84.5MIL price was established.

If you are a Destin resident or in the close surrounding area, I invite you to join our private, targeted group for locals and property owners at Facebook.com/groups/Destinites with 12,000+ members (Est. Oct. 2018). Check out our local business directory at Destinites.com where 500+ local businesses are already listed and enjoy advertising in our targeted group.



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