



MAY 2026
VOL. 8, NO. 10

DESTIN Life

PRSR STD
ECRWSS - EDDM
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Santa Rosa Beach, FL
PERMIT NO. #11

Postal Customer Local

A Natural Treasure in Our Backyard: The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

For many local residents, it's easy to drive along State Road 20 and not fully realize that just beyond the trees lies one of the most extraordinary environmental education centers in the country.

I had the special opportunity recently to visit the amazing E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center. And, believe me, it isn't just a place to visit — it's a point of pride for our local communities and a powerful example of how our area is helping lead the way in conservation, education and environmental stewardship.

Located in Freeport on the Nokuse Plantation, the center opened in 2009 thanks to the vision of the late M.C. Davis, a Walton County conservationist who believed deeply that people protect what they love. His mission was simple, but profound: give children and families the opportunity to experience nature first-hand, and they will grow up wanting to protect it.



That philosophy is rooted in the concept of "biophilia," a term coined by famed biologist Dr. E.O. Wilson, meaning a natural love for living things. It's a fitting name for a place that has quietly been changing lives in our own backyard for more than 15 years.

Today, the center operates as a nonprofit environmental education facility serving thousands of students each year, many from Walton and Okaloosa counties. Fourth- and seventh-grade students regularly visit for immersive

field experiences that go far beyond a typical field trip. Here, learning happens outside — in the woods, along trails, and through hands-on discovery.

"The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center lets children and adults explore a unique ecosystem that inspires curiosity and play with the benefit of having a knowledgeable staff available to answer the questions that naturally arise when engaging with nature. Sharing our passion for nature and conservation is our founda-



tion," says Executive Director Nicole Schafer.

For local families, it's especially meaningful knowing that children in our own community have access to this kind of experience. Many students leave with not only new knowledge, but a genuine appreciation for the natural beauty that surrounds us every day.

And that beauty is something special.

BIOPHILIA
continued on page 2



Norriego Point Reopens Just in Time for America's 250th — and a New Chapter for Destin

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

There are some places that just feel like Destin. Norriego Point has always been one of them.

It's where the harbor meets the Gulf, where boats glide through the East Pass, where dolphins surface almost daily — and where, if you've

NORRIEGO
continued on page 27



YEAR ROUND DEEP SEA FISHING

Individual Tickets or Private Charters Available
\$105 per Person for a 6-Hour Trip • Multiple Voyage Selections **FAST • CLEAN • AIR CONDITIONED • RESTROOMS**

Book online at www.DestinPartyBoatFishing.com or
Call Us at (850) 837-5088 | (888) 837-5088



Experience You Can Trust • *The Locals' Real Estate Pro*

Mary Anne Windes

CCIM, CRB, CRS, GRI, RRS, e-PRO.

REAL ESTATE
PROFESSIONALS
OF DESTIN, INC.



REAL ESTATE
PROFESSIONALS
OF NW FLA, INC.

www.Destin-Real-Estate.com | 210A Harbor Blvd. | 850.837.2211



Community

BIOPHILIA

continued from page 1

The Biophilia Center sits within the longleaf pine ecosystem, one of the most diverse and endangered habitats in North America. Thanks to restoration efforts on the Nokuse Plantation, millions of longleaf pines have been replanted, bringing this critical ecosystem back to life. It's a quiet but powerful success story happening right here at home.

Visitors to the center can encounter native wildlife, including birds, reptiles, pollinators and the beloved gopher tortoise — a keystone species that plays an important role in the health of the ecosystem. Inside, interactive exhibits and “animal ambassadors” help bring these lessons to life in a way that resonates with all ages.

Beyond its educational programs, the center also supports broader environmental initia-



tives, hosting researchers, educators and conservation leaders who are working to protect Florida's natural resources. Its sustainable practices — from conservation efforts to environmental programming — reflect the same values it teaches every day.

For those who haven't visited yet, the center is open to the public on select days and

through special events and seasonal programs. It's a perfect outing for your family, grandparents (like me) with visiting grandchildren, or anyone looking to reconnect with nature just minutes from home.

Did you know? The Nokuse Plantation surrounding the center spans more than 50,000 acres, making it one of the largest private conservation efforts in the Southeast — and it's right here in Freeport.

In a fast-growing area where so much is changing, the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center stands as something steady and lasting — a reminder of what makes this community so special.

It's not just a destination. It's part of who we are.

Summer Kickoff

Mark your calendar for the public's first “non-event” opportunity to come in for the season—

E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center's Summer Kickoff on May 30 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. This family-friendly fundraiser will feature live music by Jennifer Alvarado, food trucks, bounce houses, animal chats, raffles, and access to the Reptile Room. Admission is \$15 for ages 13 and



PHOTOS: JEFF TALBERT

up, \$10 for ages 4–12, and free for Bio-members. Guests are encouraged to bring a towel and spare clothes for water activities, and come ready to celebrate the start of summer surrounded by nature.



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

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

Editor & Publisher
Lori Leath Smith
Lori@LifeMediagr.com

Director, Advertising Sales
Scott Miller
Scott@LifeMediagr.com

Art Director
Kim Harper

Contributing Writers
Kimberly C. Cole
Mary Fomby
Christopher Manson
Barbara Palmgren
Michelle Ruschman
Doug Stauffer

To Advertise
850.688.9886

To submit events: Cali Hlavac
cali.hlavac@gmail.com

Destin Life assumes no financial liability for errors or omissions in printed advertising and reserves the right to reject/edit advertising or editorial submissions.

© Copyright 2026 Destin Life




LISA Y. SHORTS PITELL
ATTORNEY AT LAW

- Wills, Trusts, Estate Planning
- Corporation, LLCs, Business Law
- Taxation law & Tax returns
- Contracts
- Guardianship, Probate & Estate Administration

1402 Cat Mar Rd., Suite B, Niceville, Florida 32578
850.897.0045 | LYP@LYP-LAW.COM

The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience.

70th Annual



Billy Bowlegs Festival

May 14	May 15	May 16	May 18
4pm-6pm	5pm-9pm	10am-6pm	7pm
Little Scallywags Pirate Walk	Vendor Booths, Concerts at the Landing, Skirmish & Fireworks	Vendor Booths, Live Music by The Aces, Pirates Landing	Torchlight Parade

PRESENTED BY: 

Downtown Fort Walton Beach
www.billybowlegspiratefestival.com

Proceeds Benefitting the William Augustus Bowles Foundation 



America 250 Comes to Life: Countywide Celebration Heads to Crestview for Historic Parade and Festival

As communities across the nation prepare to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States, Okaloosa County is stepping into the spotlight with a celebration designed to honor the past, celebrate the present and inspire the future. And while the centerpiece event will take place in Crestview, Destin residents are invited to be part of what promises to be one of the largest patriotic gatherings in the county's history.

On Saturday, May 9, the Okaloosa County America 250 Commission Grand Parade & Celebration will transform downtown Crestview into a vibrant showcase of American pride, unity and heritage. From 4 to 10 p.m., Main Street will come alive with music, movement and meaning—bringing together families, veterans, community groups and visitors from across the Emerald Coast.

For many in Destin, this

milestone moment feels especially significant. As America approaches its semiquincentennial—250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence—it offers a rare opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices, resilience and vision that shaped the nation. It's also a chance for local communities, from the coast to the

county seat, to come together in a shared celebration of freedom.

The highlight of the evening will be the grand parade, featuring colorful floats, marching bands, veterans tributes and a wide range of community and cultural organizations. Spectators are encouraged to line Main Street dressed in red, white and blue—or even in colonial-era attire—adding to the immersive, patriotic atmosphere.



Adding a hometown-hero moment to the festivities, Crestview native and Olympian Mia Manganello will serve as one of the event's Grand Marshals. Fresh off earning a bronze medal for Team USA at the 2026 Winter Games in Milan, Italy, her presence brings both national pride and local inspiration to the celebration.

Beyond the parade, the event will offer a full evening of entertainment and family-friendly

fun. Live performances will energize the crowd, while food trucks and vendors provide a festive backdrop for gathering and connection. The goal, organizers say, is to create an experience that reflects the spirit and diversity of Okaloosa County—welcoming all ages and backgrounds.

The celebration is part of a broader, year-long initiative led by the Okaloosa County America 250 Commission, established earlier this year by the Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners. The 18-member commission represents a cross-section of the community—from historical organizations and education leaders to military, civic and cultural representatives—all working together to ensure the anniversary is marked with purpose and meaning.

For Destin residents, the May 9 event offers more than just a day trip inland—it's a chance to be part of history in the making. Whether attending to honor veterans, celebrate community or simply enjoy a festive evening with family and friends, the Grand Parade & Celebration invites the entire county to come together in a spirit of gratitude and pride.

As the nation looks ahead to its 250th birthday, moments like this serve as reminders that the American story is still being written—one community, one celebration and one shared experience at a time.

For details, visit Facebook at Okaloosa County America 250 or contact america250@myokaloosa.com.

Mark the calendar for Saturday, May 9, 2026, 4-10 p.m. in Downtown Crestview (114 N. Main St.)

Watch Repair Service

Trust The Experts

In-House Certified Technicians

MCCASKILL & COMPANY
— Finest Jewelry & Watches —

13390 Highway 98 West | Destin, FL

(850) 650-2262



Community



The Menopause Conversation Every Woman Needs (But Rarely Gets)

By DR. KAREN DEVORE, TORTOISE CLINIC

What if I told you there would be a period in your life, one that could last up to 10 years, that would fundamentally shift how your body feels and functions?

Imagine a season marked by persistent fatigue, disrupted sleep, weight gain that no longer responds the way it once did, and emotional shifts that feel unfamiliar. And that you would be expected to carry all of this



TORTOISE CLINIC

 INTEGRATIVE HEALTH

HOLISTIC HEALTH • ACUPUNCTURE
MASSAGE • APOTHECARY

Now Offering

PEPTIDE THERAPIES
IV INFUSIONS
IN-HOUSE LABS
HRT



Scan the QR code to learn more and book today!



2441 U.S. HWY 98, SANTA ROSA BEACH, FL 32459
TORTOISECLINIC.COM | 850.267.5611



\$30 OFF

NEW PATIENT OFFER

Present this coupon and receive \$30 off any service at the Tortoise Clinic. One coupon per person.

while maintaining a career, supporting a family, and showing up for your community. For many women, this isn't theoretical. It is the reality of perimenopause and menopause.

For years, this transition was rarely discussed openly. That is changing, as it should. Many women are still navigating this blindly without understanding what is happening, what to expect, or what options they have to support themselves.

This is a natural progression, but it is not always easy, and most women are never taught how to navigate it. With the right understanding and guidance, this phase can shift from something reactive and uncertain to something far more stable and intentional.

Here's what I would share with every woman, regardless of where she is in her transition:

Build Your Team

You do not have to navigate this phase alone. When you understand what is happening in your body, your decisions, and your outcomes, improve. Your health deserves the same level of support as every other area of your life.

Build a team that will explore this transition with you—one that listens, collaborates, and individualizes your care. The right support shifts this experience from reactive to intentional.

Explore Your Options

Menopause is not a uni-

form experience, and your care should not be either.

Support may include nutrition and lifestyle changes, targeted supplementation, hormone therapy when appropriate, and restorative therapies. The goal is not to push through symptoms. It is to understand them and respond appropriately. If something feels off, it is worth addressing.

Rethink How You Fuel Your Body

Hormonal shifts increase sensitivity to blood sugar fluctuations, driving energy instability, cravings, weight gain, and brain fog.

Focus on stability: prioritize protein and hydration, include healthy fats and limit highly processed carbohydrates. When blood sugar is stable, energy, mood, and metabolic function follow.

Build Strength—Not Just Endurance

Muscle becomes increasingly important during this phase of life. Hormonal changes contribute to muscle loss, reduced bone density, and slower metabolic function. Resistance training is one of the most effective ways to counter this.

Build up to strength training 2-4 times per week. This not only preserves muscle, but it places necessary stress on long bones, helping maintain bone

Continued on page 33

Deer Moss Creek®

New homes in a vibrant community of Niceville, Florida



621 CHAMOMILE COURT
4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,761 SF
\$924,935 | construction completed
Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



237 FOXGLOVE RUN
4 Bedroom | 4.5 Bath | 4,364 SF
\$1,329,990 | construction completed
Listed by Yeska Sand 850.368.5936



307 GAZELLE COURT
4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,450 SF
\$665,000 | ready July 2026
Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



313 GAZELLE COURT
4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,421 SF
\$601,000 | ready August 2026
Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



402 MARSH DEER RUN
4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,092 SF
\$581,000 | ready August 2026
Listed by Yeska Sand 850.368.5936



251 FOXGLOVE RUN
4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 3,994 SF
\$1,425,000 | ready October 2026
Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



Contact Ruckel Properties for a full list of available lots.

PHASE 11 LOTS
SIZE: 0.16 - 0.26 ACRE
PRICE: \$100,000 - \$149,000

PHASE 7A ESTATE LOTS
SIZE: 0.49 - 0.64
PRICE: \$209,000 - \$269,000



850.678.2223
RUCKELPROPERTIES.COM

Visit our model homes
in Deer Moss Creek®

1413 CLARY SAGE LANE
Monday - Saturday 12 - 4 pm
Sunday 1 - 4 pm

301 GAZELLE COURT
Friday & Saturday 12 - 4 pm
Sunday 1 - 4 pm

Events at the Beach

Magic & Comedy Destin Returns — Bigger, Bolder and More Interactive Ongoing Shows | The Palms Resort, Destin

It's back — and better than ever. Following a sold-out debut season, the Magic & Comedy Destin residency returns to The Palms Resort with an upgraded, high-energy show featuring up-close illusions, sharp comedy and immersive audience interaction.

Headliner Bart Rockett, a globally recognized performer who has entertained in more than 90 countries and starred in his own nationally syndicated TV show, brings big-stage talent to an intimate coastal setting. His fast-paced performance blends magic, comedy and ventriloquism — with every show offering a unique, interactive experience. Adding to the excitement, Rockett's children, Kadan and Brooklyn, make special guest appearances throughout the season, bringing their own star power from film, television and viral media. Guests can enjoy all table seating with food

and drinks delivered directly to their seats, creating a seamless, elevated night out. Arrive early or stay after to dine at the adjacent Blue Lagoon restaurant.

Showtimes include 7 p.m. evening performances and select 4 p.m. Sunday matinees. Seating is limited and shows often sell out, so advance reservations are recommended. Free parking is available.

Tickets & info: MagicDestin.com

CCA Emerald Coast Banquet & Auction Returns May 7

May 7 | Shoreline Church, Destin

The 32nd Annual CCA Florida Emerald Coast Chapter Banquet & Auction, presented by The Ships Chandler, returns Thursday, May 7 from 6–10 p.m. at Shoreline Church in Destin. Known as the “fishing party of the year,” this popular event raises critical funds to protect and enhance Florida's marine resources.

Guests will enjoy a catered dinner, drinks, an expansive si-

lent auction, exciting raffles and a lively live auction featuring exclusive items, artwork and trips across the state, country and beyond.

CCA has been actively investing in local conservation efforts, including a recent \$500,000 contribution toward the upcoming sinking of the SS United States, one of the organization's largest project investments to date.

Tickets and sponsorships are available now. Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate, connect and support the future of our coastal habitats and fisheries.

Tickets & info: Register in advance to reserve your spot

Crawfish, Community & a Cause: Destin Rotary's Annual Bash Returns

May 8 | Towne Centre at Seascapes | Food, Music, Auction & Family Fun

Laissez les bons temps rouler! The Rotary Club of Destin's 14th Annual Cajun Crawfish Bash returns Friday, May 8, from 5:30–9 p.m. at the Towne Centre at Seascapes, co-hosted by Mezcal Mexican Grill. This high-energy fundraiser supports the Robert Hafner Scholarship Fund, A Bed 4 Me, Harvest House, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center and Fisher House of the Emerald Coast—benefiting local students and families while helping fight hunger and expand opportunity across the community. Guests can enjoy fresh Louisiana crawfish with all the fixings—potatoes, sausage and corn—served up by Destin Rotary volunteers. Not a crawfish fan? No problem. Burgers, hot dogs and chicken will also be grilled fresh on-site. The evening features live music from Black Eyed Blonde, a silent auction, bourbon pull, magic by MagiShaun, a photo booth and face painting for the kids.

Tickets are \$40 for a crawfish plate, \$50 for all-you-can-eat and \$15 for kids' or non-crawfish meals (ages 3 and under free). Each ticket includes one complimentary drink. VIP tables for 10 are available for \$500, with upgrade options for all-you-can-eat.

The event is family-friendly and open to the public. Tickets are available online. The Towne



Centre at Seascapes is located at 80 Seascapes Drive in Miramar Beach, across from Silver Sands Premium Outlets.

69th Annual Blessing of the Fleet

May 14, 4–6 p.m. | Destin Harbor (behind Brotula's Seafood House & Steamer)

Destin's beloved Blessing of the Fleet returns on Ascension Day with a 4 p.m. Captains' Praise & Worship Service under the tent, followed by the traditional vessel blessing at 5 p.m. More than 130 boats participated last year. A community Fish Feast begins around 5:15 p.m. (suggested donation). Free parking available at Brotula's and the city lot across the street (starting 2 p.m.). T-shirts available on-site.

Captains wishing to participate should register by emailing immanuel@iacdestin.org or calling 850-837-6324. For more information, visit iacdestin.org or facebook.com/TheChurchOfDestin.

Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival Returns With Swashbuckling Fun May 14–16 | Fort Walton Beach Landing

Ahoy, mateys! The 70th annual Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival sails back into Fort Walton Beach May 14–16 at the Landing, bringing a lively weekend of pirate-themed fun, live entertainment, fireworks and family-friendly activities. Led by Captain Billy Bowlegs LXX, Rique Gwin, and his Krewe, the festival celebrates local history while boosting tourism and community spirit. Guests can expect vendors, music and the festival's signature “skirmish” Friday night — with Captain Billy playfully “captured” — before returning Saturday to officially storm the city.

Festivities also include the Little Pirates Scavenger Hunt on Thursday and an ongoing coin hunt leading up to the event, with clues shared on local Cumulus radio stations and the festival's Facebook page. The celebration continues beyond the weekend with the Billy Bowlegs Parade on Monday, May 18, along Eglin Parkway. A downtown Fort Walton Beach pub crawl is also set for May 8 to kick off the excitement.

The festival is free to attend and benefits the William Augustus Bowles Historical Foundation, supporting local history and heritage.

Info: krewesofbowlegs.com | Follow Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival on Facebook

Gate To Gate Memorial Run/Walk 40th Anniversary

May 16 | Eglin East Gate Sports Complex, Eglin AFB

Honor service and sacrifice during the 40th Anniversary Gate To Gate Memorial Run/Walk on Saturday, May 16, at the Eglin East Gate Sports Complex. Held on Armed Forces Day, the historic 4.4-mile race returns to its traditional gate-to-gate course, inviting runners and walkers to pay tribute to America's fallen heroes while celebrating the spirit of community and military heritage. Opening ceremonies begin at 6:45 a.m., with the race starting at 7 a.m. Participants may register individually or as four-person teams, and are encouraged to dedicate their journey in memory of loved ones or military heroes. Online registration is available at tinyurl.com/40th-GateToGate, with more details at eglin96fss.com/gatetogate. Registration is limited to 1,500 participants, and only 1,000 commemorative medals will be awarded.

MAGIC + COMEDY

VOTED
“Best Date-Night Activity”
“Best Indoor Family Activity”

The Palms of Destin Resort

“Brilliant, incredible magic & fantastic showmanship!”
Simon Cowell

“Really good magic!”
Kelly Ripa

“He will blow you away!”
Ryan Seacrest

Reservations Required:

MagicDestin.com

For ALL Ages!

Alcoholic & Non-Alcoholic Drinks Available in Showroom
FREE Parking - 4207 Indian Bayou Trail - Destin

The Heart Behind the Bride

A Mother's Role in "I Do"



BY KRISTIN SULLIVAN, GENERAL MANAGER, THE ALICE

The relationship between a mother and daughter often finds one of its most meaningful expressions during the wedding planning process and on the wedding day itself. It is a season layered with much emotion; joy, nostalgia, pride, and sometimes even tension as two generations navigate expectations, traditions, and the inevitable passage of time.

The Planning Process: Collaboration and Growth

Wedding planning has a way of bringing out both the best and the most complex dynamics in a mother-daughter relationship. For many mothers, this is not just an event to organize, it is a moment they have imagined for years. For daughters, it is often the first major life event where they are fully in charge of shaping their own vision.

This intersection can create friction. Differences in taste, budget priorities, guest lists, and traditions may surface quickly. A mother may lean toward classic elegance, while a daughter envisions something modern and unconventional. These differences, however, are not simply obstacles, they are opportunities for growth.

When approached with openness and mutual respect, the planning process becomes a collaboration rather than a negotiation. Mothers bring experience, perspective, and often a steadying presence. Daughters bring fresh ideas, personal identity, and a clear sense of what feels authentic to them. Together, they can create something richer than either could alone.

As with everything in life communication is key. The most successful planning experiences

are grounded in listening, not just hearing preferences, but understanding the emotions behind them. A mother's insistence on inviting certain guests may stem from lifelong relationships. A daughter's desire for a specific detail may reflect her personal story. When both sides feel seen and valued, compromise becomes far more natural.

The Emotional Undercurrent

Beyond logistics, wedding planning carries a quiet, emotional current. For mothers, it can mark a transition from being the primary caregiver to witnessing their daughter step into a new chapter of independence. There is pride, certainly, but also a subtle sense of letting go.

For daughters, the process often brings a renewed appreciation for their mothers. Moments that once felt routine shopping, decision-making, and late-night conversations take on new significance. Many daughters begin to see their mothers not just as parents, but as individuals with their own histories, sacrifices, and dreams.

These realizations deepen the bond. What may begin as a checklist-driven process often evolves into something more



meaningful: shared memories, laughter, and even the occasional tearful conversation that strengthens understanding between them.

The Wedding Day: A Shared Milestone

When the wedding day finally arrives, the energy shifts. The planning is complete, and what remains is presence being fully in the moment.

For mothers, this day is often a culmination of years of love and effort. Seeing their daughter walk down the aisle is both a proud and poignant moment. It is a visual representation of a journey that began long before the wedding itself.

For daughters, the day often brings clarity about the role their mother has played in shaping who they are. Small gestures such as helping with the dress, a quiet hug before the ceremony, and a few whispered words carry immense weight.

Some of the most memorable moments between mothers and daughters happen in the quiet spaces of the day: getting ready together, sharing a private look before the ceremony, or dancing together at the reception. These moments are not staged or planned they are felt.

Honoring a Mother's Presence When She Is No Longer Here

For brides whose mothers have passed, the wedding day can carry a different kind of emotional weight. Alongside the joy is a quiet absence, a longing for the person who would have shared every detail, every decision, and every moment.

Finding ways to include and honor a mother's presence can be deeply meaningful. These gestures do not need to be grand; often, the most personal touches carry the greatest significance.

Some brides choose to incorporate a piece of their mother into their attire, a handkerchief sewn into a dress, a piece of jewelry, or even fabric from a cherished garment. Others reserve a seat during the ceremony, include a mention in the program, or display a photograph in a private or shared space.

Moments of reflection can also be woven into the day. A quiet letter written to her, a pause before walking down the aisle, or a song that holds special meaning can create space to feel connected.

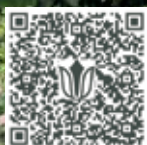
Importantly, there is no single "right" way to honor a mother who has passed. For some, it may be a visible tribute; for others, it may be a private acknowledgment carried in the heart. What matters most is that it feels authentic.

In many ways, a mother's presence is not defined by physical proximity. It lives in the values she instilled, the love she gave, and the person her daughter has become. On a wedding day, those things are everywhere.

Why Multi-Day Celebrations Matter: The Role of The Alice in Destin

Modern weddings are increasingly moving beyond a single day, evolving into multi-day experiences that allow families to slow down and truly be together. This shift is especially meaningful for mothers and daughters, who often find that the most memorable moments

Continued on page 25




THE ALICE
A GATHERING PLACE

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.

Book now!

Corporate Events | Holiday Parties | Weddings
Contact Kristen at inquiry@the-alice.com | (850) 460-0425

www.the-alice.com  



Community

Cali's To Do In Destin! MAY 2026

All Month

Bart Rockett's Magic & Comedy | Shows nightly 7pm; Sundays 4pm | The Palms Destin

5

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB

6

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Run Club

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Wednesday Night Concert Series: Duesh | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

Contractors Connect | 4:30pm | AJ's Grayton Beach

CCA Emerald Coast Banquet & Auction | 6pm | Shoreline Church, Destin

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

Concerts In The Village: Brass Transit | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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

Bloom & Glow | 12pm | ReVi Aesthetics

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Destin Rotary Crawfish Bash | 5:30pm | Towne Centre at Seascape | MB

Brooks Street Pub Crawl: Billy Bowlegs Pirate Edition | 6pm | Downtown FWB

Concerts at The Landing: Miles Flatt | 6pm | The Landing Fort Walton Beach

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

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

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

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Grom Surf Competition | 9am | Pompano Joe's | Miramar Beach

City of Destin's Painting at the Park | 9am | Captain Royal Melvin Heritage Park

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Pink Coyote Dessert Co Book Club | 10am | Pink Coyote Dessert Co

All White Brunch Party | 11am | Sound-side

Saturday Sing-A-Long Brunch | 11:30am | Skybar Destin

Wellness at the Water | 2pm | Harborwalk Village



Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Festival

12th Annual Crawfish Boil | 3pm | Cabana Café

Murder Mystery Dinner | 6pm | Fudpuckers Destin

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Sound Bath Sundays | 6pm | Hotel Effie

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

Mahjong at Ovide | 11:30am | Ovide at Hotel Effie

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

Bingo Night | 6pm | American Legion, 311 Main Street

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Run Club

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

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

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

Little Scallywags | 4pm | Downtown FWB (by Parlor Doughnut)

Blessing of the Fleet | 4pm | Destin Harbor

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

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

Concerts In The Village: Turnstile | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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

Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival & Concerts at The Landing | 5pm-9pm | The Landing Fort Walton Beach

Concerts at The Landing: Grace & Grit | 6pm | The Landing Fort Walton Beach

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Sandestin Wine Festival Grand Tastings | 5pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

Jaws in Concert | 7:30pm | Destin FWB Convention Center

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

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

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Fireworks for Billy Bowlegs | 8:30pm | The Landing Fort Walton Beach

Gate To Gate Memorial Run/Walk | 7am | Eglin East Gate Sports Complex, Eglin AFB

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Farmers Market | 10am | Harborwalk Village

Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Festival | 10am | Harborwalk Village

Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival | 10am-6pm | The Landing Fort Walton Beach

Emerald Coast Bike Blessing | 11am | Emerald Coast Harley Davidson

Saturday Sing-A-Long Brunch | 11:30am | Skybar Destin

Tequila & Taco Festival | 1pm-4pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Festival | 10am | Harborwalk Village

Sound Bath Sundays | 6pm | Hotel Effie

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

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

Bingo Night | 6pm | American Legion, 311 Main Street

Billy Bowlegs Parade | 7pm | Eglin Parkway

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

The Traveling Painter | 5:30pm | ILJ Schooners

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Run Club

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Wednesday Night Concert Series: Blackwater Calvary | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

21

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

Bands on the Blvd: Summer Music Series | 6pm | Grand Boulevard

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

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

Concerts In The Village: Boogie Wonder Band | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

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

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Concerts at The Landing: Count The Years | 6pm | The Landing Fort Walton Beach

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

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

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

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Farmers Market | 10am | Harborwalk Village

Saturday Sing-A-Long Brunch | 11:30am | Skybar Destin

Memorial Day Celebration - Six Piece Suits | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Memorial Day Celebration - Saltwater Revival | 6pm | Baytowne Wharf

Sound Bath Sundays | 6pm | Hotel Effie

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Blood Drive | 11am-4pm | 311 Main Street, Destin

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

Silent Disco | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Bingo Night | 6pm | American Legion, 311 Main Street

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

Harbor Days ft. The Harbor Street Parade | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Ricks Crab Trap FWB

Boomin' Tuesdays Fireworks | 7:15pm | Baytowne Wharf

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay Run Club

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

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

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Gulf Coast Jam | Frank Brown Park, PCB

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice

Harbor Nights | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

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

Bands on the Blvd: Summer Music Series | 6pm | Grand Boulevard

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

Concerts In The Village: The Molly Ringwalds | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Thursdaze Light Show (Drones) | 9pm | Baytowne Wharf

Fireworks | 9pm | Harborwalk Village

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

Gulf Coast Jam | Frank Brown Park, PCB

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

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Concerts at The Landing: Stormfolk | 6pm | The Landing Fort Walton Beach

Coastal Country Concert | 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 | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Gulf Coast Jam | Frank Brown Park, PCB

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Farmers Market | 10am | Harborwalk Village

Hurricane Expo | 10am | Okaloosa County Admin Building

Saturday Sing-A-Long Brunch | 11:30am | Skybar Destin

Saturday Social | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Gulf Coast Jam | Frank Brown Park, PCB

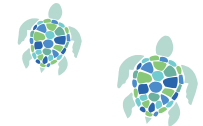
DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk

Sound Bath Sundays | 6pm | Hotel Effie

Scallywag Sundays | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill



EVENTS • LIVE MUSIC • FOOD
your local guide for everything
WWW.TODOINDESTIN.COM
TO DO IN DESTIN @TODOINDESTIN TO DO IN DESTIN

Baytowne Wharf Bursts Into May with Music, Fireworks and Fun!

Get ready—May is bursting with energy at The Village of Baytowne Wharf! From sunset strolls to live music, themed nights to family-friendly fun, there’s something happening around every corner. The Village is buzzing, and its shops and eateries are ready to welcome you to play, dine, dance and discover. Whether you’re sipping something sweet by the lagoon, grooving under the stars or simply soaking in the vibrant atmosphere—there’s no better time to experience Baytowne.



Welcome Summer During Memorial Day Celebration Weekend!

Saturday, May 23
7–9 p.m. | Live Music with Six Piece Suits

Sunday, May 24
6–9:15 p.m. | Live Music with Saltwater Revival

Kick off the “100 Days of Summer” with a full weekend of music, family fun and fireworks!

On Saturday, May 23, enjoy a high-energy performance by the Six Piece Suits from 7–9 p.m. on the Events Plaza Stage.

On Sunday, May 24, the celebration continues with live music from Saltwater Revival from 6–9:15 p.m., plus free children’s activities during the show. The evening wraps with a spectacular fireworks display over the lagoon at 9 p.m. It’s a can’t-miss weekend filled with music, shopping, dining and festive fun.



annual Tequila & Taco Fest brings together local restaurants and food trucks competing for Best Taco and Best Margarita on the Emerald Coast.

Sample a wide variety of tequilas and margaritas—from blancos to añejos and even mezcal—while enjoying live music and a lively, family-friendly atmosphere. Don’t miss the crowd-favorite Chihuahua Beauty Pageant and your chance to vote for the People’s Choice Award.

featuring two interactive shows at 7 and 8 p.m. Perfect for kids and the young at heart.

Wednesday Night Concert Series

Wednesdays, May 6–27
7–9 p.m. | FREE

Bring your lawn chairs and blankets and enjoy live music under the stars each Wednesday night at the Events Plaza Stage. This popular series features a mix of local and regional talent across a variety of genres.
May 6: Duchess
May 13: Boukou Groove
May 20: Blackwater Cavalry
May 27: Modern Eldorados

Bubbly Baytowne

Thursday, May 21
5–7 p.m. | FREE (21+)

Sip, shop and stroll during this sparkling evening in the Village. Guests 21 and older can enjoy complimentary champagne tastings while browsing participating retail shops throughout Baytowne Wharf.

Tequila & Taco Fest Returns!

Saturday, May 16
1–4 p.m. | Ticketed Event

One of the Southeast’s most flavorful festivals is back! The

Scallywag Sunday

Sundays beginning May 31
7–9 p.m. | FREE

Set sail for family fun each Sunday night! Join Captain Davy for an evening of magic, music and pirate adventures,



9:15 p.m. Before the show, enjoy a lively DJ dance party starting at 7:15 p.m. with DJ Mike Whitney in the Events Plaza.

Thursdaze Lights Show Thursdays beginning May 28 | 9 p.m. | FREE

Experience a unique aerial display that blends technology and coastal charm. This dazzling light show is the perfect way to end a night in the Village.

Don’t forget to tune in to Beach TV to catch live updates and daily happenings from The Village of Baytowne Wharf—all year long.

Boomin’ Tuesday

Tuesdays beginning May 26 | 7:15–9:15 p.m. | FREE

Turn your eyes to the sky as Baytowne lights up the night with fireworks over the lagoon at



Community

Warning: Unlimited Tacos and Tequila Ahead — The Gulf Coast’s Biggest Fiesta Returns May 16!

Every May, **Extreme Festival & Events** transforms the Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort into the Gulf Coast’s most spirited fiesta — and this year is no exception. The **13th Annual Tequila & Taco Fest** returns on **Saturday, May 16, 2026**, bringing together the best tacos, the finest tequilas, and an energy that simply cannot be matched anywhere on the Emerald Coast.

Recognized as the **second longest-running Tequila & Taco Fest in the United States** and a **Gold Medal winner for Best Event in Walton County**, this award-winning festival has earned its place as a beloved spring tradition for locals and visitors from across the Southeast. With a history of sell-outs, early ticket purchases are strongly encouraged.

From **1:00 PM to 4:00 PM**, more than **30 top taco vendors** will fire up their grills and compete for the prestigious title of Best Taco in Northwest Florida, with a **\$4,250 total prize purse on the line** — including a \$2,500 grand prize for first place. Guests enjoy **unlimited taco tastings** as they make their way through every booth, while judges score each entry on taste, presentation, and texture. The **Best Margarita Competition** adds even more flair, with both judge and People’s Choice awards up for grabs.

Beyond the competition,



guests can explore **40 tequila tasting tents** offering **unlimited tequila and margarita tastings**, enjoy imported beers, and dance to **live music** and a mariachi band all afternoon. Thrill-seekers can

test their limits in the **Macho Nacho Eating Contest** and the fiery **Muy Caliente Pepper Eating Contest** — each offering a **\$250 prize** to the bravest competitor. Show off your festival style in the **Best**

Dressed Contest for another shot at \$250. Face painting and interactive activities round out a celebration the whole family can enjoy.

For those looking to elevate the experience, the exclusive **Fast Pass Party Pack** offers VIP perks including a pre-party at **Ara Rooftop inside Hotel Effie** from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM, skip-the-line access, premi-



um spirit tastings, drink specials, and an after-party back at Ara starting at 4:00 PM.

Planning to make a weekend of it? **Book your stay with My Vacation Haven** and enjoy exclusive discount rates for festival guests. A special thank you to the major sponsor, **The Zen Companies Inc.**, for making this year’s event possible.

A portion of proceeds benefits the **Fisher House of the Emerald Coast**, supporting military families in their time of need — making every taco and every sip mean just a little bit more.

Tickets are available now at **efestevents.com**.

LOCATION: SEASCAPE TOWNE CENTRE (NEAR MEZCAL MEXICAN GRILL)

\$40 - Crawfish Plate | \$50 - All You Can Eat | \$15 - Kids' or Non-Crawfish Meal | Children 3 & under eat free

FRIDAY
May 8, 2026
5:30pm - 9'ish

LIVE MUSIC PERFORMED BY:
Black Eyed Blonde

PROCEEDS BENEFIT:

CRAWFISH • COMMUNITY • CAUSE

Scan for Tickets!



13th Annual **TEQUILA & TACO FEST**

Saturday, May 16, 2026 | 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Village of Baytowne Wharf, Sandestin, FL



-  **Unlimited Tacos & Tequila Tastings**
-  **Live Music & Mariachi Band**
-  **\$4,250 Taco Competition Prize Purse**
-  **Muy Caliente Pepper Eating Contest**
-  **Best Dressed Contest – \$250 Prize**
-  **Fast Pass VIP Party Pack Available**

GET TICKETS: efestevents.com

Presented by Extreme Festival & Events | Major Sponsor: The Zen Companies Inc.



Mayor Bobby Wagner and
PIO Tamara Young, PhD

“Reel Talk” from the City of Destin

Caught in the Current: The Simulator That Could Save Lives

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

TY: Rip currents are a natural part of our water, but they can be terrifying and even fatal if an individual is unfamiliar with how to navigate being caught in one. We're thrilled Destin Fire Rescue was recently awarded a state funded rip current simulator.

BW: This is going to be an invaluable asset for our coastal community. Our emerald-green water is one of the things that makes Destin so special, drawing visitors from all over and inspiring many to call this place home.

But with that beauty comes real power, and rip currents are a reminder that our water deserves both enjoyment and respect.

TY: Our partnership with Emerald Coast Fitness Foundation, the Aquatic Center in Destin will allow youth and beachgoers hands-on training in rip current survival skills. That's big. Talking the talk is

BW: I cannot wait to try it out at the Aquatic Center. The staff and facilities there are outstanding, and they consistently offer activities and water safety programs for all ages. I have seen everything from toddlers learning to float to seniors staying active in the pool. For me, it is especially meaningful because

I have been going there since middle school swim team days.

TY: Rip currents account for roughly 80% of beach rescues and nearly 100 fatalities across the USA annually. The challenge is explaining how to react to something you can't easily see when you're in the water. A simulator like this makes the invisible visible.

BW: Like most locals, I think we have all seen the diagram showing how a rip current pulls you away from shore and why swimming parallel to the beach can help you escape it. But reading about it and experiencing that force are two very different things. In a real moment of panic, that hands-on understanding

can make all the difference.

TY: The simulator provides a current of up to 3,000 gallons per minute, demonstrating the very real and very powerful force of a current, but in a controlled pool environment.

BW: Wow, I did not realize it was that many gallons. It definitely makes you wonder how long anyone could swim against that kind of force, and the truth is, probably not very long. That is exactly why this simulator matters. It gives locals, lifeguards, and visitors a chance to understand the power of a rip current in a safe, controlled environment so they can be better prepared if they ever face one in the Gulf.

TY: And before anyone asks, we're happy to say that this was a grant at no cost to our taxpayers.

BW: That is the cherry on top. So many of the best things we are able to bring to our community happen through strong partnerships and grant opportunities. It is one more example of how we can deliver world-class resources and experiences for our locals without placing a heavier tax burden on them. That is the kind of smart, community-focused investment Destin is all about.

TY: Yes! Can't wait to share more and tout this as details come out of how to participate!

City Clerk: A Happy Hello and a Bittersweet Well Wishes

BY TAMARA YOUNG

After more than a quarter century of service, the City of Destin is preparing to say goodbye to a familiar and respected

leader. City Clerk Rey Bailey will retire at the end of May, closing out a 26-year career with the City, along with 22 years of prior service in the United States Air

Force. His military career took him to Georgia, Nebraska, Italy, and Hurlburt Field, experiences that helped shape the steady, disciplined leadership style he later

brought to Destin. When reflecting on his time with the City, Rey points first to the people. From mayors and councilmembers to coworkers across depart-

ments, he has always valued the relationships built along the way. That people-first mindset is a big

Continued on page 18

LARGEST SELECTION OF STREET LEGAL CARTS

EXCLUSIVE GIFT

Present this layout upon purchasing a cart to receive an exclusive gift.



SALES • SERVICE • PARTS AND ACCESSORIES • FINANCING • RENTALS

Join the *Neighborhood* Fun

SHOP BY
BRANDS

Garia
Star EV
EvoLution

GEM Car
Hunt VE
Club Car

Yamaha
Denago EV
Atlas

Epic/Icon
Hunt VE



Santa Rosa Beach
(850) 622 2000

www.ElectricCartCompany.com



It's Not Just the Crawfish: Why the Emerald Coast Keeps Getting Chosen



BY PAUL DOMENECH

It's the crawfish on the Emerald Coast.

If you've been here long enough, you know it's not just what's in the pot that brings people here.

I believe we're in for a busy summer. The emerald blue water, the sugary quartz sand beaches, the added carriers flying into our airport, and of course, the vibe. Once people experience it, it sticks. That combination is setting us up for a strong wave of tourism... and a fresh round of transplants.

But why? There are a lot of

factors driving movement right now—taxes, politics, lifestyle shifts, but that's another article. What I'm focused on here is tourism and the quiet strategy behind it: people planning their exit before they ever make the move.

In recent months, I've received a large influx of calls for condos. And if you follow real estate at all, you know the condo market was basically at a standstill.

A few reasons for that. Interest rates were high. On top of that, the mandatory structural integrity studies due by 2025 created a big unknown. These studies require reserves to be fully funded, which often means assessments charged to owners. When buyers don't know what those numbers look like yet, they hesitate.

Then there were rentals. They weren't performing the way many expected. A lot of projections were built on peak numbers, not real averages. And with the amount of competition



from large vacation rental companies, some of those numbers started getting... let's just say, a little optimistic.

If the units aren't renting the way they were projected to, you can see how that affects everything, from pricing to confidence.

That was before. So, what's going on now? Timing is interesting. With conflict overseas, international travel isn't as appealing right now. And let's be real, there's never a good time for conflict. I love traveling the world, but not today. Not until

things settle down.

So, people are making a responsible decision: stay state-side.

And when they do that, they start looking for a place to visit... or revisit... or eventually land.

The Emerald Coast checks that box.

At the same time, we've seen a bit of stability return, ceasefire talks, the stock market responding, confidence creeping back in. And when that happens, people start moving money. Not just sitting on it, but placing it

somewhere they feel is solid.

Real estate. So now we're seeing movement again. Condos that were quiet are starting to get attention. Calls are picking up. People are asking questions again instead of waiting.

So be ready, because they're coming. And here's the part most people miss... this isn't just pressure. It's also fuel.

These condos filling back up means new money coming in. It means support for local businesses. It means improving what's already here instead of constantly pushing to build more.

The crawfish is good, but that's not the only thing cook'n on the Emerald Coast.

Stay grounded. Stay informed. And if you've been here a while, just smile a little when someone "discovers" what you've known the whole time.

It's simple.

This place isn't changing. It's being chosen.

A House Sold Name



DOMENECH
GROUP

Emerald Coast Real Estate

kw EMERALD COAST
KELLERWILLIAMS. REALTY

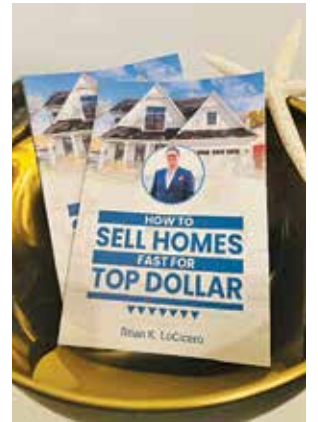
Paul A. Domenech

Paul@TheDomenechGroup.com

(850) 543-1418

thedomenechgroup.com

Trends & Treasures!



Shine Bright This Season with Custom Sparkle Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Spring brings color, celebration and the perfect excuse to add a little sparkle—and Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry is ready to help you shine. Inspired by the season's vibrant hues, owner Ashleigh Woolly and her team create stunning designs in diamonds, gemstones and precious metals—each piece as unique as the moment it celebrates.

Whether you're searching for a meaningful Mother's Day gift, a graduate keepsake, an engagement ring or even a patriotic piece for America's 250th, Beyond Measure offers both ready-to-wear beauty and custom creations tailored just for you. Step into the City Market Bayside showroom to browse rings, bracelets, necklaces and earrings, or sit down for a one-on-one design experience. "Helping people celebrate life's most meaningful moments is what we love most," Woolly says. With hundreds of custom designs and a passion for quality craftsmanship, the team turns inspiration into unforgettable jewelry.

Start your custom journey today.

(850) 424-7011 | [Facebook.com/beyondmeasurejewelers](https://www.facebook.com/beyondmeasurejewelers)
BeyondMeasureJewelers.com

Give Mom the Gift of Wellness This May CRYO850 Performance and Recovery

May is all about celebrating the women who give so much—and CRYO850 Performance and Recovery is making it easy

to give back with rejuvenating, feel-good experiences designed just for her. Their popular Two-for-One Day Pass (\$99, \$175 value) offers a full afternoon of wellness, including the infrared sauna, Emerald Coast Igloo, red light therapy, vibration therapy and compression lounge—perfect for relaxing, detoxing and recharging together.

For a beauty boost, the Collagen Enhancement Treatment (\$145, \$175 value) combines hot and cold therapies with a wrinkle-reducing treatment, finishing with an oxygen mini facial and liquid collagen infusion for glowing, youthful skin.

With drug-free, advanced treatments and the option to use HSA and FSA funds, CRYO850 makes self-care both accessible and impactful. Pre-register online and treat Mom—or yourself—to something truly revitalizing.

(850) 279-4145 | [Facebook.com/CRYO850](https://www.facebook.com/CRYO850)

CRYO850.com

Elevate Your Look with Effortless Style Pure & Couture Salon

At Pure & Couture Salon, beauty is more than a service—it's a personalized experience rooted in passion, expertise and connection. Owner Adrienne Brackett has built a space where guests feel like family and leave feeling confident, refreshed and truly seen.

"Our guests often say the atmosphere feels special," Brackett says. "That's because we genuinely care about every person who walks through our doors."

From precision cuts and color

to skincare and styling, the team takes a thoughtful approach—considering your skin tone, face shape, lifestyle and budget to create a look that's uniquely yours. Planning a wedding or special event? On-location bridal and event styling ensures you look your best for every milestone.

Whether you're treating yourself or celebrating Mom, Pure & Couture invites you to step into summer with confidence, beauty and ease.

Second location: *Pure Collective Salon, Grand Boulevard*

(850) 424-3935 | [Facebook.com/PureandCouture](https://www.facebook.com/PureandCouture)

Pureandcouture.com

Sweeten Every Celebration—Big or Small Smallcakes Destin: A Cupcakery

From Mother's Day to Memorial Day to "just because," Smallcakes Destin delivers sweet moments worth celebrating. Located in City Market Beachside, this local favorite serves handcrafted cupcakes, custom cakes and a variety of treats baked fresh daily.

Choose from 13 signature cupcakes, rotating seasonal flavors, ice cream, gourmet popcorn, brownies, jumbo cookies and more. There are even gluten-free options and adorable pupcakes for your four-legged family members.

Planning something special? Custom edible images and logos make cakes and cupcakes perfect for weddings, birthdays and corporate events. Not sure where to start? Try a 12-pack of assorted minis and sample a little of everything.

With new flavors arriving in May and convenient ordering options including DoorDash and curbside pickup, Smallcakes makes every celebration a little sweeter.

Mon–Sat: 11 a.m.–7 p.m. | Sun: 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

(850) 842-9002

SmallcakesDestin.com | [@SmallCakesofDestin](https://www.instagram.com/SmallCakesofDestin)

Thoughtful Gifts with a Personal Touch Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

When it comes to meaningful, one-of-a-kind gifts, Frill Seekers Gifts brings creativity and charm to every occasion. Whether you're shopping for Mom, a graduate or your best friend, you'll find something truly special at this City Market Bayside boutique.

Favorites include the Champagne Nite Shirt—luxuriously soft with elegant details and monogram options—and custom porcelain ring boxes with personalized notes inside. For those who love handwritten touches, engraved stationery and notecards make timeless keepsakes.

Don't miss the beloved Volcano candle by Capri Blue, a citrusy, sweet scent that's hard to resist, along with custom invitations, thank-you notes and personalized paper goods for life's biggest moments.

Looking to go all out? Let the team create a custom gift basket tailored to your budget, complete with complimentary signature gift wrapping and shipping options.

Mon–Fri: 10 a.m.–5 p.m. |

Sat: 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

(850) 460-2700 | [Facebook.com/FrillSeekersGifts](https://www.facebook.com/FrillSeekersGifts)
Frillseekersgifts.com

Unlock the Secrets to Selling Your Home for Top Dollar!

Brian LoCicero, REALTOR®

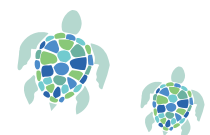
Thinking of selling your home? Discover the insider strategies used by top sellers with the new book from luxury REALTOR® Brian K. LoCicero. With years of experience and thousands of successful sales, Brian reveals the proven methods that can help you get maximum value in minimum time—in any market.

Inside his book, you'll find battle-tested techniques once reserved for high-end sellers, now available to you. Whether you're selling a cozy cottage or a luxury estate, these insights will give you the edge you need. "In this guide, I share what works—practical, powerful strategies for sellers who want results," says Brian.

Clients agree. "Brian helped us navigate 30A's competitive market with ease. Thanks to his strategies, we sold our Destin home quickly and bought a beachfront home on 30A—below asking price!" shares happy client A. Albright.

Destin Life readers can claim a FREE copy of Brian's book for a limited time by emailing Brian@BeOnTheCoast.com or calling (850) 739-3800.

Your successful sale starts here!





pure & couture
SALON

Styling, extensions, makeup, blow outs, eye brows, facials and massage. Gift cards available.
(850) 424-3935 | www.pureandcouture.com



frillseekers
STATIONERY GIFTS MONOGRAMS

Make a splash this summer with a personalized beach towel, swimmie wet/dry bag and heart sunnies!
(850) 460-2700 | www.frillseekersgifts.com



CRYO 850
PERFORMANCE AND RECOVERY

Cutting edge, drug-free therapies to build immunity and expedite recovery.
(850) 279-4145 | www.cryo850.com



Cupcakes, Ice Cream, Cookies, Custom Birthday and Wedding Cakes
(850) 842-9002 | www.smallcakesdestin.com



Ready to buy or sell Residential Property?
Looking to buy or lease Commercial Property?
CALL: Brian LoCicero (850) 739-3800



BEYOND MEASURE
FINE JEWELRY

Custom Designs, Engagement Rings, Earrings, Bracelets, Rings, Necklaces, Wedding Bands
(850) 424-7011 | beyondmeasurejewelry.com

CITY MARKET
BEACHSIDE & BAYSIDE

Two locations to Shop, Dine & Enjoy!



Karlina's Painting: Three Decades of Vibrant Solutions

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

"I've worked with tons of painting companies in the past and by far, Karlina's was the best... outstanding! 'On point' every step of the way!" — Stacey W.

Since June 1990, Karlina's Painting has brought craftsmanship, expertise and customer satisfaction to Shalimar and surrounding areas in Northwest Florida. The company special-

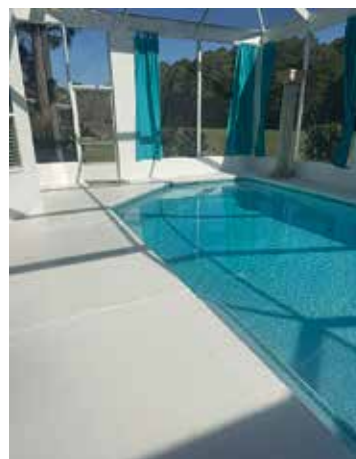
izes in residential and commercial painting.

Chad Quick recently took ownership of Karlina's, while the long-running business' namesake (and founder) continues to look over projects, price projects, and make crucial decisions. "Karlina is still 100 percent involved," says Quick.

Karlina Neubauer relocated from the Chicago area in early 1989 to work as an officer for the Fort Walton Beach Police

Department. "It didn't take long for me to realize that I needed to supplement my income," she says.

She found additional employment with a lawn service that catered to VA "repo" homes in Okaloosa and Escambia counties. "A gentleman asked if I knew how to paint, and we got something going at one of the houses." This led to the founding of Karlina's Painting. "Thirty years ago, it was unheard of



**PC BEACH
POTS & PLANTERS**

Two Miles East of Pier Park
**12405 Panama City
Beach Pkwy.
Panama City Beach**
850-960-POTS (7687)

PREMIUM POTTERY AT AFFORDABLE PRICES

- Over 85,000 square feet of unique pottery and garden decor
- Copper and bronze sculptures, statuary, garden figures & water features
- Large selection of fountains in many sizes, finishes & styles
- Many styles and colors, from statement pieces to succulent pots
- Commercial planters • Fountains and accents

ery place will grow until it can't grow anymore."

Quick started working with Karlina at age 22 and at some point between then and his early 50s he met, dated and married Karlina's niece. They're one big happy family "if there is such a thing," calling Shalimar home with their two daughters and half a dozen dogs. "I love giving something new life," Quick says of his work. "When you paint a room (or anything), it's brand new again." When he's not running Karlina's Painting, Quick likes to head out on his boat to "people watch" on Crab Island. He and his wife also operate the Little Learning Academy, a child care center in Fort Walton Beach that will celebrate its one-year anniversary this month.

Despite the ownership shift on the painting front, Quick assures the community that Karlina's Painting's customers can continue to expect the same treatment they've come to expect for the past three decades — "timeliness, cleanliness, and professionalism."

Karlina's Painting is accredited by the Better Business Bureau. Discover more, view the company's projects gallery, and get your free estimate at karlinaspainting.com. Call 850.585.7717 to speak to a member of the Karlina's team.

for a female to own and operate this type of business," says Neubauer. She hung on to most of the core team members almost from the get-go; Quick came on board about three years after the company's launch.

Quick says the day-to-day business "hasn't changed too much." He continues to build relationships with customers and make decisions vital to the success of Karlina's. "This job has supported my family for a long time."

Karlina's specializes in interior and exterior painting — full patios, concrete roofs, and metal roofs for starters. "We've done quite a few concrete roofs, power washing and repainting, and it's very important to do that in this area. It's much better, and a lot less expensive than replacing them," says Neubauer.

Karlina's serves Okaloosa County and the Navarre area, and the crew is willing to travel to Pensacola and Panama City for certain commercial painting jobs. "It was a much smaller community when I moved here," says Neubauer. "The growth was bound to happen. You can't stop progress and, really, why would you want to? Ev-

Karlina's Painting, Inc.

35 Years of Trusted Service
OWNER OPERATED

Interior Painting
Cabinet Painting & Refinishing
Walls • Ceilings • Doors • Trim and more.

Exterior Painting
Full exterior repaints • Fence Staining
Deck Restoration

Call today to schedule your Free Estimate
(850) 585-1513


Residential & Commercial



The Rigdon Center

BY CAROLYN NEWCOMER KETCHEL

The Okaloosa County Fairgrounds, located behind the courthouse on Lewis Turner Boulevard, were historically owned and operated by the City of Fort Walton Beach. In 2022, the Fort Walton Beach City Council declared the property surplus. Recognizing its potential value—and the possibility that it could be sold for private development—the Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners entered into negotiations to acquire the site as a valuable public asset. The county officially purchased the property in March 2023.

In July 2023, the board established a seven-member citizen advisory committee to help

epoxy flooring is nearing completion, with security and audiovisual systems scheduled for installation soon.

Additionally, construction is underway on a new 3,000-square-foot building between Buildings B and C. This addition will feature event catering kitchens, concession areas and modern restroom facilities. Completion is expected in just over six months. The facade portion of the project will soon go out for bid and will include three new entrances, updated signage, additional parking, decorative walls, covered walkways and refreshed landscaping.

Once Phase I is complete later this year, the facility will offer approximately 50,000 square feet of affordable event space

pickleball, large trade shows and community and military gatherings. Its capabilities will position the county to attract larger, multi-day events and remain competitive with similar venues.

Planned features include high ceilings (40-plus feet), durable flooring, a mezzanine level, elevators, multiple flooring types, fixed seating, breakout rooms and specialty-use spaces.

The building will be a hardened metal structure, enhancing resilience and offering potential use

Continued on page 19



guide the enhancement and refurbishment of the fairgrounds. The committee included representatives from the Northwest Florida Fair Association, the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce and one appointee from each county commissioner. The Fort Walton Beach city manager served in a non-voting, ex officio role.

Based on the committee's recommendations, a long-term, five-phase master plan was developed to guide the future growth and direction of the property. As part of this plan, the facility was rebranded as the Rigdon Center Complex in honor of Bull Rigdon, who managed the facility for many years.

Since acquiring the property, the county has made significant progress on Phase I improvements. These include the demolition of dilapidated structures and major upgrades to electrical systems, HVAC, lighting, ceilings, drainage and overall aesthetics. Installation of new

capable of hosting festivals, trade shows, business meetings and a wide variety of community events.

Designing and permitting projects of this scale requires considerable time—often up to a year. As planning continues for Phases II and III, the next step is to begin the design phase for a new multi-purpose event center. This phase is expected to take about a year, with construction bidding likely in 2027.

The proposed expansion includes approximately 50,000 square feet of new space, complementing the existing 50,000 square feet, an additional 20,000 square feet of storage and 15 acres of outdoor event area. The main event hall—approximately 35,000 to 40,000 square feet—will be designed as a flexible, divisible space with seating capacity for up to 3,000 people.

This facility will support a wide range of events, including cheerleading and dance competitions, volleyball, wrestling,



SERVING BUYERS AND SELLERS ACROSS NORTHWEST FLORIDA'S GULF COAST

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION: DESTIN WATERFRONT



3 BR | 2 BA | 1,431 SQ FT

Spectacular waterfront townhome on the bay in Destin. Lots of recent updates and ready to become your ideal waterfront home. Features 3 beds, 2 baths, and bonus room in a spacious two story 1,431 sq ft design.

Back patio faces the emerald waters, and offers a spectacular view in a highly desirable neighborhood with amenities that include a pool, clubhouse, boat ramp, dock right behind home, and so much more.

I just represented the owners in the purchase of their new Destin home, and this one is priced to sell fast.



LISTED AT \$449,900

WILL ESTELL, REALTOR®

850.499.0174

IMWILLESTELL@GMAIL.COM

COCONUTPALMREALESTATE.COM



 Community

Crawfish, Community & a Cause: Destin Rotary's Annual Bash Returns

May 8 | Towne Centre at Seascapes | Food, Music, Auction & Family Fun

Laissez les bons temps rouler! The Rotary Club of Destin's 14th Annual Cajun Crawfish Bash returns Friday, May 8, from 5:30-9 p.m. at the Towne Centre at Seascapes, co-hosted by Mezcal Mexican Grill.

This high-energy fundraiser supports the Robert Hafner Scholarship Fund, A Bed 4 Me, Harvest House, Emerald Coast

Children's Advocacy Center and Fisher House of the Emerald Coast—benefiting local students and families while helping fight hunger and expand opportunity across the community.

Guests can enjoy fresh Louisiana crawfish with all the fixings—potatoes, sausage and corn—served up by Destin Rotary volunteers. Not a crawfish



fan? No problem. Burgers, hot dogs and chicken will also be

grilled fresh on-site. The evening features live music from Black Eyed Blonde, a silent auction, bourbon pull, magic by MagiShaun, a photo booth and face painting for the kids.

Tickets are \$40 for a crawfish plate, \$50 for all-you-can-eat and \$15 for kids' or non-crawfish meals (ages 3 and under free). Each ticket includes one

complimentary drink. VIP tables for 10 are available for \$500, with upgrade options for all-you-can-eat.

The event is family-friendly and open to the public. Tickets are available online. The Towne Centre at Seascapes is located at 80 Seascapes Drive in Miramar Beach, across from Silver Sands Premium Outlets.

CITY CLERK

continued from page 12

part of his impact. It's not just what he accomplished, but how he approached the work and the people around him. Wit, professionalism, strong ethics and care.

A graduate of Troy University with a degree in Human Resources Management, Rey became known for his consistency, mentorship, and calm presence. He brought a level-headed approach to his role and a sense of humor that made even the busiest days a little easier.

Now, as retirement approaches, Rey is looking forward to a different pace. That includes more travel, with Barcelona high on his list, and more time with



family. With his son and grandchildren in Tampa, that may be what he's most excited about. He also joked that his next full-time role may be his most important yet: serving as his wife's personal Uber driver, manager, bodyguard, and chef.

As he steps away, the City is also moving forward with a thoughtful transition. Lisa Wallace has already stepped into the City Clerk role, bringing more

than 28 years of experience in municipal government. That includes 20 years as the Municipal Clerk for Summerville, South Carolina, along with leadership roles as Assistant City Manager in Myrtle Beach and City Manager in York. In 2021, Lisa returned to Summerville to serve as Town Administrator, continuing her commitment to public service until retiring from South Carolina local government in 2024. But her retirement didn't last long. During that time, she and her husband Dennis, also a retired public servant, traveled to several bucket-list destinations and enjoyed some well-earned downtime. They enjoy fishing, cruising, and spending time with their grandchildren, six of them,

all under the age of seven. Now, she's bringing that experience and energy to Destin.

"I am thrilled to be a part of the Destin community," said Lisa. "From the moment I stepped into City Hall, it has felt like home. I look forward to upholding the high level of commitment and professionalism that defines the City Clerk's Office."

That perspective aligns well with what Rey has built over the years. He also expressed strong confidence in her leadership,

noting that finding the right person for the team was one of his top priorities before retiring. Rey leaves behind a legacy of steady leadership, strong relationships, and a deep commitment to the City of Destin. His impact will continue to be felt, even as he steps into this next chapter.

With Lisa Wallace now in place, the transition is already underway, and the City is well positioned for what comes next. A big welcome to Lisa, and the biggest hugs and congratulations to our beloved "Rey Bey."

Life is complicated.
Your insurance
doesn't have to be.



ABORA

INSURANCE GROUP



Personal &
Commercial
Insurance

850-424-6979

11275 U.S. Hwy. 98 #7 | Miramar Beach, FL 32550

www.GetAora.com

- Coordinator
- Photographer
- Music
- Flowers



850.217.5710

CelebrationsbytheSea.com



Zoran Entertainment

ADJPro

Celebrations by The Sea



CELEBRATIONS BY THE SEA

DJ Zoran, Event Coordinator

DJ / Emcee

DestinZoran@CelebrationsbytheSea.com




@djzoranusa





Learning at the E. O. Wilson Biophilia Center: Snakes!



BY HELEN PETRE

I volunteer at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center, helping Turtle Bob teach fourth and seventh-graders about snakes and turtles. When the students enter the Turtle Bob room, some are terrified. By the time the class is over, Turtle Bob has convinced even the most uneducated that snakes are our friends. All the snakes the students hold are non-venomous and accustomed to being held. We teach the students that they will encounter snakes in the wild if they go outside.

Most of our snakes in the Panhandle are non-venomous, but a few, like our common cottonmouth, are venomous. Even so, if you wear shoes and keep your hands where you can see them, you will be fine. Venomous snakes do not chase you down or attack you unless you try to kill them, step on them in bare feet, or pick them up. Like bears and bobcats, give them room, do not threaten them, and you will be fine. Any snake will bite if threatened. Any human probably will, too.

Eastern cottonmouth (Agkistrodon piscivorus piscivorus)

The cottonmouth is our most

common venomous snake. It swims well, lives near water, and opens its mouth when threatened. Cottonmouths sometimes shake their tails when threatened, sort of like rattlesnakes. They are just trying to let you know they are there, and they hope you will go away. When cottonmouths are swimming, you can see their entire body on the surface of the water, unlike other water snakes.

Cottonmouths have big heads and skinny necks. They are very thick snakes with very thick tails. They look scary, but unless you step on them in bare feet or try to kill them, they will not bite. Venomous snakes use venom to subdue prey. You are not prey. You are way too big to swallow. Bites are last resorts to make you go away.

Contrary to public opinion, cottonmouths are not aggressive. I almost stepped on one wearing flip flops (which is not a good idea), and the snake just sat there with its mouth open. Yes, I was terrified, but it did not bite. Bites are very uncommon, and although they are not fun, they are very rarely fatal.

Cottonmouths are food for eagles, owls, herons, alligators, kingsnakes, and snapping turtles. They eat fish and frogs. They are important members of an ecosystem that we want to preserve.

Banded watersnake (Nerodia fasciata)

Some snakes look like venomous snakes, and they do that on purpose. The banded watersnake



Turtle Bob and a gray rat snake, or oak snake (*Pantherophis spiloides*)

is a common snake that lives near water like the cottonmouth, but it is not venomous. The banded water snake hopes you will think it is a cottonmouth and leave it alone. Sometimes that works. The difference is that banded watersnakes have long, pointed heads (not triangular), round eyes, they do not open their mouths when threatened, and you cannot see their entire body when they swim, only their heads. They, and especially their tails, are much thinner than those of a cottonmouth. They also have dark, vertical lines on their heads that are visible in the photo below and can be seen from a safe distance.

When a banded watersnake is threatened, it flattens out its

head, but don't be fooled. The head looks flat, not blocky like a cottonmouth.

Red rat snake (corn snake, oak snake) (*Pantherophis guttatus*)

Red and gray rat snakes are also called oak snakes and corn snakes. They look alike except some are red and some are gray, or brownish. Red corn snakes are expert climbers. Some people think they look like copperheads, but copperheads are rare in the Panhandle.

Red and gray rat snakes are constrictors, but have no fear, they are way too small to strangle you. They constrict around a mouse, or other rodent when

RIGDON

continued from page 17

during hurricane events.

The campus includes 20.4 acres of outdoor space for events and parking, along with an additional 15.83 acres of adjacent county-owned land. The City of Fort Walton Beach also maintains a large asphalt area nearby that may be used for overflow parking or event support on a limited basis.

Project costs include land acquisition, construction, parking, stormwater systems, landscaping and pedestrian access improvements. Funding for the new facility will come from a variety of non-taxpayer sources, including grants from the Gulf Consortium, tourism development funds, legislative appropriations and state agricultural grants. No property tax dollars are planned to be used for this project.

It is an honor to serve as your commissioner.

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




SURF BREAD CO.
SOURDOUGH

Healthy. Local. Artisanal.
Proudly Serving Destin For 5 Years!

STOP BY THE BAKERY:
Thursday & Friday | 11:30 AM – 4:00 PM
Grab a fresh sourdough loaf from our daily selection!

PRE-ORDER & SAVE TIME:
Pick up Tuesday – Saturday Mornings

Call/Text: 850-650-2334
www.SurfBreadCo.com
102 Hutchinson | Destin

BRIGHT BLUE POOLS

Commercial & Residential
Pool Remodeling
No Pool Too Big

We'll Make Your Pool Look New

Professional Plastering and Tile
Blue Diamond Finish • Pebble Finish
10 Year Guarantee • Free Quotes

Our owner, Curtis Nelson, makes it a point to be on the jobsite for every project to ensure everything goes according to plan.

Plastering Pools Since 1975

850.496.2025

BrightBluePools.com

Proudly serving the entire Florida Panhandle!

Taking Advantage of the Emerald Coast's Short "Shoulder Season"



BY KYLE SPARKS,
OVATION PAINTING

May is a unique month along the Emerald Coast. The spring break crowds have mostly headed home, and the summer travel season hasn't quite begun. For homeowners and property managers, that creates a valuable window to tackle larger home improvement projects.

Painting projects in particular can benefit from this quieter stretch of time. Homes may have fewer guests, property managers often have a little more flexibility in their schedules, and the weather is usually cooperative for both interior and exterior work.

For homeowners, May is a great time to refresh spaces that



see the most daily activity—hallways, kitchens, and family rooms. A full repaint can bring new life to those areas and give the entire home a clean, updated feel.

Property management companies and rental agencies across our beautiful Emerald Coast also use this short pause to prepare properties for the busy summer season. Guests notice the details when they arrive, and a well-maintained home makes a strong first impression.

Kyle's Tip:

"Many homeowners try to tackle painting one room at a time, but doing the whole interior together often gives the best results. It creates better flow throughout the home and usu-

ally saves time in the long run."

Using May wisely allows homes and vacation properties to be ready when the summer crowds arrive.

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

Big projects. Beautiful results. Done right.

[VISIT MYDESTINLIFE.COM](http://www.mydestinlife.com)



OVATION PAINTING, INC.

Residential & Commercial Painting

Interior Repaints, Exterior Repaints, Community Repaints, New Construction, Cabinet Painting, Sheetrock Repairs, Wood Rot Repairs, Stucco Repairs, Staining Work and More

Military & First Responder Discount

Call/Text (850) 830-9668
Email Kyle@ovationpaint.com
www.ovationpaint.com




DESTIN - 30A
LANDSCAPE LIGHTING
A DIVISION OF ABULOUS LIGHTING

OUTDOOR LANDSCAPE LIGHTING
Get Lit!

Free Design Consultation
New Installations • Rehab • Repair • LED Conversions
Color Changing Lights Available • Lifetime Warranty Fixtures

Residential / Commercial
CALL NOW: 850-783-9191
www.destinoutdoorlighting.com

Google ★★★★★



Sparkles
CLEANING SERVICE

It's just not clean unless it sparkles!

CLEANING SERVICES:
Home - Business - Vacation Properties - Deep Cleaning
Construction Cleans - Move-In / Move-Out

What they are saying:
"I use Sparkles for my vacation rental, and the guests ALWAYS rave about how clean it is. Highly recommend!"

CALL TODAY!
850.517.5581

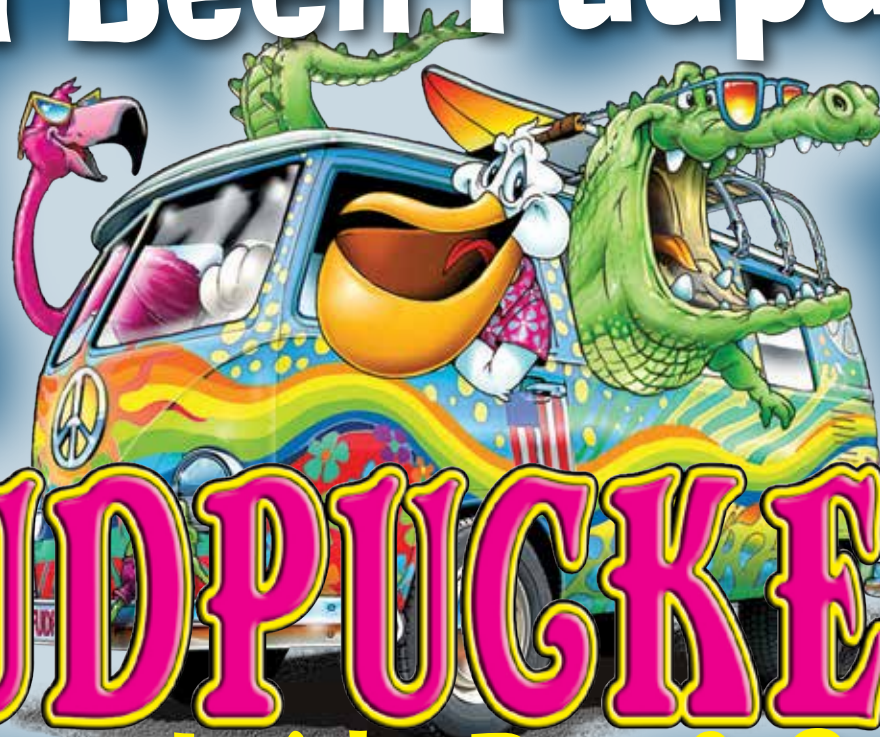
Visit us on the web:
www.sparklescleaningflorida.com

SEE COUPON IN BACK OF PAPER



FREE ADMISSION TO FUDPUCKER'S GATOR BEACH

**"Ya Aint Been Pucked,
Till Ya Been Fudpucked"**



FUDPUCKER'S

Beachside Bar & Grill

GREAT FOOD & DRINKS

ALLIGATORS

WORLD FAMOUS T-SHIRTS

FOOD, FUN & GATORS!

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT • AWARD WINNING FOOD & DRINKS

ALLIGATOR PARK • FEED THE GATORS • GET A PHOTO WITH A LIVE ALLIGATOR

DESTIN (850) 654-4200 | FUDPUCKER.COM | #FUDPUCKER

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

Since 1984, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. 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. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month.

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

Austons on 98

Offering an amazing raw oyster bar and the best happy hour in town, Austons is the place to be and home of the 102-foot bar, including 32 beers on draft! Some of the specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail. With big screen TVs all around and football season upon us, there's no bad seat in the house. So, come by and watch the games all season long. Happy Hour 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 dozen raw oysters. Austons on 98 is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9

p.m. and features its own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce." View full menu at austonson98.com.

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

Boathouse Oyster Bar

Oysters, live music and a local vibe, the Boathouse is where the locals go with live music every night. Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, the Boathouse specializes in making oysters a delicacy. Boathouse's gumbo recipe was written by Mama Gumbo herself. And, of course, the oysters are raw, steamed or baked, just the way you like 'em. The first Friday of each month, The Boathouse hosts locals on the Destin Harbor from 5-7 p.m. Listen and move with live entertainment daily. See ad for bands and times. Music schedule subject to change. Follow on Facebook for updates. During or after the game, mosey on over to hang with the locals.

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

Café Destin

Looking for dining the entire family can enjoy? Looking for a place to work with free WiFi while enjoying your cup of coffee? For breakfast and lunch, Café Destin offers an expanded

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

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

Coastal Protein & Energy

Fuel your day the healthy way at Coastal Protein & Energy, Destin's cutest spot for clean caffeine and protein-packed treats. Sip on energizing loaded teas, protein coffee and shakes, or dig into protein waffles, smoothie bowls and even guilt-friendly protein donuts - all crafted to keep you going strong. Tucked along Harbor Boulevard in Norred Plaza across from Boshamps,



this bright, beachy hangout has quickly become a favorite for locals looking for fast, feel-good fuel between school runs, gym sessions and days on the water. Special holiday flavors are available for a limited time and December specials include Gift Cards, wellness shots and koozies for gift-giving. Swing by for your morning energy, mid-day pick-me-up or post-workout refuel and see why everyone's talking about Coastal Protein & Energy.

(850) 904-9738

501 Harbor Blvd., Ste. F, Destin
[Facebook.com/coastalprotein/](https://www.facebook.com/coastalprotein/) |
coastal-protein-co.square.site

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

"Ya Ain't Been Pucked Til Ya Been Fudpucked!" Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill in Destin has been locally owned and operated since its inception in 1982. Fudpucker's restaurant stands out by being dedicated to its owners' three favorite "F" words: Food, Fun and Family. Fudpucker's is not just a restaurant, it's not just a bar, it's a one-of-a-kind entertainment experience, and one that can be enjoyed by locals, kids and families of all ages and all occasions with plenty of fun included! Bring your family and come for the food! Come for the fun! Get your gift shopping done with a Fudpucker's gift card or shop the Fudpucker's gift shop for unique gifts and merchandise!

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

Tailfins Waterfront Grill



Hey sports fans, Tailfins Waterfront Grill is calling YOU to watch March Madness 2026! With TV's all around, it's a local favorite for ALL sports watching fans!

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



BOATHOUSE
OYSTER BAR

A Locals Favorite For Over 30 Years!


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: Brendon Preece 4pm: Shane Curle 8pm: Shane Curle Trip

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

288 Harbor Blvd, Destin
(850) 837-3645
Facebook: www.facebook.com/BoathouseOysterBar
www.boathouseoysterbardestin.com



THE BOARDWALK OKALOOSA ISLAND

**Daily
Entertainment
All Summer
Long!**

**AL'S
BEACH CLUB
BURGER BAR**

**OPEN
FOR THE
SEASON!**

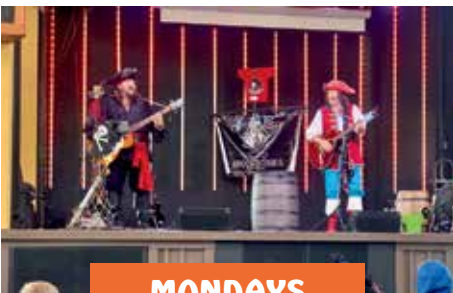
NEW!

FLAT TOP HOT DOGS



- Premium 100% domestic beef & brisket dog.
- Vienna Beef Company's century old family recipe.
- Split & seared on our butter grilled signature bun.

FREE EVENTS



MONDAYS

PIRATE SHOW

March 16th - August 3rd
Capt. Davy and Kirby Jake & the Crossbones perform a free show from 5-8pm with music, magic & mayhem for mateys of all ages!



TUESDAYS

MOVIES ON THE BEACH

March 10th - August 4th
Grab a beach towel & a spot on the sand for a new featured movie each week at 8pm on the giant inflatable beachfront screen.

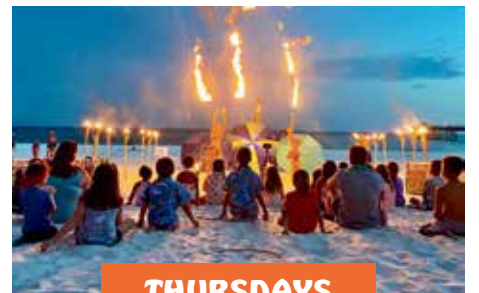


WEDNESDAYS

FIREWORKS

May 27th - August 5th
Front row seats to the 9pm fireworks show from the iconic Okaloosa Island pier.

Labor Day Weekend Show:
Sunday, September 6th



THURSDAYS

BEACH LUAU PARTY

May 28th - July 30th
Aloha at Al's from 5:30-8pm with FREE facepainting, balloon animals, and an 8pm island inspired fire & dance performance!

**ENTERTAINMENT,
FOOD & FUN FOR
EVERYONE!**



theboardwalkoi.com

Popular Destin Café Lady Ray's Announces Expansion and Founders Club as It Celebrates Four Years

By TIM VONDELL

This month, Lady Ray's celebrates its fourth anniversary, marking a significant milestone for the beloved Destin-based brand known for its whimsical tea parties, refined café offerings, and immersive lifestyle experiences. What began as a charming concept has grown into a thriving, multi-faceted business—and now, it's preparing for its next chapter.

To commemorate the occasion, Lady Ray's has announced plans to begin renovations in May, introducing a highly anticipated addition: a private tea room designed to function as both an elegant lounge and a banquet space. The new area will be available for birthdays, baby showers, and private events, further enhancing the brand's signature tea party experience while expanding its

hospitality footprint.

The space will also serve a practical purpose. During peak café hours, when regulars know seating can be at a premium, the tea room will act as overflow—ensuring that more guests can enjoy the Lady Ray's experience without compromising comfort or ambiance.

Alongside the physical expansion, the organization also plans to introduce a highly cu-



a moment. This new space lets us lean even further into that magic.”

Owner Tim Vondell emphasized that the expansion reflects both customer demand and a long-term vision for the brand.

“Lady Ray's has always been about thoughtful growth,” Vondell said. “We're building something that goes beyond a café—a brand that brings together food, wellness, retail, and community. This renovation is a natural next step in delivering more of what our guests already love.”

A Brand Built for Experience

Lady Ray's is a Destin-based, multi-concept culinary, beauty, and lifestyle brand operating a diversified portfolio of consumer experiences and product lines. The company integrates food service, wellness, retail, and branded distribution under a scalable platform designed for measured growth, strong community engagement, and long-term brand equity.

Over the past four years, Lady Ray's has distinguished itself not only through its offerings but through its atmosphere—where curated tea parties, delicate pastries, and intentional design converge to create a memorable escape from the everyday.

As renovations begin and the brand continues to evolve, one thing remains constant: a commitment to experience, detail, and community.

“We're just getting started,” Vondell said. “And we're excited to bring our guests along for what comes next.”

With its expansion underway and its reputation firmly established, Lady Ray's appears poised to turn four years of success into a foundation for even greater growth—one tea party at a time.



rated “Founders Club,” an invitation-forward membership experience designed for those who value priority, access, and distinction. Members will receive first-right booking privileges, preferred access to limited seatings, bespoke brand offerings and preferred pricing, as well as invitations—with guest privileges—to private, members-only gatherings and preview events.

Positioned as an elevated extension of the Lady Ray's experience, the Founders Club is intended to deliver a more intimate, refined way to engage with the brand as it continues to grow.

“If you've ever stopped in during our busiest hours, you know we're often at capacity,” said Rachel Ploegmakers. “We've thoughtfully utilized just about every inch of our café space over the years. This expansion allows us to grow while preserving the charm and intimacy our guests love.”

Ploegmakers, the creative force behind the culinary direction at Lady Ray's, has become known for her artful approach to tea service and seasonal menus. Her work blends classic tea traditions with modern, inspired flavors, earning her recognition among both locals and visitors seeking a unique, elevated experience.

“Our goal has always been to create something transportive,” she added. “Tea parties are more than a meal—they're

LADY RAY'S

CULINARY DELIGHTS

CAFÉ • TEA HOUSE • PASTRY BAR

833 HARBOR BLVD,
DESTIN, FL

(850) 269-0763

www.Ladyrays.com

RAW BAR!

Open 7 Days a Week
11 AM - 9 PM

LIVE MUSIC!

Every Night Except Thursday
6-9 PM

TRIVIA
Thursdays 7-9 PM

HAPPY HOUR!
Everyday 3-6 PM

OYSTER BAR AND GRILL

Specialties include
little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail!

(850) 842-3200 | 125 Poinciana Blvd | Miramar Beach | austons98.com

DESTIN DINING

continued from page 22

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, 3-6 p.m. Happy hour from 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday, featuring \$24 domestic bottle buckets, \$7 house wines and well drinks and \$7 Long Island iced teas. Live music on the docks 7 days a week. Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than

100 big screen TVs showing college and pro games. March Madness is here. Don't miss a single game and be sure to check out our Jumbotron outside on the docks.

(850) 650-1111
On the Harbor in Destin
172 Harbor Blvd.
tailfinsdestin.com

DAILY CRUISES: Tailfins' Tikis, Tailfins' newest, one-of-a-kind tiki boat, features on-board restrooms and certified captains. Talk of the Town tikis are the only Coast Guard certified Tiki boats in the U.S.! Enjoy the Destin Harbor and Crab Island like never before. Choose between the three-hour tour, sunset

cruise or Thursday night's spectacular fireworks cruise. Book online: tailfinsislandadventure.com.

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

MOTHER

continued from page 7

happen outside of the formal timeline.

A venue like The Alice in Destin plays a pivotal role in making this possible. Rather than compressing meaningful interactions into a few hurried hours, it creates space, both physically and emotionally for connection to unfold over several days.

From welcome gatherings to rehearsal dinners, from quiet mornings with coffee to post-wedding brunches, these extended celebrations allow mothers and daughters to experience the wedding not just as an event, but as a shared chapter. There is time to reflect, to laugh, to revisit memories, and to create new ones without the pressure of a tight schedule.

For mothers, this extended time offers the chance to be present beyond logistics to simply enjoy their daughter, her partner, and the coming together of families. For daughters, it provides room to soak in each moment, to express gratitude, and to experience the support of their mother in a more relaxed and meaningful way.

Multi-day settings also allow for deeper family integration. Relatives who may not often spend time together can connect more naturally, strengthening bonds that extend well beyond the wedding itself. In this environment, the mother-daughter relationship is not isolated, it becomes part of a larger, shared family experience.

The Alice in Destin, with its ability to host and hold these moments in one place, becomes more than a venue. It becomes a backdrop for connection, where the pace slows and the focus shifts from production to presence. In doing so, it enhances not just the wedding day, but the entire emotional journey surrounding it.

Honoring the Role of Mothers

Weddings are often described as a celebration of love between partners, but they are also a celebration of the families and relationships that made that love possible. Mothers hold a unique place in that story.

They are often the first to teach love, resilience, and compassion. They provide guidance, support, and, at times, the strength needed to navigate life's challenges. A wedding is one of the rare occasions where their role is both visible and deeply felt.

Taking time to honor mothers, whether through a speech, a letter, or a simple acknowledgment adds depth to the celebration. It reminds everyone present that the day is not just about a new beginning, but also about the foundation that made it possible.

A Reflection for Mother's Day

As May arrives and Mother's Day approaches, weddings offer a powerful reminder of the enduring bond between mothers and daughters. The planning process and the wedding day itself highlight not just the milestones, but the relationship that underpins them.

Mother's Day is an opportunity to pause and express gratitude, for the guidance given, the sacrifices made, and the love that continues to evolve over time. Whether a wedding is on the horizon, recently passed, or simply a distant memory, the connection between mother and daughter remains one of life's most profound and lasting relationships.

In celebrating mothers this May, we honor not only their role in weddings, but their role in shaping lives, quietly, consistently, and with a love that endures far beyond a single day.

Honoring my Mom this month, I miss her every day!

DEPARTURES 7 DAYS A WEEK **TAILFINS TIKIS** FIRST CLASS TOURS




Tiki Boat Tours
6-18 passengers, Captain operated, on board bathroom

The World Famous 3-Hour Tour • Fireworks Tour • Sunset Tour





Book Now!



Located at 172 Harbor Blvd., Destin | Tailfins Tikis 850-650-1111
Book online: tailfinsislandadventure.com - or - tailfinstikis.com

Voted Best Seafood!



BREAKFAST SERVED DAILY
7 Days a Week, 8 am until 11 am

LUNCH SPECIALS
Monday-Friday 11am-3pm
Baja Fried Fish Tacos \$12.95
Maine Lobster Roll \$24.95
KC Smashed Cheeseburger \$12.95

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

HAPPY HOUR DRINKS
Monday-Friday 3-6pm
Margaritas, Johnnys Red Ale,
Michelob Draft Pints, Well Drinks,
Long Island Teas, House Wines

\$7



Live Music on the Docks
7 Days a Week

172 Harbor Blvd. Destin
(850) 650-1200
TailfinsDestin.com

Off the Hook

Gulfarium CARE Center Raises Over \$155,000 at CARE on the Coast TurtleFest!

By MARY FOMBY

The Gulfarium CARE Center is proud to announce the tremendous success of its annual CARE on the Coast TurtleFest, held Saturday, April 18th, at Gulfarium. With more than 1,200 tickets sold, the event raised over \$155,000 to support local sea turtle rescue, rehabilitation, and release efforts.

Guests from across the Emerald Coast gathered for an afternoon of live entertainment, food and drinks from local vendors, animal meet & greets, educational activities, and conservation partner exhibits, all in support of the Gulfarium CARE Center's mission to protect and preserve marine life.

"TurtleFest is a celebration of both community and conservation," said Patrick Berry, President/CEO of Gulfarium. "Seeing over a thousand guests come together to enjoy the festival while directly supporting our life-saving work with sea turtles is incredibly meaningful. Every



dollar raised helps us continue rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing these animals back into the Gulf."

Funds raised from the event directly benefit the Gulfarium

CARE Center, which has rescued and rehabilitated hundreds of sea turtles since 2015. These funds help cover the cost of medical care, food, and rehabilitation for injured and endan-



gered sea turtles along the Gulf Coast.

"This level of community support makes a real difference for every patient that comes through our doors," said Sarah Kamen, Stranding Coordinator for the Gulfarium CARE Center. "From hook and line injuries to cold stunning events, the CARE Center can respond quickly and provide critical care because of events like TurtleFest. We are so grateful to everyone who attended and contributed to our mission."

The Gulfarium CARE Center extends its sincere appreciation to the event's sponsors, including title sponsor Valparaiso Coca-Cola, as well as Salt-

water Restaurant Group, Omni-Broadcasting, Florida Power & Light, Eglin Federal Credit Union, Daher Contracting, Okaloosa Gas District, Cattywampus Aquatic Adventures, Cumulus Media, and Tito's Handmade Vodka, whose generous support helped make this impactful event possible.

The Gulfarium CARE Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, remains committed to marine animal rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation education along the Gulf Coast.

Follow the C.A.R.E. Center on Facebook to learn more about sea turtles and the center's rehabilitation efforts. The C.A.R.E. Center and its patients can be visited as part of a general admission ticket to Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park.

If you encounter a sea turtle in distress, please report it to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-FWCC (1-888-404-3922).

SEA LIONS, DOLPHINS & MANATEES... OH MY!

Plan your visit!

Open Daily at 9am

850-243-9046

www.gulfarium.com

Located in Destin-Fort Walton Beach



Gulfarium
Marine Adventure Park

NORRIEGO

continued from page 1

lived here long enough, you've probably stood barefoot in the sand at least once and thought, this is why I'm here. I even remember the three crosses that used to stand as a beacon on the crystal sand that made me want to be there even more.

So, when I heard it had officially reopened — beautifully reimagined and just in time for America's 250th celebration — it felt like more than a ribbon cutting. It felt like a moment.

A Place That Holds Our Story

As our country prepares to celebrate 250 years of freedom, there's just something meaningful about what's happening right here in Destin.

Because, this isn't just about a new park. It's about preserving access to a part of the Destin heritage. It's about protecting beauty. It's about making sure the places that define us locals are still here for the next generation. And, to me, that's exactly what Norriego Point represents.

Reimagined — But Still Nature-First

The improvements are noticeable the moment you arrive. Boardwalks guide you through the dunes. Crossovers protect



the landscape. There's more access and more usability — but somehow, it still feels like it always has.

And that's not by accident. This project, funded in part by BP oil spill restoration dollars, as most locals know, has been years in the making—carefully designed to balance access with environmental protection. It includes shoreline stabilization, ADA-accessible walkways, restrooms and native plant restoration — all meant to protect the point while welcoming people in.

Our Community That Cares Deeply

But, perhaps the most important improvement is something you can't see. It's the intention behind it.

If you've followed the conversations around Norriego

Point over the past year, you know this space matters deeply to our community. And that passion has shaped what this park is becoming.

Destin Mayor Bobby Wagner has been one of the most vocal advocates for keeping the area true to its roots. "My constituents are my bosses," Wagner said. "And if they're not part of the conversation, then we're doing government wrong."

He's also been clear about

what people want preserved here: "No one comes to Florida because there's a concession stand on the beach," Wagner said. "They come for the beach." And perhaps most simply, and most powerfully: "If this is conservation land, then conserve it."

That sentiment — echoed by so many residents — has helped shape a vision that prioritizes the natural experience over overdevelopment.

A Major Investment in The Future

Behind the scenes, this project is part of something much bigger. The State of Florida's multi-million-dollar acquisition of adjacent land ensures that Norriego Point won't become high-rise development, but instead will remain accessible to the public.

Continued on next page

THE ALICE MARINA

Brand New Slip Rentals With Lifts Now Available Just Off Crab Island
7,000 + 10,000 Pound Lifts @\$1,000 per month through end of 2026
 Include Parking & Concierge Service | Call 850 460 0425

NEW TO DESTIN!

Protein Shakes, Protein Waffles, Protein Coffee and Clean Energy Drinks without the afternoon crash!

Try our different flavors, and add collagen or protein to your drink.

ORDER ONLINE

[@coastalprotein](https://www.instagram.com/coastalprotein)
 850-904-9738 - TEXT YOUR ORDER
 501 Harbor Blvd, Destin FL

DESTIN PRIVATE TIKI

New Service - Crab Island Express

Easiest, Most Affordable, and Fun way to Crab Island - \$69
(plus taxes and fees)

When the sun is out, and the water is pretty, hop on a pink tiki boat for a crab island adventure with family and friends. See 20% discount coupon in back of paper.

2 hr Open Party trip, max of 14 passengers • Mondays / Wednesdays / Thursdays / Sundays
 Tikis Depart Top of the Hour 11am / 12 noon / 1 pm / 2 pm
 B.Y.O.B. - Bottled water provided • Upscale Tiki Boat with a restroom, music, and water toys

Offered by Destin Private Tiki
 Located on the Destin Harbor Boardwalk, at Heron Harbor Marina, 314 Harbor Blvd, Destin

Ph: 850-424-1119 | www.DestinTiki.com

Locals: Ask about the Locals Only Unlimited Access Pass
Only \$40 / mo plus taxes and fees x 12 mo.
 You and free guest. Available exclusively to residents of Okaloosa and Walton Counties. See details for limitations and restrictions. Call Michelle 850-424-1119.

 Off the Hook

NORRIEGO

continued from previous page

That's not just a win for today — it's a decision that will shape Destin for decades. And in a place that continues to grow and evolve, those decisions matter more than ever.

I think that's why this re-opening feels different. It's not just another project completed. It's a statement. A statement that says:

We value this.

We want to protect this.

We're willing to fight for this.

And as we step into a year where our nation reflects on its founding, it feels fitting that right here in our own community, we're doing a little of that same reflection.

Preserving what matters.



Protecting what's been entrusted to us.

Making space for future generations to experience something real.

So, yes — Norriego Point is

open again. But more than that, it's back.

Back as a place to gather.

Back as a place to breathe.

Back as a place that reminds us why we love where we live



(something I post quite often).

And that's the kind of story

worth telling right now.

Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Tournament & Festival

May 15–17 | HarborWalk Village, Destin

The world's largest lionfish tournament returns to Destin for a high-energy weekend of competition, cuisine and conservation. Divers from across the country compete for nearly \$175,000 in prizes while helping remove invasive lionfish from Gulf waters—more than 100,000 since 2019. Onshore, the family-friendly festival at

HarborWalk Village features lionfish tastings, fillet demonstrations, live music, educational exhibits, vendors and activities for all ages. Many local restaurants also participate in Lionfish Restaurant Week leading up to the event.

Details and registration: emeraldcoastopen.com.



COMPASS MARINE GROUP
DOCKS, LIFTS, & SEAWALLS

We make waterfront construction simple!

A full-service design-build marine construction firm serving Freeport, Niceville, Destin, Santa Rosa Beach. Custom docks, boat lifts, and seawalls built to last.

Talk to us about your next project!

- Docks
- Boat Lifts
- Seawalls
- Custom Marine Structures

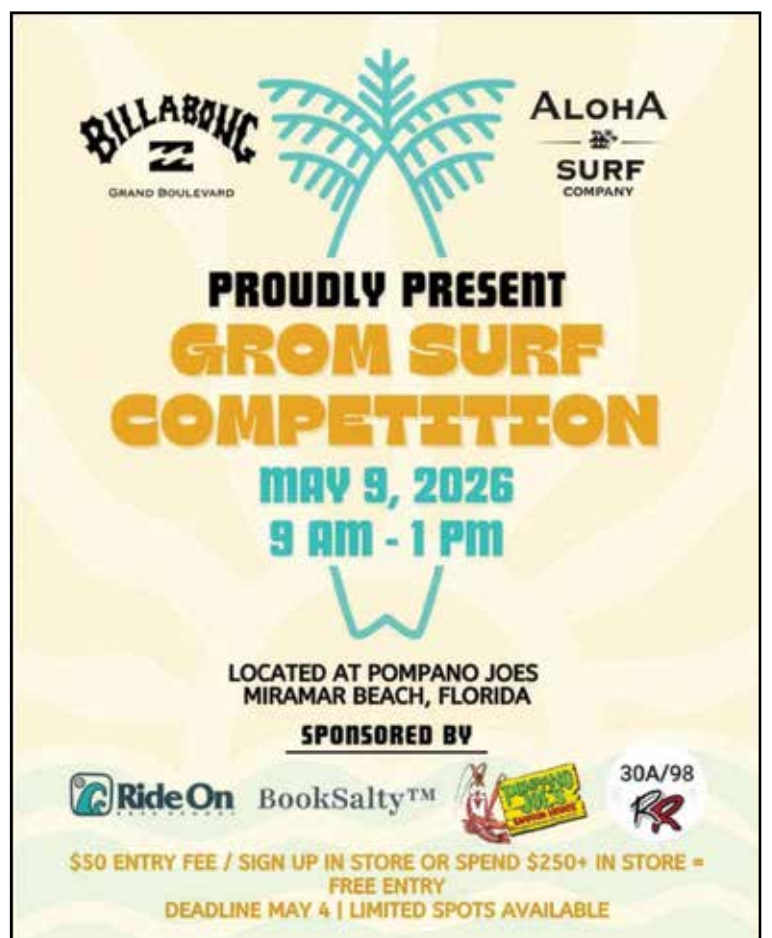
Over 40 Years Experience!

[@CompassMarineGroup](https://www.facebook.com/CompassMarineGroup)



License Number SCC131152465 Fully Insured

Call us @ 850-797-8428



BILLABONG GRAND BOULEVARD


ALOHA SURF COMPANY

PROUDLY PRESENT GROM SURF COMPETITION

MAY 9, 2026
9 AM - 1 PM

LOCATED AT POMPANO JOES MIRAMAR BEACH, FLORIDA

SPONSORED BY

RideOn **BookSalty™** 

\$50 ENTRY FEE / SIGN UP IN STORE OR SPEND \$250+ IN STORE = FREE ENTRY

DEADLINE MAY 4 | LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE



Paws that Protect: The Military Working Dogs Defending Hurlburt Field

By 2ND LT. RACHEL HECK,
1ST SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

At 4:30 a.m., while most of Hurlburt Field is still dark and quiet, a security forces handler assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing begins his shift. He checks his gear, reviews the night's incidents and prepares for a long day of patrol. But before he heads out, he makes sure his partner is ready.

That partner doesn't grab a radio or lace up boots. He waits patiently in a kennel, tail thumping against the gate.

"Me and you—it's time to get to work," the handler tells his four-legged companion.

Together, they are one of several military working dog teams assigned to the 1 SOW. This group of handlers and canines trained in patrol and detection work to enhance installation se-



"You're trying to learn what makes them tick—what winds them up, what winds them down, what makes them shy away, what amps them up," the handler said.

For this handler, his MWD is more than a partner.

"I get to be a cop," the handler explained. "But I also get my best friend as my ride along partner. It's the best of both worlds."

In the quiet parts of the day, their partnership looks a lot like any other bond between a man and his dog. Each MWD has a distinct personality ... some playful, some stubborn, some already eyeing retirement and the promise of a couch somewhere down the line, he noted.

"When I'm driving around, he's relaxed in the back."

When the call comes in, however, affection gives way to focus.

"Play time's over. Let's get it done," the handler says to his partner.

In an instant, the same dog that was relaxed moments before is alert, disciplined and mission-ready, serving as a reminder that behind every wagging tail is a highly trained defender, always prepared to protect.

First of Its Kind: F-15E Strike Eagle Lands at Eglin Museum



The Air Force Armament Museum welcomed a historic addition April 10 with the dedication of an F-15E Strike Eagle — the first of its kind ever placed on public display.

Aircraft No. 86-184, a roughly 35-year-old jet, served its entire career as a developmental test aircraft with the 96th and 412th Test Wings at Eglin Air Force Base. It was also one of the oldest F-15Es in the active fleet before its retirement. "This Strike Eagle will take her rightful place here among the equally distinguished artifacts for the public to engage," said retired Brig. Gen. Fran Hendricks, president of the museum foundation.

The aircraft also honors those who flew and maintained it. Former Eglin commander Maj. Gen. Robert Chedister, who piloted 86-184, is commemorated with



his name displayed on the canopy. "His name on the canopy is a lasting salute to a man who gave so much to the country he loved both in and out of uniform," Hendricks said.

Weapons system officer Lt. Col. Rich Bailey and maintainers Master Sgt. Vik Maharaj, Staff Sgt. Robert Lawson and Staff Sgt. Benjamin Haag are also recognized on the aircraft. "This new and first-of-its-kind addition to our museum is both a tribute to all who have served at Eglin and an inspiration to those who will follow," Hendricks added.

curity, deter threats and provide an added layer of protection for Air Commandos and their families.

According to the handler, the value of MWDs lies in their unmatched senses and ability to detect subtle changes in an environment long before a human might notice.

"We're able to rely on their ability to think independently," the handler described. "They're going to catch what I don't catch."

Their tactical value relies on

a unique partnership built on discipline and unwavering loyalty, he further explained.

"I protect him, but he also protects me," said the handler. "We're in this together."

The kennel houses German Shepherds and Belgian Malinois, each paired with a dedicated handler. While every dog and handler qualifies in similar mission sets through their respective training programs at Lackland Air Force Base, each team builds its own dynamic and trust.

AJ'S CRAWFISH BOIL
SUNDAYS • 1PM

AJ'S Seafood & Oyster Bar
DESTIN HARBOR

116 Harbor Boulevard, Destin, FL 32541



Charlotte Brooks Rides to a National Title and Auburn University

BY DOUGLAS "DOC" STAUFFER

At just 17 years old, local resident Charlotte Brooks has already accomplished what many young athletes only dream of — a national championship title and a collegiate athletic future

at one of the nation's premier equestrian programs.

The Okaloosa County native recently captured the coveted Congress Champion title in Youth Hunt Seat Equitation (age 15–18) at the prestigious

All-American Quarter Horse Congress — widely recognized as the largest and most competitive single-breed horse show in the world. For those within the equestrian community, the title alone speaks volumes. For those



Cruise in Style Aboard the Private Yacht Miss B Haven

Charters Starting at \$900 + Fees
1/2 Day or Full Day / Sunsets / Weddings
5-Star Rated • Impeccably Maintained • Carry 2-12 Guests
Professionally Managed by Destin Private Yachts



Phone 850-655-2323

Located on the Destin Harbor @ Heron Harbor Marina
314 Harbor Blvd, Slip 2E, Destin

www.PrivateYachtMissBHaven.com



unfamiliar, imagine winning a national championship on one of the sport's biggest stages, against the very best riders from across the country.

And this fall, she will continue her journey at Auburn University, joining the nationally respected Auburn Tigers equestrian team.

But Charlotte's story is about far more than trophies.

A Life in the Saddle

Charlotte did not stumble into the sport. She was raised in it. Horses have been part of her life from an early age, and she began competing seriously around age ten. What followed was not overnight success, but years of early mornings, long travel weekends, disciplined training sessions, and quiet perseverance.

Equestrian competition requires a rare blend of physical skill, technical precision, and mental composure. Riders must communicate with a thousand-pound animal through subtle cues, balance, and trust. In Hunt Seat Equitation, judges evaluate the rider's form, control, and effectiveness — not just speed or flash. It is a discipline that rewards poise under pressure.

Charlotte has learned to thrive in that pressure. Winning at the Quarter Horse Congress represents the culmination of years of refinement — hours

in the arena, countless practice rounds, and the resilience to improve after setbacks. National titles are not handed out; they are earned stride by stride.

Balancing Excellence

Unlike many student-athletes who compete locally, Charlotte's competition schedule has taken her across the country. To maintain both academic and athletic excellence, she enrolled in Florida Virtual School, which allowed her the flexibility to travel and train while staying on track academically.

That decision reflects maturity beyond her years. It takes discipline to manage studies independently while competing at a national level. Charlotte has demonstrated that excellence in athletics does not require sacrificing academic responsibility. Her ability to balance both speaks to strong family support, personal determination, and a clear sense of purpose.

The Next Chapter: Auburn

Charlotte's next step brings her to Auburn's equestrian program, one of the most respected in collegiate competition. Auburn competes under the umbrella of the National Collegiate Equestrian Association, where varsity riders face elite talent from across the nation.

Auburn has a history of na-

Continued on page 33

Where Did the Golf Cart Come From?

The golf cart has come a long way from its humble beginnings as a simple tool designed to move golfers around the course. What began as a practical convenience has evolved into a lifestyle vehicle — especially in coastal communities along the Florida Panhandle, where golf carts are a familiar part of everyday life.

The story of the golf cart dates back to the early 20th century. In the 1930s, early electric carts were developed to transport equipment across golf courses. Not long after, they were adapted to carry golfers, helping players move around large courses more comfortably.

By the 1950s, golf carts began gaining popularity in recreational golf. Early models were simple, often three-wheeled and powered by basic electric batteries. As demand increased, manufacturers improved the design. Four wheels replaced three, steering wheels replaced



tillers and gas-powered models appeared in the 1960s and



1970s, offering greater power and range.

Over time, people realized golf carts could be useful beyond the course. Resorts, retirement communities and large campuses adopted them for short-distance transportation. Their small size, quiet operation

and ease of use made them ideal for quick trips.

Today, golf carts have entered a new era. Modern models feature lithium batteries, advanced suspension, LED lighting, Bluetooth sound systems and luxury seating. Some even include touchscreen displays and back-

up cameras, transforming them into comfortable neighborhood vehicles.

This evolution is especially visible along the Florida Panhandle. In many beach communities, residents use golf carts for quick trips to the beach, local restaurants or neighborhood events. Families often pile into multi-passenger carts to grab ice cream, visit friends or enjoy a sunset ride.

Golf carts offer a unique mix of convenience and fun. They encourage a slower pace, make it easier to connect with neighbors and add a sense of enjoyment to everyday travel. Once just a golf course utility, the golf cart has become a defining part of coastal community life.

Let ECCO Motors help you find the best golf cart for you and your family. Visit in person at 147 Professional Place in Miramar Beach or online at www.ECCOMotors.com.

Golf Series: Raven Golf Club Junior Tournament



BY BARBARA PALMGREN

I wonder if Edgar Allan Poe would take up golf knowing there's a course named for his famous poem, The Raven. Would he embrace the challenge—or find it as relentless as the raven at his chamber door?

We may never know, but the Raven course proved plenty chal-

lenging March 28–29 as it hosted the Emerald Coast Junior Golf Tournament. Younger players competed over nine holes Saturday, while older juniors played 18 holes Sunday, vying for spots in the Notah Begay III Junior Championship Regional Qualifier for ages 10–18. Three players in each age group advanced.

The NB3 Junior Golf National Championship is a two-stage qualifying series culminating in a 54-hole national championship broadcast on Golf Channel. In 2026, qualifiers advance to the Florida Regionals—June 8–9 for girls at Indian Springs CC and June 24–25 for boys at Mission Resort Club.

Top Performers

Girls 10–11: Mackenzie Brown (advances to regionals)



Boys 10–11: 1. James Goodman (77), 2. Luke Stuart (78), 3. Eli Woolsey (all advance)

Girls 8–9: Madelyn Morelock (low medalist)

Boys 8–9: Alden Marek (low medalist)



Spring Championship Winners (Day 2)

Boys 16–18: Bo Baxter (155)

Girls 15–18: Julie Waldo (137)

Boys 14–15: Benjamin Lebus-burger (152)

Girls 12–14: Finley Jeter (206)

Boys 12–13: Matthew DeRoy (138)

Bounds, Inc. sponsored the Spring Championship. Additional tournaments this season were held at Hidden Creek, Baytowne and Stonebrook, with ECJGT events also serving as qualifiers for the Optimist International Tournament at Doral and the FCG Callaway World Championship and U.S. Wing Mojing World Championship at Torrey Pines.

Tournament Director Dennis Attaway, who has led the program since 2020, continues to inspire young golfers and grow the game across the Emerald Coast.



ECCO Motors.com
Your Everything Golf Car & LSV Shop.

850-837-2600
147 Professional Place

LITHIUM BATTERY UPGRADE!
As low as \$1,995.00 installed
Includes: Charger, Meter, Charge Port, DC Converter

Our Mobile Repair Experts can bring your cart back to
PEAK PERFORMANCE!

The Body, Mind, Spirit Connection



By STEPHENIE CRAIG, JOURNEY BRAVELY

Do you ever find yourself feeling a bit off and you can't figure out why? Maybe you've had seasons of trying to heal and feel better using different means. You might feel anxious

and go to the doctor only to be told you check out fine and they recommend going to counseling. Other times, you may have gone to counseling trying to resolve feeling low energy to be told you should try going to the doctor and get your blood work checked. Maybe you've prayed and gone to speak to a pastor about emotional pain and while that was helpful, they recommended you get some additional counseling.

It can become confusing trying to sort out the origin of issues you are having and where exactly to go for help. For a long time, humans were encouraged to view their bodies, minds, and spirits as separate without much overlap. If medical professionals didn't find a medical explanation, people were sometimes told "it's all in your head." As more research emerged, doctors started encouraging people to get mental health support to supplement medical help. For years, people went to counselors talking about problems believing that their mind and their physical experience were two completely separate things. As more research emerged, counselors began understanding the connection between emotions and how feelings are stored and experienced physically in the body. More therapists are now incorporating physical body exercises along with talk therapy with improved results. For many years, some churches discouraged people from trusting mental health support outside the church. Now, many churches encourage church members toward counseling alongside spiritual discipleship.

While it is complicated to



Try talking to a spiritual mentor about spiritual struggles. Do the work to unblock what might be blocked related to how you grew up.

Notice. Start intentionally noticing the connection between what you

think, how you feel, what sensations you are having in your body, and how your faith experience is shaping you. All of these work best when you are open to noticing how they work together.

Try using body, mind, and spirit together to process life experiences. For example, notice that you are feeling angry and stressed. Notice the physical signs such as tension in your body and exhaustion. Notice the irritable thoughts and feelings. Notice how your anger and stress are related to your relationship with God and how you are living out your faith.

Try engaging spirit, mind and body to address feeling better. Try talking openly with God and people in your spiritual community about your struggles. Engage spiritual disciplines to support yourself. Ask for help surrendering spiritually. Seek counseling to understand how historical messages, boundaries, and your internal thoughts might be impacting your stress and anger. Try a stretching class, breathing exercises or other physical activities to engage your body in releasing anger and stress. Each of these can be helpful, however, all of them together work most effectively.

Practice and repeat. Use reminders in your phone and post it notes to notice how mind, spirit, and body are deeply connected and all important parts of how you were created to be a person. Your brain rewires through repetition. The more you connect all three areas in your daily awareness, the more you will notice naturally how they are each at play every day.

Be kind and curious toward yourself as you ponder and practice the body, mind, spirit connection. Connect with us at Journeybravely.com along your journey for counseling and coaching support.

6 Ways to Embrace the Body, Mind, Spirit Connection

Evaluate historical messages. Notice messages you may be carrying from childhood or other times in life that make it hard for you to give credibility to your experiences in your body, mind, or spirit. Were you told that you shouldn't believe in counseling? Was faith modeled for you in harmful ways that create current confusion? Were you encouraged to ignore or skip what your physical body is trying to signal to you?

Get support to decide what you believe now. While historical messages can be powerful, you have the option to decide what you want to believe in the here and now. Try doing your own research to develop beliefs about how you want to seek mental or medical support.

HOTWORX®

Destin, FL

HOTWORX offers members unlimited, 24-hour access to a variety of virtually instructed, infrared sauna workouts. Our members achieve their fitness goals with 3D Training- our powerful combination of heat, infrared energy, and exercise.



Train Smarter with Training Trax
JOIN ELITE FOR \$5



4489-C Commons Dr W
Destin, FL
(850) 468-9679




JOURNEY
BRAVELY



Stephenie Craig, LCSW

Therapist
918-221-9987 | stepheniecraig@journeybravely.com

Todd Craig

Life & Leadership Coach
918-740-1232 | todd@journeybravely.com

www.journeybravely.com

MENOPAUSE

continued from page 4

density and reduce the risk and progression of osteoporosis.

Address Sleep Directly

Sleep disruption is common and often one of the most impactful symptoms. Difficulty falling asleep, waking during the night, and non-restorative sleep

affect everything from mood to metabolism. Support sleep with a consistent routine, a cool, dark environment, and mindful use of caffeine and alcohol.

For some women, declining progesterone may contribute to sleep disruption. In those cases, targeted support, including progesterone when clinically appropriate, can help restore more consistent, restful sleep. Quality

sleep is a cornerstone of hormonal and cognitive health.

Support Your Nervous System

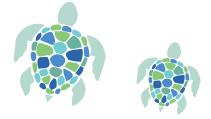
This transition affects both hormones and the brain. Increased anxiety, irritability, and emotional variability reflect real neurological shifts. Daily regulation, through movement, time outdoors, breathwork, or mean-

ingful connection, supports resilience and emotional stability.

These are not luxuries. They are essential tools for navigating this phase well.

Menopause is not the end of your vitality. It is a significant physiological transition that deserves attention and support, not dismissal. These changes are not random. They are signals.

When you understand what your body is doing and respond accordingly, you move through this phase with greater stability, clarity, and long-term health in mind.



CHARLOTTE

continued from page 30

tional championships and a culture built around discipline, teamwork, and competitive excellence. Charlotte will now test her skills at the highest collegiate level — representing not only her university, but her hometown of Laurel Hill and Okaloosa County. For a local athlete to step onto that stage is significant. For a national champion to do so is remarkable.

But true character is revealed in the unseen hours — the practice sessions when no one is watching, the moments of disappointment that require perseverance, and the quiet discipline of improvement. Charlotte’s journey reminds us that greatness is rarely dramatic. It is built patiently, consistently, and faithfully.

In a world quick to celebrate viral fame and overnight success, her story stands as a refreshing testimony to sustained effort and earned achievement.

values hard work and excellence.

When she enters the arena in Auburn colors, she will do so as a national champion — but also as a local young woman who never forgot where she started. And if her past is any indication, the best rides may still be ahead.

More Than a Title

While the headline reads “national champion,” those who know Charlotte would likely describe her differently: dedicated, humble, steady, and focused.

Champions are often defined by what happens in the spotlight.

A Community to Cheer

As Charlotte prepares to ride for Auburn this fall, Okaloosa County has every reason to celebrate one of its own. Her success is not only personal—it is shared. She carries with her the pride of a small community that



Audiologist Dr. Mandy Rounseville-Norgaard

Accepting New Patients

850-517-6977

42 Business Centre Drive, Unit 306
Summit Building • Miramar Beach

Check us out on Facebook!

miramarbechaudiologyassociates.com



EMERALD ENT

**Ear, Nose, Throat, Allergies
Hearing**

Facial Plastic Issues

From newborns to the elderly

Stop suffering from painful sinus issues.
Services offered by Emerald ENT are comprehensive and unique to this area.



We are thrilled to announce our second location in Panama City Beach.

12909 Panama City Beach Parkway, Panama City Beach, FL 32407

Accepting New Appointments!

(850) 797-6191 | Emerald-ENT.com

141 Mack Bayou Loop, Suite 102, Santa Rosa Beach
12909 Panama City Beach Pkwy., Panama City Beach, FL 32407

Bluewater

PLASTIC SURGERY

Steven J. Clark, MD, DMD, FACS

Board Certified Plastic Surgeon

Michelle Sasala MSN, APRN, FNP-BC
Nurse Practitioner/Aesthetic Injector

Maya Newell, Licensed Esthetician







TURN BACK THE CLOCK!

<p>Non-Surgical Treatments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Botox Bar Facial Fillers Laser Hair Removal Laser Pigmentation and Wrinkles New - Ultra Clear Laser 	<p>Surgical Procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breast Augmentation Breast Lift or Reduction Tummy Tuck Mommy Makeover Liposuction (Vaser, 360) Facelift, Necklift, Eyelift Gynecomastia (Male Breast Reduction) Post Weight Loss Labiaplasty 	<p>Skincare & Aesthetician Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical Grade Skin Care Facials Diamond Glow Dermaplane Peels <p>Come Meet MAY 5th: Obagi Rep 9 a.m.-noon Alle Rep 10 a.m.-2 p.m.</p>
---	---	---

Book your appointment today!
Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach

(850) 530-6064 | bluewaterplasticsurgery.com

 Wellness

Hormone Therapy for Stronger Bones



DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

You're taking care of all of it — work, home, children or grandchildren, spouses, parents, your boss/clients/students/patients. Mother's Day is for the flowers, but every day you show up — lifting groceries, carrying kids, steadying loved ones — you're asking a lot from your bones. This Women's Health Week (May 10-16), let's celebrate all women (the nurturers, the bosses, and everyone in between) by protecting those quiet

workhorses. At The Hormone Restoration Center, we use bi-identical pellets as our method of hormone therapy — here's how pellets can help keep your bones strong.

Why Pellets — And Why Hormones — Matter

Estrogen slows the breakdown of old bone and supports new bone formation. When estrogen drops around perimenopause and menopause, bone loss can speed up, making fractures more likely over time. Testosterone and progesterone help too, by supporting muscle and balance so you're less likely to fall. Pellet therapy delivers bi-identical hormones under the skin in a slow, steady stream — avoiding daily highs and lows — and gives consistent support that helps preserve bone.

How Pellet Therapy Helps Bones

By keeping hormone levels steady, pellets can slow or even reverse bone loss for many women, especially when started near the time of menopause. Over time, the benefits of pellet therapy reveal themselves as improved bone density and, importantly, a lower risk of fractures. Pellets often also ease hot flashes and improve sleep and energy — benefits that help with strength and fall prevention.

What The Pellet Process Looks Like

Consultation: We review your health, family fracture history, lifestyle, and order baseline labs.

Placement: A brief in-office procedure places small, sterile pellets under the skin. Minimal



downtime and a small dressing afterward.

Steady delivery: Pellets release hormones continuously for about 3–6 months, depending on dose and metabolism. No daily dosing to remember.

Follow-up: We monitor symptoms and labs, adjust dosing as needed.

What To Expect

You won't "feel" bones strengthening day-to-day, but many patients notice fewer menopausal symptoms, better sleep, and steadier energy within weeks.

Pellets are one tool in a practical plan: individualized HRT when appropriate, adequate calcium and vitamin D, resistance and balance exercise, fall-proofing your home, and regular bone checks.

You carry everyone else — let's help your skeleton keep up. If bone health is on your mind, call The Hormone Restoration Center. We'll review your history, run the right tests, and build a personalized pellet plan so you can keep lifting, hugging, and showing up for the people who matter most. Call (850) 837-1271 to schedule a consultation.

Glow Into Spring: Refresh, Renew and Radiate

BY KRISY WHITELY ANDERSON

Spring has arrived, bringing with it a season of celebrations—from graduations to Mother's Day gatherings—and the perfect time to refresh your glow. At Beverly Hills Day Spa, one standout treatment is helping clients step confidently into

summer: the Ultimate Skin Refiner H2O Facial.

Designed to deliver visible results, this advanced facial works to deeply cleanse and refine the skin while restoring hydration and radiance. After just three treatments, clients often notice minimized pores, improved



tone and texture and a smoother, more youthful complexion. Gentle yet effective, the treatment removes dirt, oil and impurities while infusing the skin with antioxidants and anti-aging benefits.

This luxurious four-step "water facial" exfoliates, extracts and hydrates in one seamless experience. It clears away dead skin cells, removes blackheads and resurfaces the skin, while also softening fine lines, boosting circulation and helping to reduce breakouts. The result is skin that looks brighter, plump-

er and beautifully refreshed—making it a favorite among those preparing for special occasions or simply seeking a seasonal reset.

Just in time for Mother's Day, Beverly Hills Day Spa is bringing back its popular spring special. The Ultimate Skin Refiner H2O Facial is available for \$150, with an added bonus: purchase five treatments for \$750 and re-

Continued on next page



Dr. Chern, MD,
Sue Griffin, ARNP
Presley Pulse, APRN





Look Healthy, Feel Alive!

Personalized Hormone & Wellness Care

At The Hormone Restoration Center, we help you restore balance, energy, and confidence through personalized, science-backed care—designed for your body and your life.

Bio-Identical Hormone Therapy • Thyroid Optimization • Weight Loss • Anti-Aging & Aesthetics

Miramar Beach, Florida
850-837-1271
thehormonerestorationcenter.com





FLORIDA MEDICAL CARD

Elevate Your Wellness in 2025 with Kaya Life!

Cannabis Consultations for a Healthier, Happier You!

SCAN ME TO BOOK A VISIT!



kaya LIFE
CANNABIS CLINICIANS

www.thekayalife.com
850-235-1252



KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, CERTIFIED NUTRITION ADVISOR

The word exercise triggers a range of definitions from 'it's work', I love it, I hate it, I should, I have to, I get to and the list goes on. The bottom line is we should all be moving. Back in the 'old days' we had to get off the couch to change the channel or turn the record over, kids played outside every day, we spent more time on our feet in the kitchen because we didn't have appliance garages, we had to push the manual lawn mower and clip the bushes by hand. We have so many things today that make our lives easier, not paying attention to the gradual move toward lethargy.

We all know we should be exercising but how do we start and what is our goal? Some of us have a home gym while others go to a gym and others use the internet for their gym. So, where do we start?

The first decision we need to make is what do we want to achieve. We then need to determine what our physical limits are. Our next decision is what type of exercise or exercises do we need and how much time are we willing to commit to it.

The Department of Health shows (Seems to be focused

on cardio, but what about everything else?) 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise (heart rate = 50-70% of our maximum) weekly.

OR

75 minutes of high intensity exercise (heart rate = 70-85% of our maximum) weekly.

PLUS

2 days of muscle strength exercises (30 minutes/5 days a week or 10 minutes/3 times daily).

AND

Always warm up with stretches before.

Now, let's take a look at our choices:

- **Aerobic:** walking, running, jogging, cycling, swimming, dancing
- **Strength:** free weights, body weight (does not use any appliance), resistance bands, Pilates (core muscles, posture, flexibility)
- **Flexibility and Stretching:** Yoga, static stretching, dynamic stretching (arm circles, leg swings, etc.)
- **Balance and Stability:** Tai Chi, single leg stands, heel to toe walking, ankle exercises, coordination routines
- **HIIT (high intensity interval training):** sprint intervals, circuit training, jump rope, R.I.P.P.E.D. (resistance, interval, power, plyometrics, endurance, diet).

Dancing is a great place to start. Put on music you love and just start moving! This will exercise your joints, muscles and cardiovascular system as well as lift your spirit and reduce stress. Another good way to start is to

It's Time to Exercise



take a short walk after dinner. This helps with digestion, decreases stress and ends the day on a fresh air note.

If you have joint issues I encourage you to start with pool exercises. There are cardio, resistance and other options available. The water gives excellent support and cuts down on the whole sweat thing.

Some of the exercises cross categories. Advanced yoga includes body weight postures as well as balance. Pilates is also good for flexibility. Tai Chi exercises the brain.

Let's say you want to start a cardio program and have only been walking. Try this: walk for 10 steps, walk fast for 10 steps, run fast for 10 steps, repeat. How many times can you do this? You would be amazed how well this works.

Look up chair exercises. These are great during commercials or while you're sitting at your desk.

Are you someone who just doesn't have enough time in your day? If that's you then it's time to think outside of the box.

at work. The options are endless.

There are no excuses. Even the most inactive person can find a place to start. Start with 10 minutes a day and build from there. Oh, did I hear you say you want to increase muscle strength but can't afford weights? Use a one gallon container of milk or a couple large cans of beans. What about your laundry detergent bottle? Like Tom Bodett (Motel 6) once said, 'We don't have a gym but you can carry your luggage around the parking lot.'

It's not about what we can't do or don't have. It's about taking that first step every day and every step makes a difference.

*Hear's to Health!
HealthyDay HealthyLife succeed.
hdhl@gmail.com*

GLOW

continued from previous page

ceive a sixth complimentary, allowing clients to maintain their glow throughout the season at

their convenience.

Located in the heart of Destin, the spa offers a serene setting for relaxation and renewal. Whether treating yourself or gifting a loved one, it's an ideal

way to celebrate the season with a little extra care.

Appointments and gift certificates are available by calling (850) 654-8544 or visiting beverlyhillsdayspa.com.

FEEL LIKE A STAR!



FULL SERVICE DAY SPA SERVICES:

- Massages
- Skin Care
- Couples' Treatments
- Teeth Whitening
- Manicures
- Pedicures
- Body Treatments
- Makeup | Waxing

SPRING INTO THE STRESS-FREE YOU:
60-Minute Aromatherapy Massage, Enzyme Facial, Red Light Therapy Session - \$175

Hours: Tues. - Sat. 10am - 5pm | Closed Sun. and Mon.

Our goal is for you to feel like a star during and after your visit!

114 PALMETTO DRIVE, SUITE 6, DESTIN, FLORIDA
(850) 654-8544 | BeverlyHillsDaySpa.com
Purchase gift cards in store or on our website!

JOIN NOW AND SAVE!



JUST
\$25⁹⁹
Month to Month



WORKOUT ANYTIME®
Your Fitness. Your Schedule.

Basic Monthly Membership \$25.99 • Premium \$35.99 • Premium Add Ons \$15.99

Niceville
850.481.3999

Ft. Walton Beach
850.533.0555

Destin
850.428.2333

What Marriage Counseling Really Looks Like and Why It Works

By MICHAEL McMANUS,
LCSW, PSYCHOTHERAPY 30A

In nearly four decades of sitting with couples in my office, I have yet to meet two people who stopped caring about each other overnight. What I do see, again and again, is two people who have been hurt, who have grown tired, and who have quietly stopped reaching for one another because they are not sure the reach will be met. That is usually what brings a couple through my door. Not hatred. Exhaustion.

People come to marriage

counseling for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes there has been a betrayal of trust and they are trying to figure out whether the relationship can survive it. Sometimes the arguing has become so predictable and so painful that they have just stopped talking altogether. Sometimes life has simply gotten in the way. A new baby, a career change, aging parents, financial pressure. The intimacy fades gradually and one day they look at each other across the dinner table and realize they feel like strang-



ers. Whatever brings a couple in, I have rarely met one that could not benefit from the work.

A lot of people are nervous about starting. They worry that therapy will become a place where old wounds get reopened, or that the therapist will take sides, or that talking about their problems will only make things worse. In my experience, the opposite tends to be true. What happens in a good couples session is that two people begin to actually hear each other, often for the first time in years. Not just the words, but what is underneath them. The hurt, the longing, the fear of being left or unloved. When that kind of understanding starts to happen, something shifts.

The practical side of the work matters too. Couples learn concrete ways to communicate that do not escalate into fights. They learn how to recognize when a conversation is starting to go sideways and how to slow it down before real damage is done. They work on rebuilding trust, on rekindling physical and emotional closeness, and on getting back on the same team when it comes to parenting, finances, and everything else that life throws at a marriage.

Research tells us that more than seventy percent of couples who commit to the process see real improvement. In my own practice, I would say that number feels about right, and I would add that the couples who do the best are almost always the ones who came in before things got truly desperate. Most people wait far too long. If something feels off in your relationship right now, that feeling is worth paying attention to. You do not have to wait until you are standing at the edge before asking for help. The door to my office is open.

To learn more, contact Psychotherapy 30A by phone at (850) 837-0123 or visit their website, psychotherapy30a.com.

Michael McManus, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker in private practice along the 30A/South Walton corridor with nearly 40 years of clinical experience. He works with individuals, couples, and offers concierge in-home therapy.

A Personal Trainer, Dedicated to Your Goals.

-Taking New Clients-

Private/Tailored Instruction

-One on One and Small Group Training -Nutrition Help

Call **Lisa Turpin**, Degreed & Certified Personal Trainer

*Be Active,
Stay Active!*



850-974-2005

[LisaTurpinFitness](https://www.facebook.com/LisaTurpinFitness)

Get the Smile You Deserve

Smile with Confidence Again

- Are you embarrassed about smiling in front of people?
- Do you ever put your hand up to cover your smile?
- Do you dislike your smile in photographs?
- When you look through magazines, do you envy the models' smiles?
- Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
- Would you like to change the way your teeth or gums are shaped?
- Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, you may be a good candidate for **A Smile Makeover**.



GULF COAST DENTAL
Steven G. Robinette, DDS
(850) 897-9600
4566 Hwy 20 East Ste 108
Niceville, FL 32578
gulfcoastdental.com



Call today
to schedule a personal
FREE consultation

Don't miss out on
our next issue!

To Advertise,
contact **Scott Miller**

850.688.9886

Scott@LifeMediagr.com



Psychotherapy30A.com

**Individual, Marital
and Family Therapy**

1-850-837-0123

**1131 Mack Bayou Rd &
76 Allen Lakeshore Dr.**

Michael McManus LCSW

From Basement to Balcony: Fueling Strengths That Drive Results



BY BILL MASON,
ROCKET FUEL COACH

We've all seen it—talented team members who, for a moment, lose their footing. One day they're thriving in their strengths, and the next, they're stuck in patterns that hold them back. The good news? With a little awareness and encouragement, it's possible to help them rise from "basement" behaviors back to their "balcony," where their strengths truly shine.

Unlocking Your Co-worker's Futuristic Superpower

Do you have a co-worker who's usually full of bold, forward-thinking ideas but every so often, they get stuck in the past? I've got one on my team who's typically amazing at imagining what the future could look like. But recently, when we were brainstorming new strategies, they seemed to focus on what had failed in the past instead of dreaming big. It was like watching someone with a vision for the future stuck in the basement of regret!

This is a classic case of "basement" behaviors for someone with the Futuristic strength. When they feel weighed down by past setbacks or uncertainty, they can get bogged down in focusing on what didn't work, rather than looking ahead. But at their core, they have an amaz-

ing ability to envision what's possible and inspire others to reach for exciting, innovative goals.

How can we help them get back to their "balcony" and thrive? Here are 3 ideas:

- **Shift the Focus to Possibilities** – Encourage them to share what could be, not what's been. Helping them focus on future opportunities reignites their natural optimism.

- **Create Space for Visionary Thinking** – Invite them into discussions about long-term goals or big-picture projects where their future-focused ideas can truly shine.

- **Celebrate Bold Ideas** – Acknowledge when they share innovative solutions and forward-thinking strategies. Positive reinforcement will fuel their creative vision.

Unlocking Your Co-worker's Focus Superpower

Do you have a co-worker who's usually laser-focused and driven, but every so often, they seem to lose track of what's important? I've got one on my team who's typically amazing at blocking out distractions and staying on task. But recently, during a meeting, they became overwhelmed by too many tasks and started jumping from one thing to the next without finishing anything. It was like watching someone with super focus stuck in the basement of overwhelm!

This is a classic case of "basement" behaviors for someone with the Focus strength. When they feel scattered or have too many things on their plate, they can get bogged down and lose their ability to zero in on what truly matters. But at their core, they have an incredible ability to concentrate on the big picture

and drive toward meaningful goals.

How can we help them get back to their "balcony" and thrive? Here are 3 ideas:

- **Help Prioritize Tasks** – Encourage them to focus on the most important tasks first. Breaking things down into

smaller, manageable chunks can help bring back clarity.

- **Encourage Short Breaks** – Sometimes, a quick reset can



help refocus. Encourage them to step away for a moment to regain perspective and energy.

- **Celebrate Their Achievements** – Acknowledge their

ability to get things done when they're on track. Recognizing their focus will inspire them to keep pushing forward.

When we recognize these patterns and respond with intention, we not only help others succeed—we strengthen our entire team. The goal isn't perfection, but progress: helping each person rise back to their strengths and operate at their very best.

Fuel Your Strengths. Ignite Your Potential.



FREEDOM

STARTS WITH SMART MARKETING

Our Services

- Web Design
- Ad Management
- SEO
- CRM Software
- Automation

Contact Us Today:
 850-981-4850
info@vdxmarketing.com
vdxmarketing.com



Ignite your success with a Rocket Fuel Coach!



Bill Mason

Executive Leadership Coach, CPLC, ICF PCC, Strengths Champion

Stuck? Frustrated? Tired of conflict? Need accountability?
 Visit rocketfuelcoach.com to get started today!

Call now to schedule a consultation
(850) 855-3430

Email: Bill@rocketfuelcoach.com



 Business



What Is Your Business Actually Worth?

BY NATALIE KESSLER

If you've built a business from the ground up — a restaur-

ant, a landscaping company, a retail shop, a service business — you probably have a number in your head. Maybe it's what you think you deserve after years of hard work. Maybe it's what your neighbor got when he sold his shop down the street. The truth is, business valuation is more science than gut feeling, and understanding how buyers think about value can make a significant difference when the

time comes to sell.

It Starts With Earnings, Not Revenue

One of the most common misconceptions among small business owners is that revenue drives value. Buyers don't buy revenue — they buy profit. The number that matters most is called ****Seller's Discretionary Earnings (SDE)****: your net profit plus your own salary,



READY TO SELL YOUR BUSINESS?



Call for a FREE Business Valuation

850-588-1025

panamacitybeach.fcbb.com | natalie.kessler@fcbb.com



Natalie Kessler
Lic. Real Estate Broker



FLEX DESK \$125 / month

Most Valuable Month-to-Month Membership

- Desk in a professional office environment
- Access to The Hub - a casual meeting space
- 3 monthly conference room credits for private meetings
- Secure, fast Wifi
- Unlimited printing
- Professional business address & mail management app

TRY ONE TIME FOR FREE!



34990 Emerald Coast Pkwy., #300, Destin, FL 32541
www.thebeachworx.com | 850-974-3435 | info@thebeachworx.com

benefits, and any personal expenses you've run through the business. This figure represents the total financial benefit a new owner-operator would receive in your shoes.

For most Main Street businesses, value is expressed as a multiple of SDE. A business generating \$150,000 in SDE might sell for 2 to 3 times that amount — somewhere between \$300,000 and \$450,000. The multiple depends on a range of factors that buyers weigh carefully.

What Pushes the Multiple Up or Down

Not all businesses earning the same profit are worth the same price. Buyers pay a premium for businesses that feel stable and transferable. Here's what moves the needle:

Things that increase value: consistent revenue year over year, a loyal and diverse customer base, a strong team that isn't dependent on the owner, documented processes, and a long-term lease in a good location.

Things that decrease value: revenue concentrated in just one or two customers, books that are difficult to verify, heavy owner involvement in day-to-day operations, aging equip-

ment, or declining trends in the financials.

A buyer is essentially asking: "If I write this check, will the business keep running without you?" The more confidently you can answer yes, the more your business is worth.

What Buyers Actually See

Here's something most owners don't realize until they're in the process: buyers will ask for three years of tax returns and financial statements. Not just the current year. They'll look for trends, inconsistencies, and anything that feels uncertain. Clean, consistent financials aren't just good accounting — they're a valuation tool.

The Bottom Line

Valuation isn't a single number — it's a range, shaped by your earnings, your business's stability, and current market conditions. Our office can provide a formal opinion of value at no cost, giving you a realistic picture of where you stand today and what steps might increase that number before you go to market.

Whether you're planning to sell next year or in a decade, knowing what your business is worth is simply good business.



With 18 years of expertise, SecureVision delivers customized **fiber internet, TV, and phone services** to **HOAs, COAs, short-term rentals, and multifamily properties** along the Gulf Coast.

Call Today 251-216-9434 | Email sales@secvis.com | Visit www.secvis.com



Fast Fiber Internet • Bundled Services • Worry-Free Support



A Pastor's Ponderings: From Dust Bowl to Garden



BY PASTOR DAVID HOLLAND

I was burned out—deep fried burned out.

Pastoring a thriving church in Massachusetts brought me great

joy and fulfillment. The church was growing, and we desperately needed a larger facility. The logical next step was to buy property and build. That decision nearly broke me.

We began with a \$600,000 budget. Then we hit granite—thousands of tons of it—right where we needed to dig the foundation and basement. Overnight, the budget doubled to over a million dollars. With no other options, the project became largely volunteer-driven.

That meant I became the pas-

tor, the contractor, and the chief bottle-washer—working eighty hours a week just to keep things moving.

Six months later, I found myself thirty feet up on a ladder, painting the new church. Exhausted beyond words, my mind drifted into a strange place. I caught myself fantasizing, Could I fake a heart attack? I imagined an ambulance pulling up, being strapped to a gurney, and taken away to a hospital where I could simply rest for a few days.

That's how depleted I was.

Near the end of the project, we ran out of money. We had completed the building structure, but there was no landscaping. It looked like a church dropped into the middle of a dust bowl.

Then something unexpected happened.

A new family began attending our church. The husband was a cranberry farmer who had studied horticulture in college. One day he mentioned he had plants on his farm he'd like to donate.

A few days later, he pulled up in his truck and unloaded 150 shrubs in five-gallon buckets. "Oh, great," I thought. "150 more living things to take care of."

Over the next several months, I developed a new rhythm. I would leave my phone in the of-

fice, get down on my knees in the dirt, and plant those shrubs one by one—talking to God as I did so.

Somewhere in that soil, I got my soul back. God began to speak to me again—much like He did to Adam:

"Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed... The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:8-9, 15, NIV)

At my lowest point—when temptation and discouragement ran through my mind like Wile E. Coyote chasing the Road Runner—God brought me back to the ground. Literally.

With my hands in the dirt, my perspective began to change. My eyes saw beauty again. My ears picked up the sound of birds. My mind settled on the goodness of God.

I don't fully understand why God sometimes brings us to the end of ourselves before revealing Himself more clearly. But I know this: Our lives are a garden God has given us to tend—something to cultivate that will be both beautiful and fruitful.

And He meets us there. In that place, He walks with us in the cool of the day. And if we're

listening, He speaks in ways we can understand.

God gave Adam a partner, Eve, and together they were fruitful. Their story spread across the earth. Even today, people plant crops for provision, vineyards for joy, and gardens for beauty.

Here in our Florida paradise, the invitation remains the same.

Will we walk with God?

Will we listen for His voice?

Will we cultivate the garden He has placed in our care?

Maybe your "garden" doesn't look like much right now. It feels more like hard ground than fertile soil. But sometimes, the quiet work—the unnoticed, ordinary, hands-in-the-dirt moments—is where God does His deepest restoration.

I learned that on my knees, planting shrubs in a dust bowl. Because the garden of God isn't just something we tend—it's where He tends to us.

Dave Holland pastored churches for 38 years before retiring in Destin, Florida. His new book, Resurrection Jesus, is now available. 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.

Help Preserve Destin's Founding Family History

Descendants and community members connected to two of Destin's founding families—the William T. Marler and John George Maltezos families—are invited to take part in an important local history project. Destin's 15 founding families are defined as those who lived here prior to the completion of the Destin Bridge in 1936.

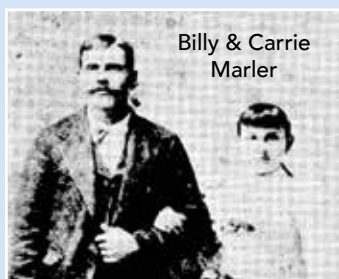
Local historian Claude Newland is preparing two long-awaited books and is seeking stories, photos and historical details from the community. An informational workshop was held May 2 at the Destin Community Center in conjunction with the city's annual Founder's Day Celebration, where attendees learned how to contribute to preserving this rich Emerald Coast history. If you missed the May 2 workshop, there's still time to get involved.

Now, the effort continues—and broader community participation is encouraged. All contributions, whether detailed family histories or simple memories and photographs, will be credited. The goal is to publish both books in time for the 2027 Destin Founder's Day Celebration.

William T. Marler, known as "Uncle Billy," worked for founder Leonard Destin as a youth, later serving as a lighthouse keeper and Destin's first postmaster. He named the city in honor of Destin, and the Destin Bridge bears his name. His descendants be-



John George Maltezos, wife Isabelle and daughter Inez



Billy & Carrie Marler

came some of the area's earliest charter boat captains.

John George Maltezos arrived in the United States as a young stowaway from Greece, eventually settling in Northwest Florida. A skilled boat builder and fisherman, he later moved to Destin, where his family became intertwined with several prominent local families, including the Marlers, Coxes, Brooks, Woodwards and Walters.

Community members are encouraged to begin writing down family stories and gathering photos to ensure these legacies are preserved. Each of the families' nine children will have a dedicated chapter in the books, highlighting their lasting impact on the Destin community.

For more information or to contribute, contact Claude Newland at 850-582-1074 or rustic19@cox.net.

A Superior Mechanical

- Air Conditioning
- Indoor Air Quality
- Plumbing • Electrical

We now offer all Plumbing Services:

• Emergency Plumbing	• Sewer Services
• Water Heater Repair	• Drain Services
• Clean Water Solutions	• Leak Detection
• Waterline Services	• Commercial Plumbing
• Bathroom Remodeling	• Repiping
• Plumbing Fixtures Installation	
• Tankless Water Heaters	

Call Us at
850-258-3225
 A Superior Mechanical
 17728 Beach Park Trail
 Panama City Beach, FL 32413
 ASuperiorMechanical.com
 CAC1821064 / CFC1431881

Musing



Sean of the South: Enough

BY SEAN DIETRICH

What if I told you that you are enough?

Moreover, what if you woke up this morning and, for the first time ever, you actually felt like enough. What if you loved yourself? And I mean really loved yourself.

Do you love yourself? Let's find out.

Are you a perfectionist? No? Yes? Have you ever asked WHY you're a perfectionist? Have you ever wondered why you strive to be flawless so that nobody will find a reason to judge you?

Or are you a people pleaser? Ever wonder why? How did you become a doormat? Why do you fall all over yourself to ensure everyone will like you? Would showing them the real you be that bad?

Or maybe you're critical. Maybe you nitpick those you love. Heck, maybe you nitpick yourself. Maybe you look in the mirror and think, "I'm so fat and ugly."

Perhaps you see photos of yourself and react with true dis-

gust, thinking, "I'm so old and wrinkled. Look at all this flab underneath my neck, jiggling like Jello salad."

Maybe you don't like your nose. Or your teeth. Or the shape of your bootymus maximus.

Then again, maybe you dislike yourself in much simpler ways. Maybe you're embarrassed about your bank account. "Omigod. Is this ALL you have in savings? What a loser."

Maybe you don't like where you are in your career. What a freaking disappointment you are. You should've been MUCH further along in your field by now. Instead, you're just a supporting actor in someone else's made-for-TV drama.

Maybe you don't feel smart enough. Maybe you are socially anxious. Maybe you think you're too much of an introvert. You're a classic procrastinator. You feel invisible. You hate your hair. You wish you were prettier. Skinnier. Funnier. Happier.

Either way, your inner critic is always screaming, "You're not enough!" You've tried to shut up this blowhard for years. But it doesn't work. The inner critic just keeps talking smack.

"You're simply not enough," the critic keeps saying.

This is shame you feel. You might not be aware that it's shame, but it is. You don't feel shame because of something you've done. You feel shame over who you are.

You dislike the real you. And thus, you've formed a persona to hide the real you. And hopefully, everyone will like this persona because, God knows, you work really hard building it. You built this persona because the real



you is not worthy. The real you just isn't enough.

But...

What if I told you that you don't have to feel this way anymore? What if I told you that you ARE enough? What if I said that you are so insanely beautiful as a human being, just the way you are in this moment. Moreover, what if I am not prodigiously and majestically full of bovine ordure?

There is a way to never feel ashamed again. You will not find the answer through rituals and creeds, nor through the oppression of pious dogmas. You will not find answers in internet

videos or poorly written articles on the internet—such as the one you are currently reading.

I have been ashamed of myself for my entire life. Because of childhood trauma, I became the essence of shame itself. But if I have learned one truth in my short life—if you get nothing out of what I've written you today—I hope you understand one thing, because the entirety of reality rests upon it:

The only way to love yourself is to first love your neighbor. And the only way to love your neighbor is to love the One who made them.

2021 BEST

When only the best will do.

Specialty Roofers, Inc., is one of the fastest growing roofing companies in Northwest Florida. Our company specializes in residential, commercial, and solar projects and take pride in our commitment to quality workmanship.

SRI SPECIALTY ROOFERS 850-974-ROOF | SPECIALTYROOFERS.COM
124 TROUT BRANCH DR. FREEPORT, FL 32439

Sliding Glass Doors Hard to Open? Dont Replace It, We Can Fix It!

Fast and Affordable Repairs
FREE ESTIMATES! Fully Insured

- Roller Replacement
- Track Maintenance
- Locks & Handles
- Highest Quality Parts

850-987-5433

www.BeachsideSlide.com
BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC.

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

BELMAC ROOFING SINCE 1995

Roofing • Repairs & Maintenance • Roof Coating & Restoration

SANTA ROSA BEACH
850-267-0900 | www.Bel-MacRoofing.com

DESTIN SMOKE SHOP
16055 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin
Next to the Destin Walmart

CBD • Delta 8 • Kratom • E-Cig • Walking Humidors
Hookah • Pipe • Vape • Cigarette • Tobacco • Novelty Items

850.837.0237
DestinSmokeShop@gmail.com

10% Off Purchase
w/Coupon (Excluding cigarettes)

Courage: A Legacy Passed Down

BY RACHEL COGGINS

A framed picture torn from an October 1975 issue of National Geographic hung above my desk. It showed a feisty and courageous woman—Revolutionary War hero Nancy Hart. Her story was told in an article titled “Women of the Revolution: Patriots in Petticoats.”

The image was of a painting that hangs in the Hart County Historical Museum in Hartwell, Georgia, where a county, a lake, a highway, and a park are named in her honor. Dressed in the simple apron and long skirt of the late 1770s, Nancy stands with a determined expression, gripping a rifle while her young daughter, Sukey, stands behind her holding another rifle.

Five Tories forced their way into Nancy Hart’s cabin after killing her neighbor and friend, Colonel John Dooley. Their intention was to do the same to her husband, Benjamin Hart, a lieutenant in the Georgia Patriot militia, and the group of militiamen accompanying him.

Her image challenged me and reminded me that women have always played an important role in defending our nation’s liberty. Years later, while deployed during war, I found myself needing that reminder—and her courage.

I joined the Army Reserves as a chaplain in December 1989. One year later I was called to active duty during Operation Desert Storm. As a young First Lieutenant, there was much to learn. Soon I was sent to Aschaffenburg, Germany, where most of the soldiers from the base had already deployed to the front lines of the war in Iraq, their tanks ready for battle. Left behind were the wives and children of those sent forward, a few support personnel, and a handful of soldiers. It was a formidable time. I understood the fears of the families because I, too, was the wife of a deployed military member.

Organizing assistance for the women was left largely to the commanders’ wives, who sought me out for counsel and spiritual direction. It was a time to be creative and decisive as we navigated unfamiliar territory. Thousands of families had been left behind in a foreign country, and the need for support was great.

Command put me in the men’s dormitory. There was plenty of room since the men were all gone. As I unlocked the creaking front door and stepped into the semi-dark foyer of the two-story building, echoes in the empty building mirrored the loneliness in my heart.

I quickly closed the door and relocked it. Then I walked down the dark hallway to my room and locked that door behind me as well—a clear reminder that I was on my own and needed to be brave.

In the stillness of an early morning walk through darkness and falling snow, I arrived at a beautiful old German church that served as the base chapel. Unlocking the massive carved wooden door, I entered and walked through the sanctuary toward my office in the back.

I would pause to sing praises and enjoy the marvelous reverberation that filled the stone church—an acoustic marvel designed to amplify the beauty of the human voice. Settling into my office, my task was to write words of inspiration and encouragement to those left behind, whose fear was palpable as their husbands faced grave danger.



Drabbing out death, Nancy Hart gets the drop on Tories who had raided her Georgia cabin. After killing one with her own musket, she holds the
National Geographic, October 1975



The supplemental training I received included how to conduct death notifications. We were preparing for the possibility of large casualties, and the person to tell a wife that her husband had been killed was an officer accompanied by a chaplain. The possibility weighed heavily on me. “Oh Lord, help me,” I prayed as I leaned back hard in my chair.

That’s when I looked up at Nancy’s picture and pondered the rest of the story.

The Loyalists shot her last turkey and demanded that she cook it for them. Nancy, with a coy demeanor, stoked the fire and pulled out a jug of corn liquor. Gradually, the warm fire, the food, and the drink worked their magic while Nancy served the men. Edging closer, she quietly wrapped her long skirt around the muskets propped beside their chairs and carried them away, hiding them out of reach.

Eventually she was discovered. Nancy grabbed one of the muskets and fired, killing the soldier who rushed toward her and wounding another. Seizing another musket, she held the remaining Loyalists at bay until her husband and his band

of militiamen returned. When they arrived, Benjamin suggested the prisoners be shot. Nancy, as I like to tell the story, replied, “Shootin’s too good for them. Let’s hang ’em!” And they did—in her backyard.

Sitting alone in the quiet church, Nancy challenged me to believe that women are courageous. As I labored under the weight of responsibility, Nancy stood guard, rifle in hand. My task was challenging, but by the grace of God and the incredible legacy passed on to me, I would do it—and I would do it well.

I could not disappoint Nancy Hart. She was more than a hero to me. My research revealed she was my fifth-great-grandmother—and I was not going to let her down.

Rachel Coggins served 25 years as an Army Reserve Chaplain, deploying four times in support of America’s military missions. Her book Gateway to Iraq: A Chaplain’s Story, captures one of those deployments, offering a heartfelt, ground-level look at the courage, struggles, and faith of the men and women she served alongside.

Rachel and her husband now live in Navarre, where they remain active in church, community, and missions. They enjoy gardening, raising chickens, and hosting friends. Rachel writes to help readers encounter faith, history, and hope.



Local, professional photographer specializing in families, weddings, and events. My passion lies in creating lasting memories through photographs, and I cherish the opportunity to be part of such meaningful moments!



205-567-2779
savvyleighphotography@gmail.com
www.savvyleighphoto.com













 Musing

Letter to the Editor: An Education

BY ANONYMOUS

I grew up running between the pines and oaks, sifting through the marsh to find arrowheads in the wide expanse of the bay shores. I went to church with many of the founding families of this area and their descendants, neighbors with the community veterinarian, the local dentist and the fishermen who took their boats out at 4 a.m. to fish the world's luckiest fishing village.

Never once did I see any of them stand on the ecological phenomenon of our white sands, face the Gulf with hands outstretched and say, "This part is mine." Not one person. We ate together, went to school together, got baptized in the surf together and waited excitedly at the docks for the day's catch together. We walked at sunrise, exploring the shape-shifting dunes that were never quite in the same place as the day before.

Every stroll down to the Gulf presented a new discovery of

shallow little pools, sand dollars scattered at the second sandbar, seaweed or jellyfish washed ashore and the occasional curled stick of driftwood. Often, there was not another human for miles. Often, it was just the breathing ebb and flow of the waves onto the ever-changing shoreline, glistening pink and orange in the dissolving light of sunset.

Many, many people have moved here since that time long ago, before the village became a city and our secret little paradise was discovered. Many of the people who moved here have made this little village by the sea a better place to live. They have started businesses, donated to charities and given their lives to making the community a better place for everyone to live. They have become neighbors, friends, family and caretakers of our ecological treasures. Never once did I see any of those people stand on the sand with arms outstretched and say, "This part is mine."



It wasn't until a poor boy from Arkansas showed up a few years back that anyone publicly and legally tried to claim, "This part is mine."

It remains incomprehensible.

We are still that same, tight-knit community we have always been. We are there for our neighbors when they need us, when they are celebrating or mourning, whenever they are

in need. You may win your fight and your lonely grains of sand, but you will never prove John Donne wrong:

No man is an island, entire of itself;


Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

We are woven together pieces of this continent as part of the

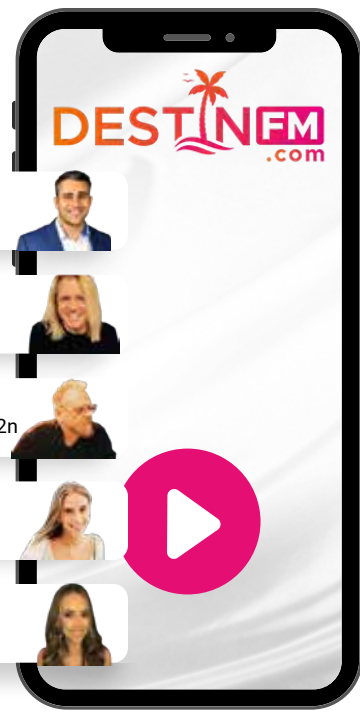
main, the community we have built around the vastness of the Gulf and its mysteries. In spite of everything, I continue to believe in the goodness of humanity, especially those around me. As long as I have breath, I will continue to stand on the ecological phenomenon of our white sands, face the Gulf with hands outstretched to those beside me and say, "This part is ours."






Destin's Only Radio Station!

DESTIN FM .com



Live and Local!
Download the FREE app!



-  **Alberto Romero**
Destin's Only Local Forecast
-  **Billy Surf**
Surf's Up In The Morning
-  **Dan Collins**
Crab Island Throw Down Sat 12n
-  **Ellie Adair**
Weekends
-  **@The850Foodie Joanna Davis**
Foodie Friday 7a, 8a, 9a

Spring Momentum: Where Familiar Faces and New Friends Meet

BY LORENDIA SMITH, FIRST NATIONAL BANK

Each spring brings a gentle shift not only at First National Bank, but also in our little community. The mornings stretch a little longer, the air softens, and our town begins to hum with a familiar sound—one that blends returning faces, sun seekers, and those who call this place home year-round.

At the bank, we notice it first in the small moments. A friendly "welcome back" is exchanged across the counter for those who visit each year. The traffic at the ITM/ATM is now nonstop, and the walk-in traffic with that look that says, "Where is the best seafood in town?" What starts as a quick stop often turns into a conversation, a recommendation, and sometimes even the beginning of a new friendship.

Being located along Scenic Gulf Drive, we're lucky to sit right in the middle of it all. It's not unusual to see visitors strolling by, taking in the ocean views, turning a simple walk

into a daily ritual. Many of them eventually find their way inside—not just for banking, but for connection. A place to cool off, ask a question, or simply be greeted by a familiar smile.

For many of our seasonal residents—our "snowbirds"—Miramar isn't just a destination. It's a second home. And for our local customers, it's the heart of everyday life. What makes this time of year special is how naturally those two worlds somehow come together.

We see it in the way our locals gladly recommend their favorite restaurants, share tips about local events, or stop in just to say hello. We see it in the conversations that linger a little longer this time of year.

And then there are the small traditions that make people feel like they belong—like Tiffany's homemade cookies, baked fresh every Friday. It's a simple gesture, but one that brings people through the door, sparks conversations, and

turns first-time visitors into familiar faces.

At First National Bank, spring is more than a season—it's an opportunity. An opportunity to reconnect, to welcome, and to continue building relationships that matter. Whether someone has banked with us for years or just discovered us on a walk along Scenic Gulf Drive, our goal is the same: to make everyone feel known, valued, and welcomed at the place we are blessed to call home.

We're proud to support local initiatives that keep our community thriving, and just as proud to be a place where connections begin—sometimes at the ATM, sometimes over a cookie, and often somewhere in between.

This spring, as our community fills with renewed energy, we're reminded that momentum isn't just about growth—it's about connection. And that's something worth celebrating.

ECTC's 1980's Iconic "Mystic Pizza" Debuts April 30

Friendship, love, and small-town dreams take center stage as Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) closes its 13th season with Mystic Pizza. This iconic coming-of-age story runs April 30 through May 17, with performances Thursday through Saturday at 7 p.m. and matinees on Wednesdays and Sundays at 2 p.m., at ECTC's theater in Grand Boulevard at Miramar Beach.

Based on the beloved classic film, Mystic Pizza follows three young women navigating life, love, and the uncertainty of what comes next, all while working less than glamorous jobs at a local pizza shop in a coastal

town. As they chase their dreams and discover who they are, their bond with one another is tested and strengthened in ways that are both heartfelt and relatable.

With humor, nostalgia, and a vibrant soundtrack of 1980s and 1990s hits like "Girls Just Want to Have Fun," "Addicted to Love," and "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now," Mystic Pizza captures the magic of growing up and finding your place in the world.

"Mystic Pizza is a story about friendship, growing up, and the moments you look back on years later and realize changed everything," said Nathanael Fisher, Producing Artistic Director. "It's nostalgic, heartfelt, and full of



music that audiences will instantly connect with."

The leading trio features Tennessee natives Shea Grande as Josephina "Jo/Jojo" Barboza and Presley Ann Calonge as Daisy Araujo, alongside Olivia Evans as Katherine "Kat" Araujo, coming to the ECTC stage from Lawrence, Kansas.

Returning to the ECTC stage are several familiar faces, including Darla Briganti as Leona Silva, previously seen as Miss Hannigan in Annie and Genie Klein in Beautiful: The Carole King Musical. She is joined by ensemble members Teresa Lombardi, last seen as Brooke Wyndham in Legally Blonde; Mikayla House Pil-

strom, who portrayed Cynthia Weil in Beautiful; and Martha Wingfield, who appeared as Lily St. Regis in Annie.

ECTC's 2025-2026 season is made possible with generous support from Grand Boulevard Town Center, St. Joe Community Foundation, Visit South Walton, Howard Group, and Jerry and Alice Zich.

To purchase tickets, make a tax-deductible donation, join as a VIP or sponsor, or learn more about Emerald Coast Theatre Company, call (850) 684-0323 or visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org. Engage with ECTC on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. 560 Grand Boulevard, Suite 200, Miramar Beach.

Gulf Coast Jam

May 28-31 | Frank Brown Park, PCB

One of the country's most popular beach music festivals returns May 28-31 as Gulf Coast Jam brings four days of live country music to Frank Brown Park in Panama City Beach. Headliners Post Malone, Chris Stapleton, Keith Urban and Riley Green lead a lineup of more than 20 artists performing throughout the high-energy Country On The Coast™ weekend.



Fans can enjoy multiple stages, food vendors, bars and interactive fan experiences while soaking in the coastal festival atmosphere that has drawn sellout crowds of more than 30,000 in recent

years. Pass options currently available include General Admission, Military, College and First Responder tickets, VIP experiences and lodging packages. Several premium viewing areas have already sold out.

Payment plans are available. Follow festival updates online. Visit GulfCoastJam.com.

POGO PASS EMERALD COAST **ONE PASS. ONE PRICE. ONE YEAR OF FUN!**

Enjoy FREE ADMISSION at every stop!

1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit
1 Visit	3 Visits	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	12 Visits	1 Visit
1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit	1 Visit

50% OFF WITH CODE: **FunLife**
www.pogopass.com Big Kahunas - Gulfarium - Uncle Bucks and More!

ECTC emerald coast theatre company

MYSTIC Pizza

APRIL 30 - MAY 17

Tickets: EmeraldCoastTheatre.org

SOUTH WALTON FLORIDA

GRAND BOULEVARD TOWN CENTER

JERRY & ALICE ZICH

25 ST. JOE Community Foundation

HOWARD GROUP

 Arts & Music

Art Month Walton County 2026 Showcases a Month of Creativity and Community

Art Month Walton County returns this month with a dynamic, month-long celebration of creativity, culture and community. Presented by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County with support from Visit South Walton, the initiative features more than 40 arts experiences spanning visual, literary and performing arts across the region.

Signature events include the 38th Annual ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival, Digital Graffiti, the Longleaf Writers Conference and Mystic Pizza at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, alongside performances by Sinfonia Gulf Coast, storytelling events, art walks, gallery shows and more.

At its April 14 meeting, the Walton County Board of County Commissioners officially proclaimed May as Art Month Walton County, recognizing the arts as a vital driver of economic development, tourism, education and quality of life.

Led by the Cultural Arts Al-

liance, the initiative brings together artists, organizations and businesses to showcase the depth and diversity of Walton County's creative landscape. "This proclamation is more than a designation—it's a reflection of how deeply the arts are woven into the fabric of our community," said Jennifer Steele, president and CEO of the Cultural Arts Alliance. "Art Month Walton County is an open invitation to experience the creativity that thrives here year-round."

The celebration serves as both an invitation and a call to action—encouraging residents and visitors alike to explore, participate in and support the arts while fostering connection and inspiration throughout the community.

Below are additional upcoming Art Month events:

Mystic Pizza, presented by Emerald Coast Theatre Company, runs through May 17. Based on the beloved 1988 film, the musical follows three young women navigating life,

love and family in a small-town pizza shop. Tickets and showtimes are available at Emerald-CoastTheatre.org.

Curate 30A hosts a live artist show featuring Plaid Columns May 7–9, showcasing nostalgic mixed-media works inspired by Americana and vintage iconography.

Emerald Coast Storytellers presents an Open Mic Night May 7 at Distillery 98. Doors open at 5 p.m., with stories beginning at 6 p.m.

The Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Concerts in the Village series continues May 7, 14, 21 and 28, offering family-friendly live music each Thursday evening. Visit MKAF.org for details.

Art Walks take place throughout the month, including Ruskin Place Artist Colony on May 8, the Artist Warehouses on County Road 393 on May 21 and the Seaside Art Walk on May 27.

The 15th Annual Longleaf Writers Conference



Details at JustinGaffrey.com.

Digital Graffiti returns to Alys Beach May 15–16, transforming the town's iconic white architecture into a canvas for projection art by international creatives. Tickets at Digital-Graffiti.com.

Jaws in Concert takes place May 15, as Sinfonia Gulf Coast performs John Williams' iconic score live alongside the film.

Emerald Coast Storytellers hosts a Writers Meetup May 21 at Distillery 98, offering a collaborative space for writers of all levels beginning at 6 p.m.

Celebrate Memorial Day weekend with **Sinfonia Salutes**, a free outdoor concert and drone show May 24 at 7:30 p.m. at Alys Beach.

Through performances, exhibitions and interactive experiences, Art Month Walton County highlights the power of the arts to connect people, inspire creativity and enrich the community—inviting all to be part of the celebration.



mkaf
Festival of the Arts
mattie kelly arts foundation
ART, MUSIC, AND MORE
FREE EVENT!
OCTOBER 25 & 26

mkaf
Membership keeps art FUNded
mattie kelly arts foundation

mkaf
Concerts in the Village
mattie kelly arts foundation
THURSDAY NIGHT
CONCERT SERIES
APRIL 9 - JUNE 11, 2026

- ✓ Receive one season pass to Concerts in the Village.
- ✓ Enjoy early admission access to Concerts in the Village.
- ✓ Receive discounts on Festival of the Arts merchandise.
- ✓ Receive membership rates on select MKAF events.

mkaf
ArtsReach
mattie kelly arts foundation

BECOME A MEMBER - JOIN TODAY!

MKAF.org



CHANGE A LIFE - SUPPORT THE ARTS!
160+ ARTSREACH PROGRAMS

Arts News

MKAF Seeks Artists for 31st Festival of the Arts

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation is now accepting artist applications for the 31st annual Festival of the Arts, set for Oct. 24–25, 2026, at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin.

One of the Southeast’s premier art festivals, the event features more than 100 artists from across the country, along with live music, Cuisine on the Green, a wine and beer garden, children’s art activities and more. This juried show includes a wide range of mediums, from painting and sculpture to photography, fiber, glass and digital art. Artists will compete for \$10,000 in cash awards. A \$30 nonrefundable jury fee applies, with booth fees starting at \$350. “Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation is a champion for arts and culture and the Festival of the Arts helps to build that creative community. This festival attracts artists from across the country and has become a popular annual fall event with locals and visitors alike,” said Deb Nissley, director of operations for Mat-

tie Kelly Arts Foundation.

Application deadline for artist exhibition and poster art is July 1, 2026. Learn more at mkaf.org.

Student Creativity Takes Center Stage in Poster Contest

The Okaloosa Arts Alliance invites K–12 students across the county to participate in the 17th Annual School Poster Contest. This year’s theme, “What Does Art Mean to You?”, encourages students to explore how creativity shapes their lives. Entries may be submitted through schools or individually and must be received by May 2 at 3 p.m. Drop-off locations include Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music in Fort Walton Beach and the Okaloosa Arts Alliance office on Beal Parkway.

The community is invited to a free public reception and showcase May 3 from 1–4 p.m. at Grow Your Gift, featuring student artwork, live music, refreshments and an interactive instrument “petting zoo,” along with the announcement

of contest winners and Viewer’s Choice awards.

Details: okaloosaarts.org.

Sinfonia Youth Orchestra Performs Free Spring Concerts May 3

Sinfonia Gulf Coast’s Sinfonia Youth Orchestra will present its Spring Concert on May 3 at Destin High School, with performances at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. as part of the organization’s 20th anniversary season.

Under new director Dr. Thomas Roggio, the program blends cinematic favorites and classical masterworks, including selections from *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Jurassic Park*, a creative fusion of *The Barber of Seville* and *Jaws*, and Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5*. “This program is designed to inspire both our musicians and our audience,” Roggio said. “We’re bringing together music that students love — from cinematic favorites to cornerstone classical repertoire — and challenging them to perform at a high level while connecting emotionally with the audience. It’s about

storytelling through music and creating an experience that resonates.”

The free, family-friendly concert will also honor graduating seniors. “Education is the centerpiece of Sinfonia,” said Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller. “The Sinfonia Youth Orchestra provides an invaluable opportunity for young musicians to grow artistically and personally. These students represent the future of music in our community, and we invite everyone to come out and support them.”

‘Jaws in Concert’ Brings Film and Live Orchestra Together May 15

Sinfonia Gulf Coast continues its 20th anniversary season with *Jaws in Concert* on May 15 at 7:30 p.m. at the Destin–Fort Walton Beach Convention Center.

This unique experience pairs the full-length film with a live performance of John Williams’ iconic score, performed in sync with the action on screen. “We love presenting these film-in-



concert experiences because they create an entirely new way to experience movies audiences already know and love,” said Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller. “Hearing this iconic score performed live alongside the film is powerful, immersive and unforgettable. It’s one of those evenings where you feel every note.”

Reflecting on the film’s famous theme, composer John Williams said, “It was fun and it seemed to have worked.”

Tickets range from \$40–\$69.50 and benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast’s music education and community programs. Learn more at SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or call (850) 460-8800.



JAWS IN CONCERT

SATURDAY, MAY 15 | 7:30 PM
DESTIN-FWB CONVENTION CENTER

20 SINFONIA
GULF COAST
YEARS
DEMETRIUS FULLER
MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

YOUR SYMPHONY EXPERIENCE ... REDEFINED

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Box Office:
SinfoniaGulfCoast.org
850.460.8800



Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the concert hall ... experience Academy Award-winning director Steven Spielberg’s classic 1970s adventure thriller like never before. *Jaws in Concert* will keep you on the edge of your seat as Sinfonia Gulf Coast performs composer John Williams’ iconic Academy Award-winning score live, perfectly synced to the film projected in HD on the big screen. Relive the suspense, the terror, and the unforgettable music that forever changed the way we view the ocean.

PRESENTED BY:



PRESENTING SEASON SPONSOR:



PRESENTING CONCERTS SPONSOR:



PRESENTING MEDIA SPONSOR:



CLASSICAL CONNECTIONS PRESENTING SPONSOR:



PRESENTING CREATIVE SPONSOR:





Ask Destinites: Encourage Your Teen To Volunteer



BY PATRICIA LEE, FOUNDER, DESTINITES FACEBOOK GROUP

I recently placed the following post in our targeted local community Facebook group (www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinites) and below, are some

of the responses it received. I hope these volunteering suggestions will motivate you to get involved, as well.

Post:

Please list in the thread below, some places or organizations that would be good for teens to do some volunteer work either permanently or temporarily for the summer. I realize most are looking for actual jobs but it's also good for them to learn early about "giving" back. If they learn early the importance of volunteering, they will be more likely to do so as adults. Please talk to your teen about volunteer work, even if it's only

once a month. Thank you for your input.

Responses:

1. Ocean Hour Okaloosa offers 1hour clean ups on Saturday mornings. Students can collect volunteer hours.

2. The American Legion Destin Post 296. We need help for Sunday morning breakfast! Servers, dishwashers, bussers!

3. Destin Garden Club maintenance of grounds at the Destin Library

- We have 21 themed gardens from Butterfly to Japanese
- We can teach design elements
- Annuals vs perennials

- Camellias
- Roses
- Native
- Pollinator
- Irrigation
- In conjunction with City of Destin staff.

4. Eden Gardens.

5. The Goodwill in Destin is looking for volunteers.

6. Destin community center specialty summer camps. (Normally 1-3 hours).

7. The Florida Trail Association is always looking for volunteers to maintain the trail for those looking to spend time outdoors. The local chapter lists volunteer opportunities on Meetup. Search: Florida Trail -

Choctawhatchee chapter.

8. Destin History and Fishing Museum.

9. Paws in Fort Walton.

10. Maybe try a florist company.

For Destin and the close surrounding area, I invite you to join our private, targeted group for locals and property owners at Facebook.com/groups/Destinites. We now have 12,600+ members (est. October 2018). Check out our Local Business Directory at Destinites.com where more than 500 local businesses are listed and enjoy advertising in our community group.

New Miss Destin 2026 Crowned!

Kaylynn Ann Hayles was crowned Miss Destin 2026 following an impressive competition featuring 10 outstanding contestants.

Rounding out the court: Estella Scoma (1st runner-up), Kallie Causton (2nd runner-up) and Kendra Quaranto (3rd runner-up).

Special awards: Miss Congeniality, Humanitarian Award and Video Excellence Award—Estella Scoma; Miss Photogenic—Andreia Barcelos.

The evening was a celebration of talent, poise and heart, with each contestant bringing something unique to the stage.

A huge congratulations to our newly crowned Miss Destin

2026, Kaylynn Ann Hayles!

Our judges had the incredibly tough job of choosing from 10 AMAZING contestants—each one truly brought something special to the stage. We are so proud of all of these young women!

Congratulations to our titleholders:

- Miss Destin 2026 – Kaylynn Hayles
- 1st Runner-Up – Estella Scoma
- 2nd Runner-Up – Kallie Causton
- 3rd Runner-Up – Kendra Quaranto



Special award winners:

- Miss Congeniality – Estella Scoma
- Humanitarian Award – Estella Scoma
- Miss Photogenic – Andreia Barcelos
- Video Excellence Award – Estella Scoma

What an unforgettable night celebrating talent, poise, and heart!

GULF COAST JAM

WHO ARE YOU MOST EXCITED TO SEE?

4 DAYS. 24 ARTISTS. 1 BEACH.

GET YOUR TICKETS AT www.GULFCOASTJAM.com

COMING TO BEAUTIFUL PANAMA CITY BEACH, FL
MAY 28 TO MAY 31, 2026

COASTAL PROTEIN

\$5 OFF YOUR FIRST VISIT

\$9 minimum order. Loyalty program sign in required.

Offer expires 5/31/26
501 Harbor Blvd., Destin
850-904-9738 - Text your order

DESTIN PRIVATE TIKI

20% OFF

Crab Island Express Ride

Offer expires 5/31/26
850-424-1119
www.DestinTiki.com

Don't miss out on our next issue!

To Advertise, contact **Scott Miller**

850.688.9886
Scott@LifeMediagrps.com

Local Coupons

BLUEWATER PLASTIC SURGERY

\$100 OFF LASER PACKAGES

INCLUDES LASER HAIR REMOVAL, PHOTOFACIALS, AND PIGMENTATION TREATMENTS (EXCLUDES ULTRA-CLEAR). PLUS ENJOY A COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTATION WITH MICHELLE, NP.

20% OFF ANY FACIAL

PLUS A FREE SKIN CONSULTATION WITH OUR AESTHETICIAN, MAYA. NEW PATIENTS ONLY.

Offer expires 5/31/26

Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach 850-530-6064
www.bluewaterplasticsurgery.com

MAGIC + COMEDY

1/2 PRICE TICKETS

for students ages 5-22

Bart Rockett Magic & Comedy Show

Booking Code DL3

Offer expires 5/31/26
MagicDestin.com

SMALLCAKES

**BUY 2 CUPCAKES
GET 2 CUPCAKES FREE**

Offer expires 5/31/26
36150 Emerald Coast Pkwy #110
850-842-9002 | SmallcakesDestin.com

CAFÉ DESTIN

**10% OFF PURCHASE
WITH COUPON**

Offer expires 5/31/26

985 Highway 98, Destin, 850-424 6777, CafeDestin.com
Kwench: 981 US Hwy. 98, 850-842-2802

BEVERLY HILLS DAY SPA

**SPRING GLOW BRIGHTENING
CHEMICAL PEEL \$85
ADD RED-LIGHT THERAPY SESSION TO
ANY TREATMENT \$1 PER MINUTE**

Offer expires 5/31/26

114 Palmetto Drive, Suite 6, Destin
850-654-8544 | BeverlyHillsDaySpa.com

CULLIGAN WATER

\$300 OFF

WHEN YOU MENTION THIS AD/COUPON

Offer expires 5/31/26
850-664-7771

SPARKLES CLEANING

**15% OFF
DEEP CLEANING**

When you mention this coupon

Offer expires 5/31/26
850.517.5581

www.sparklescleaningflorida.com

OVATION PAINTING

WE CELEBRATE AND HONOR OUR MILITARY
AND FIRST RESPONDERS WITH A

5% DISCOUNT!

When you mention this coupon

Offer expires 5/31/26
Call/Text (850) 830-9668 Email Kyle@ovationpaint.com
www.ovationpaint.com

BE WELL SOLUTIONS

FREE

QEEG BRAIN MAPPING SESSION

(NOT JUST A CONSULTATION)

Offer expires 5/31/26
4641 Gulf Starr Dr #105 • Destin
850-786-2051 • Completeketaminesolutions.com

AUSTONS ON 98

**1/2 PRICE APP
WITH PURCHASE OF AN ENTREE**

1 per table

Offer expires 5/31/26
125 Poinciana Blvd., Miramar Beach
850-842-3200

SPECIALTY ROOFERS

**\$250 OFF
RESIDENTIAL ROOF CONTRACTS**

MENTION PROMO CODE NEWYEAR250

Offer expires 5/31/26
850-974-7663
Specialtyroofers.com

DESTIN/30A LANDSCAPE LIGHTING

BOOK YOUR JOB BY MARCH 31 2026 AND RECEIVE A

FREE PATH LIGHT

Offer expires 5/31/26
850-783-9191
www.destinoutdoorlighting.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC

**\$25 OFF SLIDING DOOR TRACK REPAIR
WITH ROLLER REPLACEMENT**
FREE ESTIMATES

Offer expires 5/31/26
BeachsideSlide.com
850-98-SLIDE (850-987-5433)

PURE & COUTURE

**APRIL SPECIAL
PURCHASE TWO FULL-SIZE RETAIL ITEMS,
GET ONE AT 50% OFF**

Offer expires 5/31/26
36150 Emerald Coast Pkwy 104 • Destin
850-424-3935

CRYO850 PERFORMANCE & RECOVERY

**SPRING SPECIAL:
CRYO SERVICE, EXPERIENCE OR PASS
15% OFF, CRYO MEMBERSHIP 10% OFF**

Offer expires 5/31/26
4495 Furling Lane, Suite 10, Destin
City Market Bayside | 850-279-4145

Knowledge • Experience • Trust
The Locals' Real Estate Pro



Mary Anne Windes

CCIM, CRB, CRS, GRI, RRS, e-PRO.
Licensed Real Estate Broker/Owner

850.837.2211 • 1.800.837.2266

www.Destin-Real-Estate.com

25+ Years in Business on the Destin Harbor



If you're looking for the locals' choice for a fishing trip, call one of our boats. If you're looking for the locals' choice for buying or selling real estate, call Real Estate Professionals at (850) 837-2211.



Private Charters on 40 of Destin's
Finest Charter Boats



On-Site Booking Service:
850.837.1995
210 Harbor Blvd.



Charter Boat

OUTTA LINE



DESTIN ★ FLORIDA

850.837.2320

Book on-line at
www.CharterBoatOuttaLine.com

Party Boats

**DESTIN PRINCESS
& DESTINY**



850.837.5088

Purchase Individual or Group Tickets
Book On-line at
www.DestinPartyBoatFishing.com