



OCTOBER 2026
VOL. 9, NO. 3

DESTIN Life

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The Art of Healing

Ten years after its founding, MKAF's groundbreaking Warrior Arts program continues to create connection, calm and community through creativity.

BY ZANDRA WOLFGAM

A pen touches paper. A line becomes a curve, the curve becomes a pattern, and before long, a small square of paper has become something intricate, personal and entirely unexpected.

For participants in Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's Warrior Arts program, however, what happens while creating the art can matter as much as the finished piece.

This year, MKAF celebrates the 10th anniversary of Warrior Arts, a groundbreaking component of its ArtsReach program founded in 2016 by Melanie Moore, MKAF's director of education and community engagement. Warrior Arts connects active-duty military service members, veterans and their families with the transformative power of art, particularly those living with traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress and other visible and invisible injuries.

Through tailored work-



shops and art experiences, Warrior Arts uses creative expression as a therapeutic tool to promote mindfulness, resilience and connection while addressing some of the unique challenges military personnel and their families face. At its heart is a simple but powerful idea: Art can offer a pathway to communication, creative expression and recovery.

A Legacy of Access

The idea is deeply rooted in MKAF's history. Found-

ed in 1995, the nonprofit organization carries the name and spirit of Destin matriarch Mattie Kelly, a lifelong patron of the arts who wrote poetry, played piano and organ, composed music and supported cultural organizations. Kelly and her husband, Coleman, moved to Destin in 1935 and became prominent business owners and philanthropists in the growing fishing community.

Today, MKAF carries that legacy forward with a mis-

sion "to champion access to the arts for all in Northwest Florida." Its concerts, Festival of the Arts and other public programs help support ArtsReach, the foundation's community education umbrella serving K-12 students, children and adults with special needs, and the military community.

The numbers tell part of the story: ArtsReach now

WARRIOR ARTS

continued on page 3



Off to the Rodeo!

The Most "Destin"
Event of Them All



BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

If Frank Berte has an official title with the Destin Fishing Rodeo, he's not aware of it. But the man wears many hats, and I was surprised—and grateful—that Berte was able to work in some chat time during the

FISHING RODEO

continued on page 2



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 Community

FISHING RODEO

continued from page 1

tumultuous three or four days leading up to the October event.

Working closely with Amber Helton, the new Destin Fishing Rodeo director, Berte writes and edits the annual event guide, touches up photographs, and handles—eep—last-minute press requests. His marketing and social media expertise have served the Rodeo well.

“I really like being a part of it,” says Berte. “It’s one of the most ‘Destin’ events we have.” His involvement with the Rodeo dates back at least a decade. Berte was brought in to redesign the event guide—“making everything look quasi-professional,” he says, an understatement if there ever was. In his early days, he spent hours on the road, distributing printed copies of “the book” to Atlanta, Birmingham, and beyond.

He didn’t tote bundles of Rodeo guides to Viet Nam, but a trip there allowed him to bond with longtime Rodeo weighmaster Bruce Cheves, who went to the Big Fishing Rodeo in the Sky in April. “He had some great insights,” says Berte.



This year, the weighmaster duties will be performed by a rotating cast of area notables, including Helton and musician (among other things) Hal Aiken. Visitors to the daily weigh-ins behind AJ’s will notice a tribute to Cheves in the form of a life-size standee that’s selfie-ready.

Once the Rodeo guide is put to bed, Berte says he’s “pretty much done. The girls head down to the office on the docks and the big commercial fisherman all meet up. I’m around to handle ‘emergencies’ and Instagram videos and things like that once it’s set up and rolling.

“I can safely say this is the biggest fishing event in the world



because it’s all month, and the biggest by far when you factor everything in. I don’t know the exact number (of attendees and participants), but it’s a lot. Some fish all month long, and others come for a day or a week.”

The Rodeo comes together through the efforts of a handful of paid employees and many volunteers whom Berte credits



for “rocking out” the t-shirts, hats and other Rodeo swag they sell during the event.

Berte enjoys fishing with his pals, but doesn’t have his own boat or even a dedicated “fishing outfit per se. I do it more for the glamour and fun. And the red snapper. It’s back this year, and I look forward to eating it!”

Among the highlights of the past decade for Berte? “The last three or four Miss Destin’s have been a fun bunch, and I think that keeps the vibe going.” The Destin Fishing Rodeo royalty actively participate in the daily weigh-ins, and Berte admires

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DESTIN Life

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

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Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

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EVENT GUIDE

DESTIN FISHING RODEO

**MORE THAN 1500
PRIZES AWARDED
FOR FISH IN THE RODEO**

**WEIGH-INS DAILY 10A-7P
OCTOBER 1 – 31
AJ'S SEAFOOD & OYSTER BAR**

2026

**MISS DESTIN
KAYLYNN
HAYLES**



WARRIOR ARTS

continued from page 1

presents more than 150 programs annually, reaches more than 25,000 participants each year and has served more than 420,000 people through more than 100 schools and partner agencies since 1995.

Moore joined MKAF in 2015 and created Warrior Arts the following year. Under her leadership, ArtsReach has grown from a handful of outreach programs into a robust initiative reaching communities throughout Northwest Florida.

MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller credits Moore with helping make outreach central to the foundation's identity. "We're so fortunate to have somebody of Melanie's education and arts pedigree to lead the charge for us on outreach, which is essentially the product of Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation," Fuller said.

When You "Tangle Up," You Power Down

Warrior Arts has grown to more than 100 programs annually, incorporating visual art, painting, improv and other creative practices. One of its most

successful offerings is Zentangle, an easy-to-learn method of creating images from structured patterns, or "tangles."

Moore, a Certified Zentangle Teacher, describes the focused drawing process as an active form of meditation. "When you tangle up, you power down," she said. "The act of focused drawing becomes a form of meditation and mindfulness that supports recovery and relaxation." There are no mistakes — only "mis-tangles." There is no prescribed finished product. Participants simply begin drawing, one line at a time. That low-pressure approach can be especially meaningful for people accustomed to high-stakes environments demanding precision and control. Moore has seen participants leave sessions calmer, carrying not only a finished piece of original art but a sense of accomplishment.

Few people understand that transformation better than retired Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Charles Burkett. A 2004 helicopter crash left Burkett with a traumatic brain injury, extensive nerve damage and severely limited fine motor skills on his dominant right side. He



incorporated Zentangle into his physical rehabilitation, first learning to write with his left hand and eventually retraining his right. Within months, he had regained 80% of his fine motor skills; by year's end, he had regained full control of his right arm, hand and fingers. In 2022, MKAF sponsored Burkett's training to become a Certified Zentangle Teacher, allowing a veteran who experienced its benefits firsthand to teach other military members as a peer.

See Warrior Arts in Action
The public can experience that spirit of creativity and connection during MKAF's 31st

Continued on page 45

Experience Warrior Arts

Warrior Arts Tent
Saturday, Oct. 24,
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday, Oct. 25,
10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Meet Warrior Arts participants and instructors, explore artwork created by veterans and service members, and try your hand at Zentangle during

interactive lessons.

Tangle Time with Melanie & Chief
Saturday, Oct. 24 | 2 p.m.
Dugas Pavilion Stage

Certified Zentangle Teachers Melanie Moore and Chief Charles Burkett demonstrate how simple lines and patterns

can become an engaging mindfulness practice.

31st Annual Festival of the Arts
Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village, Destin

Admission and parking are free.
Learn more at MKAF.org.

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 Community


Needles, Fire and Herbs: The Not-So-Scary Side of Acupuncture

By DR. KAREN DEVORE

October is the season for haunted houses, bubbling cauldrons and things designed to make us shiver. Yet for many people, nothing sounds quite as intimidating as voluntarily ly-

ing down while someone places needles in their body. Add herbs, glass cups and perhaps even a flame, and I can understand the hesitation.

Fortunately, acupuncture is usually far gentler than the antic-

ipation. The needles are remarkably thin, and most patients are surprised by how comfortable—and often deeply relaxing—the experience can be.

But the needle is only the beginning of the story.

Acupuncture exists within a much broader Eastern medicine tradition that considers patterns, relationships and the interplay between structure, function, energy and environment. Traditional acupuncture, neuroacupuncture and facial rejuvenation acupuncture can use the same tiny needle in very different ways. Herbal medicine, cupping and other complementary techniques expand the possibilities even further.

So, in the spirit of October, let's make the needles, herbs and fire a little less mysterious.



Neuroacupuncture: When the Nervous System is Part of the Story

Neuroacupuncture takes acupuncture into remarkably complex territory. This specialized approach incorporates carefully selected scalp and body acupuncture around neurological and functional goals involving the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves, movement, sensation, balance and coordination.

This is where neuroplasticity becomes particularly interesting. The brain and nervous system retain an ability to adapt and reorganize in response to stimulation, learning, injury and rehabilitation—even in adulthood.

Neuroacupuncture may be incorporated as supportive care during stroke recovery or for people living with Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, neuropathy, neuralgia, tremors, weakness or certain forms of paralysis. It may also be explored around specific symptoms or functional goals for people with PTSD, anxiety or autism, as well as neurological symptoms associated with complex chronic illnesses.

Treatment is individualized around the person, their neurological presentation and their goals. Neuroacupuncture does not replace appropriate neurological, medical, psychological or rehabilitative care. Instead, it offers another potential tool within a thoughtful, coordinated plan.

Facial Rejuvenation Acupuncture: A Different Approach to Aging Well

Needles in the face may sound particularly appropriate for October, but these needles are tiny,

Traditional Acupuncture: Much Bigger Than You Think

If your idea of acupuncture begins and ends with back pain, you are seeing only a small part of the picture.

People explore traditional acupuncture for headaches, sleep, stress, digestive concerns, fertility, hormonal transitions, musculoskeletal complaints, neuropathy and chronic or complex pain. For one person, it may complement physical therapy or medical treatment. For another, it may be part of preparing for pregnancy, navigating perimenopause or staying active as the body changes with age.

Eastern medicine has also long valued prevention—paying attention to changes in sleep, digestion, energy, tension and recovery before they become impossible to ignore.

Acupuncture is about more than placing a needle where something hurts. Research continues to explore its relationship with pain modulation, sensory signaling and nervous system activity, while the traditional framework considers the individual's larger pattern of function and balance. That versatility allows it to be restorative or proactive, highly focused or whole-person, and able to stand alone or complement other care.



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Continued on page 36

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Join Us for Destin Life Sponsored Events!

Fire Up the Flavor at Eggs on the Beach

**Saturday, Nov. 7 |
10 a.m.-1 p.m.
Seascape Resort |
Miramar Beach**

Get ready to taste, vote and enjoy some serious Big Green Egg creativity when the 12th annual Eggs on the Beach Big Green Egg Cooking Competition fires up! Hosted by Bay Breeze Patio, the popular culinary competition brings together nonprofit organizations, backyard grill masters and restaurant teams, all cooking up bite-sized creations on Big Green Eggs.

Tasters get in on the action, sampling the dishes and voting for their favorites, while honorary judges score entries for taste, presentation and creativity. And it's so good, it's challenging to judge. I know, because I've been one! Winners earn prizes, the coveted Judges' Trophy and, of course, bragging rights.

The competition also cooks up plenty of good for the community. Many nonprofit teams have signed on and each participating nonprofit earns a cash



donation based on taster votes.

A few spots remain, and registration fees are waived for nonprofit teams. Spots also remain for backyard and restaurant teams, with registration \$50 for teams of up to six.

Advance taster tickets are \$60 for adults and \$21 for ages 11-17; children 10 and younger are free. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

For tickets, team registration and information, visit EggsontheBeach.com or call 850-269-4666.



**Celebrate with a Cause:
Animore Weekend 2026!**
**Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall
Fest presented by Cafe
Thirty-A**
Saturday, Nov. 14, 2026 |

11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Alaqua Animal
Refuge Grounds (155
Dugas Way, Freeport)

There are fall events — and then there are those special days you look forward to year after year. For me, this is one of them! I've attended for

several years, and it's always a highlight of the season and truly unlike anything else in our area.

Spend a beautiful autumn day surrounded by the peaceful acreage of Alaqua Animal Refuge, where live bluegrass music fills the air, local vendors offer plenty to browse and shop, and family-friendly activities make it a fun outing for all ages. There's just something about the combination of crisp fall air, great music, animals, friends and community coming together in such a beautiful setting that makes this event feel extra special.

And perhaps the best part? Your day of fun has a purpose. Every ticket purchased directly supports Alaqua's lifesaving mission of rescuing, rehabilitating and finding hope and new beginnings for animals in need.

Come for the music, shopping and fall fun — and leave knowing you helped make a difference. It's one of those uniquely local experiences you really don't want to miss!

TICKETS:

Online Pre-Sale Tiers: Available through Nov. 11. At-the-Gate: \$15 for Adults | \$5 for Children (Under 12). Online sales end Nov. 12. VIP Experience: Includes preferred concert seating at Angel's Arena and access to the exclusive VIP Patron Lounge.



For More Information & Tickets:
alaqua.org

Celebrating 15 Years! Gulf Coast Jam Announces Star-Packed 2027 Lineup
June 3–6, 2027 | Frank Brown Park | Panama City Beach

Bailey Zimmerman is the opening-night headliner (Thursday) for the 15th Annual Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam. He joins country superstars Jason Aldean (Friday), Luke Bryan (Saturday) and Zach Top (Sunday) for four days

of live music and beachside fun. A fourth and final headliner will be announced in the coming weeks.

Four-day passes are currently available for General Admission, College, First Responder and Military levels. Elevated experiences include Caymus Premium Standing, Caymus VIP, Overlook Club and Side Stage. Ticket-and-hotel packages and payment plans are also available.

Billboard Magazine called Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam one of “The 10 Best Country Music Festivals,” drawing over 25,000 fans nightly to the four-day event in May. Ticketmaster listed Gulf Coast Jam Presented by Jim Beam as one of the Best Country Music Festivals to See in 2026. Music Festival Wizard named it the number one festival in their Top 50 Most Popular Fests in the World 2024 – Voter’s Choice poll and their Best Beach Music Festivals This Summer in 2025.

Jammers are encouraged to follow Gulf Coast Jam Present-

Continued on page 10

GULF COAST JAM

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★ WARREN ZEIDERS ★

FRIDAY, JUNE 4

LUKE BRYAN
★ JON PARDI ★

SATURDAY, JUNE 5

JASON ALDEAN
★ TUCKER WETMORE ★

SUNDAY, JUNE 6

ZACH TOP
★ TY MYERS ★

*** MANY MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED! ***

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food for thought

MIRAMAR BEACH, FLORIDA

Hear the Hits — and the Stories Behind Them — at the Destin Songwriter Festival

BY LORI LEATH MILLER

Some of the songs you've sung along to for years are coming to life in a whole new way — right here in Destin.

The second annual Destin Songwriter Festival returns **Oct. 24-25**, bringing two unforgettable days of music, stories and some of country music's most recognizable songs to stages along the Destin Harbor and at The Alice.

This isn't just a concert. It's a rare opportunity to hear the people who actually wrote the hits perform their songs and share the stories, inspiration and moments that brought them to life. The weekend will feature intimate acoustic songwriter rounds, free performances at popular Destin Harbor venues and special ticketed experiences — all against one of the most beautiful backdrops anywhere.

Free performances will take place throughout the weekend at Boathouse Oyster Bar, SkyBar at The Edge and The Edge Seafood Restaurant. Most side-

stage performances are family-friendly, although SkyBar is 21 and older.

Leading this year's impressive lineup is six-time Grammy nominee and Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame inductee Jeffrey Steele, whose songs have been recorded by Keith Urban, Eric Church, Zac Brown Band, Faith Hill, Tim McGraw, Rascal Flatts and others. His chart-topping credits include songs you'll instantly recognize: "What Hurts the Most," "My Wish" and "Raise 'Em Up."

And the hitmakers don't stop there.

Also appearing are Terri Jo Box, whose songwriting credits include Lainey Wilson's "Hill-billy Hippie" and Ashley McBryde and Trisha Yearwood's "Bible and a .44"; Carolyn Dawn Johnson, writer of Chely Wright's No. 1 hit "Single White Female" and her own hit "Complicated"; and Bridgette Tatum, best known for co-writing Jason Aldean's "She's Country."

Saturday's ticketed Main

Stage will be located directly in front of SkyBar at The Edge, with performances scheduled from 4 to 8 p.m. Bring your own chairs, settle in along the harbor and enjoy an afternoon and evening filled with songs you know — performed by the people who wrote them. General admission tickets are \$30, with a limited number of premium group tables also available.

And Sunday night brings an entirely different — and especially meaningful — festival experience.

The festival moves to The Alice, Destin's waterfront event venue on Calhoun Avenue, for an intimate VIP Stage experience. The exclusive evening will bring festival headliners together with emerging "Next of Nashville" artists for an up-close night of songs, stories and special collaborations.

Adding an especially personal hometown connection will be the official premiere of country artist Jessie G's "Something Blue" music video, scheduled

for 6:15 p.m. The deeply personal song, written by Jessie G and Matt Wynn, tells the true story of my good friend and local Kristin Sullivan and the special bond between a father and daughter. Bringing that story even

closer to home, the video was filmed with local participants and produced right here in Destin by The Heal Reel — making its premiere at The Alice a true celebration of local people, local storytelling and Nashville-caliber music coming together.

The evening continues with a "Female Power Round" featuring headliners Terri Jo Box, Bridgette Tatum and Carolyn Dawn Johnson, followed by a solo performance from headliner Jeffrey Steele.

Access to The Alice is available through a separate Sunday VIP ticket, with individual tickets and a limited number of 10-person VIP tables offered.

From hearing a familiar



hit performed by the person who first put pen to paper, to discovering a rising Nashville songwriter before everyone else knows the name, the Destin Songwriter Festival promises the kind of musical moments you simply can't get from an ordinary concert.

Add the Destin Harbor, fall on the Emerald Coast and two days of incredible songwriting talent, and this is one October weekend music lovers won't want to miss.

Oct. 24-25 | Destin Harbor & The Alice

For the complete lineup, schedule and tickets, visit DestinSongwriterFestival.com.

DESTIN SONGWRITER FESTIVAL

2026 HEADLINERS

JEFFREY STEELE

OCTOBER 24 & 25, 2026

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★ 7 GRAMMY NOMINATIONS

★ 50+ SONGWRITING AWARDS

★ ★ 5 STAGES OF LIVE MUSIC ★ ★

Full schedule & tickets found at WWW.DESTINSONGWRITERFESTIVAL.COM

TERRI JO BOX **BRIDGETTE TATUM** **CAROLYN DAWN JOHNSON**

Cali's To Do In Destin! OCTOBER 2026

..... 1-31

Destin Fishing Rodeo at AJ's Seafood & Oyster House every day in October!

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Wellness By The Water Yoga | 8:30am | The Alice Destin

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Rick's Crab Trap | Okaloosa Island

Columbus Day Weekend Movie on the Beach | 8pm | The Boardwalk | Okaloosa Island

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Collab & Co-Working w/ Women in Business | 1pm | Coastal Protein & Energy

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay | SRB

Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island | SRB

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

Columbus Day Weekend Karaoke | 7-10pm | The Boardwalk | Okaloosa Island

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Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Cabaret | 5:30pm | Seagar's Prime Steaks & Seafood | Miramar Beach

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

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 8-10

Rockin' in Paradise with Styx & Friends | 3-10pm daily | Seascape Resort | Miramar Beach

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

Special 250th History Sandwiched In Lunch | Noon | Heritage Museum of NWFL | Val'p

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Movies on the Lawn: Fall Edition | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

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

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

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 10

Emerald Coat Home & Boat Show! | 10am-5pm | Destin FWB Convention Center

Yoga with Dolphins | 7:30am | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Blvd | SRB

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

America 250 Heritage Festival & Scouting Expo | 9am | Destin-Fort Walton Beach Rigdon Center | FWB

Bloody Mary Festival | 10am | The Market Shops | Miramar Beach

Nautical Flea Market | 10am-2pm | LJ Schooner's | Bluewater Bay



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

Dogs, Bands & Beer Festival | Bands start 1:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

Rocktober Concert Series | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Sip n Shop: Fall Edition | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Fireworks on the Harbor | 8pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar | Okaloosa Island

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Emerald Coat Home & Boat Show | 10am-3pm | Destin FWB Convention Center

Sunrise Sculpt on the Harbor | 6:30am | Happy Life Cruises | Destin

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk | Destin

Columbus Day Weekend Karaoke | 7-10pm | The Boardwalk | Okaloosa Island

Columbus Day Weekend Fireworks Show | 9pm | The Boardwalk | Okaloosa Island

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar | Okaloosa Island

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill | SRB

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

Bingo Night | 6pm | American Legion Destin, 311 Main St

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Wellness By The Water Yoga | 8:30am | The Alice Destin

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Rick's Crab Trap | Okaloosa Island

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Pilates with Dolphins | 7:30am | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island | SRB

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

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Bubbly Baytowne | 5pm | Baytowne Wharf | Sandestin

Harvest Wine Dinners | 6pm-9pm | Various Locations

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

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 15-25

Emerald Coast Theatre Co.'s The 39 Steps | Times vary | Grand Blvd | Sandestin

..... 16

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

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Mayor's Charity Gala | 5:30pm | The Henderson | Destin

Movies on the Lawn: Fall Edition | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Baytowne Beer Festival | 6pm-9pm | Baytowne Wharf | Sandestin

ADSO's Celebrate Autumn Art Exhibition Opening Reception | 6-8 pm | Arts and Design Society, 17 First Street SE | FWB

Exhibition Dates | Oct. 13-Nov.7 | Tues-Fri: 12-4 pm; Sat: 1-4 pm

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

Harvest After Dark | 7pm-10pm | Cerulean Park, Watercolor

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

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

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

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

..... 16-17

McCaskill & Company's First-Ever Men's Weekend | 10am - 5:30pm | McCaskill & Company | Destin

..... 17

Pilates with Dolphins | 7:30am | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

Pumpkin Festival | Hammock Bay | Freeport

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Blvd

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

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

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

Baytowne Beer Festival Grand Tasting | 2pm | Baytowne Wharf | Sandestin

Rocktober Concert Series | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Black Cat Ball | 6pm | Elks Lodge | Okaloosa Island

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Sinfonia Gulf Coast's The Wizard of Oz: Film in Concert | 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Dugas Pavilion | Destin

Fireworks | 8pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar | Okaloosa Island

..... 18

Pumpkin Festival | Hammock Bay | Freeport

Back-to-School Rock Painting Party | 9-11 a.m. | Captain Royal Melvin Heritage Park

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk | Destin

Jazz Cocktail Brunch (Harvest Food & Wine) | 11am | 140 Flatwood St | WaterColor SRB

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar | Okaloosa Island

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill | SRB

..... 19

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

Bingo Night | 6pm | American Legion Destin, 311 Main St

..... 20

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice Destin

A Superior First Responders Appreciation Lunch | 11:30am-1pm | Niceville Community Center

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Rick's Crab Trap | Okaloosa Island

..... 21

Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island | SRB

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 22

All Sports Association Presents Casino Night | 5pm | Destin FWB Convention Center

Business After Hours | 5:30pm | Beachworx

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

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 23

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

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Movies on the Lawn: Fall Edition | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

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

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

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 23-25

Shinedown's Lunatic Ball Beach Weekend | 3pm daily | Seascape Resort

..... 24

Yoga with Dolphins | 7:30am | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

McGuire's Halloween Run | 9am-Noon | Destin

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Blvd

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Destin Songwriter Festival | 12pm-8pm | Destin Harbor

Halloween Spooktacular | 3pm | Harborwalk Village

Jeepalooza Parade Invasion 2026 | 5pm | John Beasley Park | Okaloosa Island

Rocktober Concert Series | 5pm | Harborwalk Village

Movies on the Lawn: Fall Edition | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys | Destin

Fireworks | 8pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar | Okaloosa Island

..... 24-25

31st Annual Festival of the Arts | 9am-5pm Sat; 10 am-4 pm Sun | Cultural Arts Village | Destin

..... 25

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk | Destin

3rd Annual OKI Fest | 11am | 1958 Lewis Turner Blvd | FWB

Destin Songwriter Festival | 12pm-8pm | Destin Harbor + The Alice

Halloween Haunt | 6-8pm | Destin Commons

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar | Okaloosa Island

Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill | SRB

..... 26

26th Annual Destin Fall Festival | 5-8 p.m. | Destin Community Center

The Next BIG Thing 2026 | 8am - 5pm | Hilton Sandestin Beach | Miramar Beach

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

Bingo Night | 6pm | American Legion, 311 Main St | Destin

..... 27

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 8:30am | The Alice Destin

Mug Club & Bingo | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Karaoke | 6pm | AJ's on the Bayou

Karaoke | 6pm-9pm | Fatboys Destin

Trivia Night | 6pm | Rick's Crab Trap | Okaloosa Island

..... 28

Pilates with Dolphins | 7:30am | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay | SRB

Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery

Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor

Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's

Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

..... 29

Wellness By The Water Yoga + Mini Massages | 8:30am | The Alice Destin

Business After Hours | 5:30pm | Beachworx

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

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

Karaoke Night | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

..... 30

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

Dog-Harmony's 11th Annual Barktoberfest | 4:30-6:30pm | Grand Blvd | Sandestin

Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille

Halloween Eve Fun with Ron Adams | 6pm | Tuscany Italian Bistro

Movies on the Lawn: Fall Edition | 6pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company

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

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

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

..... 31

Pilates with Dolphins | 7:30am | Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Blvd | SRB

Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL

Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin

Breaking Through the Decades — A Halloween Extravaganza | 6-11pm | Ara Rooftop

Fireworks | 8pm | Harborwalk Village

Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar | Okaloosa Island



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Events Around Town

McCaskill & Company's First-Ever Men's Weekend

Oct. 16-17 | 10 a.m.-

5:30 p.m. | McCaskill & Company | 13390 U.S. Highway 98 W., Destin

McCaskill & Company hosts its first-ever Men's Weekend, featuring distinctive jewelry, watches and accessories from luxury designers William Henry and Zancan. Discover William Henry's heirloom-quality pocketknives, jewelry, watches and lifestyle pieces crafted with rare, story-rich materials, along with Zancan's sophisticated Italian designs in 18K gold, diamonds and innovative materials. The weekend's main event, Cars & Cocktails, takes place Oct. 17 from 1-5 p.m., combining exceptional automobiles, cocktails and fine craftsmanship for an afternoon designed especially for the guys — and the ladies who want to join them!

McCaskillandCompany.com | 850-650-2262

26th Annual Destin Fall Festival

Oct. 26 | 5-8 p.m. | Destin Community Center

Enjoy games, activities, a

cakewalk, costume contest, inflatables, food and the annual Jack-O'-Lantern Contest. Admission is one nonperishable food item; game and food tickets are 20 for \$5. Costume registration is 5-6 p.m. Carved pumpkins must be dropped off by 3 p.m. for judging. 850-654-5184.

28th Annual Pinfish Classic

Nov. 7 | 7 a.m. | AJ's Restaurant dock | 116 Harbor Blvd., Destin

Kids ages 14 and younger can compete in this catch-and-release fishing tradition. Bring a pole; bait is provided. Prizes for largest and smallest pinfish by age group and most fish caught overall. Awards at 8:45 a.m. Preregister by 5 p.m. Nov. 6 at cityofdestin.com/reconline.

20th Annual Holiday Craft Show

Nov. 13 | 10 a.m.-4 p.m. & Nov. 14 | 9 a.m.-3 p.m. | Destin Community Center

Shop handcrafted jewelry, wreaths, books and more, with concessions available. Free admission. Vendor space is limited. 850-654-5184.

10th Annual Harvest Wine & Food Festival

Thursday-Sunday, Oct. 15-18, 2026

WaterColor and locations throughout South Walton

Sip, savor and celebrate during four unforgettable days of exceptional wine and cuisine at the Harvest Wine & Food Festival, produced by the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation.

The festivities begin Thurs-

day with intimate Harvest Wine Dinners at restaurants and venues throughout South Walton. Friday's Harvest After Dark brings elevated wines, unexpected pairings and culinary creations to Cerulean Park. Saturday features the signature Grand Tasting, followed by a spirited Jazz Cocktail Brunch on Sunday.

Proceeds benefit the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation and its mission to help children in need throughout North-

west Florida.

Tickets are on sale now. Visit dcwaf.org/harvest-festival for the complete schedule and ticket information.

Emerald Coast Rodeo

Friday-Saturday, Nov. 6-7 | 5:30-9:30 p.m. | Northwest Florida State College | Niceville

Bring the family to the fourth annual Emerald Coast Rodeo.

Continued on next page

Destin Dresses Up for a Cause at Second Annual Mayor's Charity Gala

Emerald Coast Entertainment Group will present the second annual Mayor's Charity Gala from 5:30-10 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, at Henderson Beach Resort in Destin.

The black-tie evening will bring together community leaders, businesses and supporters for cocktails, a plated dinner, live entertainment, a live auction, inspiring stories and community awards—all in support of Northwest Florida organizations.

Destin Mayor Bobby Wagner will deliver the opening welcome, with Bernard Johnson and Shane Moody co-hosting the evening. Destin City Councilman Dewey Destin will receive the Mayor Mike Anderson Award for his service and commitment to the community. Guest speaker Mark Wilson will be presented with the Community Appreciation Award.



Event proceeds will benefit Destin Parks Foundation, The Honor Foundation and Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast.

Individual tickets are \$86 and include dinner, entertainment and live auction access with open seating. Table and event sponsorships are also available. For tickets and additional information, visit mayorcharitygalanwfl.com.



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 Community

Raise a Glass; It's Almost Here!

The Market Shops' 11th Annual Bloody Mary Festival, presented by Beach Liquors, returns Saturday, October 10, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., benefiting Habitat for Humanity of Walton County. Enjoy unlimited tastes of 16 creative bloody marys featuring Distillery 98's Half Shell Vodka, served in specialty cups provided by Compass Builders of Florida.

Competing for the 2026 "Best Bloody Mary" title: Aja 30A, Big Bad Breakfast, Cafe Nola, Cajun Corner, Iron and Grape, Island Wing Company, La Crema, LOLA, Louis Louis, Qué Pasa Mexican Kitchen & Tequila, Ruby Slipper Cafe, Shrimp Basket, Surf Hut, The Perfect Pig Grill and Fish House, The Red Bar, The Village Door, Uncle Buck's Fish Bowl & Grill, and Winn Dixie.

"We are thrilled to host this premier event that brings together our area neighbors and guests to support Habitat for Humanity's important mission in our community," said Bob Duncan, managing partner of The Market Shops. "This year's event features our biggest-ever line-up of participants!"

Guests will select first-, second-, and third-place People's Choice winners. Local celebrity judges will choose the most delicious "Judge's Choice" and most



creative "Best Bloody Accoutrement" winners. Local artist Aria Gaffrey will handcraft the awards.

Bites and treats will come from Market Shops restaurants Ben & Jerry's, Clean Juice, Jalapeño Mexican Grill Express, Maple Street Biscuit Company, Parlor Doughnuts, and Pizza by the Sea. Vendors include Edward Jones, Escapology, Favori Boutique, Foil + Pin Parlor, and Sun, Surf, Sand Insurance.

Other refreshments include Idyll Hounds Brewing Company craft brews, Palm Folly spiked seltzers, Buffalo Rock's water Hydration Station, and an Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast mocktail. The Bubbly Bar will serve Good Clean Wine rosé and sparkling wine, courtesy of Courtyard by Marriott Sandes-

tin at Grand Boulevard, Residence Inn by Marriott Sandestin at Grand Boulevard, and Hyatt Place by Marriott Sandestin at Grand Boulevard.

Jake's Beach Service will provide additional main lawn lounge seating for enjoying local band Catalyst on the main

stage. SEC football games will stream on Mariner's sponsored big screen. DJ Dad will entertain in the courtyard, sponsored by Esteem Wealth Partners, with an interactive photo booth courtesy of Legendary Marine. Shore Thing Cigars and Dozer Custom Trucker Hats will offer cigars and custom hats to commemorate the day.

The festival has raised over \$227,000 for local charities in 10 years. This year's proceeds support Habitat for Humanity of Walton County, a local nonprofit partnering with individuals and families to build and improve decent, affordable homes. "We are incredibly grateful to The Market Shops and everyone who comes out year after year to support this event," said Teresa Jones, CEO of Habitat for Hu-

manity of Walton County. "This is such a fun day, but what I love most is knowing that behind all of that fun is a community choosing to help local families build a better future. Every ticket purchased, every sponsor, and every volunteer helps us continue creating affordable homeownership opportunities"

Tickets are \$65 in advance through BigTickets or \$75 at the

door. Visit www.themarketshops.com/bloody-mary-festival.

Parking at The Market Shops is expected to fill quickly. Additional parking is available at The Beach House on the south side of Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort. A complimentary Beachworx-sponsored shuttle will run between the festival and additional parking from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

EVENTS

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Gates open at 5:30 p.m., mutton bustin' begins at 6:30 p.m. and rodeo action starts at 7:30 p.m. emeraldcoastrodeo.com

Walk to End Alzheimer's – Emerald Coast

Nov. 7 | Registration 9:30 a.m. | Ceremony 10:30 a.m. | Walk 10:45 a.m. Grand Boulevard | 600 Grand Blvd., Miramar Beach

Participants of all ages and abilities are invited to walk in honor or memory of someone impacted by Alzheimer's or another dementia. The morning includes the moving Promise Garden ceremony, with colored flowers representing each participant's personal connection to the disease. Registration is free. Participants are encouraged to raise funds to support the Alzheimer's Association's mission.

Register at alz.org/Emerald-CoastWalk.

SPONSORED EVENTS

continued from page 6

ed by Jim beam at www.GulfCoastJam.com and on Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat for special announcements about the Festival.

To purchase discounted tick-

ets through Life Media, scan the QR code and enter LM27!

Stay tuned to Life Media papers for lineup announcements and festival updates leading up to the event. GulfCoastJam.com




THUNDERBIRD INTERTRIBAL POWWOW

38th Annual

THUNDERBIRD INTERTRIBAL POWWOW

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SCAN FOR DETAILS




THE MARKET SHOPS
Boutiques & Restaurants

THE MARKET SHOPS 11TH ANNUAL BLOODY MARY FESTIVAL

BENEFITING  **Habitat for Humanity**
of Walton County, FL

SATURDAY OCTOBER 10, 2026

11AM - 2PM

**\$65 IN ADVANCE
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TICKET INCLUDES:

- UNLIMITED BLOODY MARYS
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- CUSTOM TRUCKER HAT BAR

9375 MIRAMAR COAST PARKWAY, MIRAMAR BEACH, FLORIDA | Located at the Entrance to Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort | themarketshops.com

Kelley's Beach Liquors Opens Sixth Location at The Market Shops!

Kelley's Beach Liquors has opened its sixth location in The Market Shops at Sandestin. Spanning 4,800 square feet, the new store is situated on the far west side of the shopping center at 9375 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Miramar Beach. The Market Shops location is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., with delivery service from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The store can be reached by phone at 850-460-9997.

Here's the story:

"We are excited to be part of The Market Shops family of businesses and look forward to serving all the residents of Sandestin and other nearby communities," said Beach Liquors co-owners Mike and Chuck Kelley. This store features retail as well as an exclusive self-serve wine and whiskey bar showcasing over 35 fine wines and premium whiskeys by the individual pour. Guests can also shop with the guidance of an in-house

wine steward, explore THC-infused beverages and gummies, and enjoy a large walk-in craft beer cooler. The store will host weekly Friday night wine tastings from 5 to 7 p.m., along with a variety of special tastings and educational events throughout the year. Online ordering and delivery are available through the company's website, mobile app, or Uber Eats. Beach Liquors is a family-owned chain of liquor, wine, and craft beer stores serving Northwest Florida's Emerald Coast and surrounding areas. It was founded in 2000 by siblings Chuck, Mike, and Pat Kelley, who opened their first location in Panama City Beach. The Kelley family's business roots run deeper. Their father, Charles Kelley, and uncle Roy previously owned and operated Kelley's IGA supermarkets in the region. Growing up in that environment instilled a strong work ethic that the siblings carried into their own venture. Mike Kelley has summarized



the family philosophy simply: hard work produces results, and nothing comes easy. They have long emphasized a "hometown advantage"—local ownership that resonates with permanent residents, military personnel stationed nearby, and the many visitors who flock to the Gulf Coast. From the original Panama City Beach store, the business expanded steadily. Additional

locations followed in Crestview, Fort Walton Beach, and Destin. A Pensacola Beach store has also been added, giving the chain broader coverage across the region. The stores operate seven days a week, typically from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., and offer delivery, curbside pickup, online ordering, and a rewards program. Beach Liquors specializes in a broad selection of wines,

spirits, and beers, with particular strength in craft products. The wine departments feature high-quality bottles from around the world, with an emphasis on handcrafted domestic American wines. Wines are organized for easy browsing by color, country, style, and other attributes. The craft beer selection is one of the largest in the area.

Continued on next page



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Beyond the Festivals: Big Ideas for Home, Boat & More

Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show | Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 10-11

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center | Admission is FREE

Doors open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday | 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday

BY LORI MILLER

October on the Emerald Coast does not exactly slow down. If anything, the local calendar shifts into another gear.

Weekends fill with festivals, concerts, food events and community celebrations. In that busy fall lineup, the 27th Annual Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show offers something distinctly different: a weekend devoted to the homes we maintain, projects we imagine and outdoor lifestyle that makes this area home.

Inside, more than 100 home and general business vendors will offer ideas for projects large and small. It's a place to ask questions, handle materials, compare options and talk face-to-face with professionals who understand homes and business-

es along the Emerald Coast.

Exhibitors will represent nearly every corner of home-ownership, including roofing, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, flooring, furniture, windows, doors, generators and landscaping. Visitors can also explore pools and spas, shutters, painting, restoration, remodeling, interior design, kitchen and bath projects, insurance, mortgages and solar energy.

General business and retail exhibitors will feature products and services ranging from computers and mobile phones to health and wellness.

Outside, the focus moves from the home to the water and open road. Emerald Coast Marine, Captains Choice Boats and Camping World are scheduled



to bring boats and recreational vehicles to the convention center grounds for a combined display and sale. Guests can step aboard, look around and imagine their next fishing trip, family outing or road-bound adventure.

That combination feels especially at home in Northwest Florida, where home improve-

ment and outdoor living often overlap.

The event is organized by Wes Fell, a 36-year resident of the Destin-Fort Walton Beach area who has organized home and boat shows, business expos, health and job fairs, networking events and music festivals throughout the area. He also

supports Networks of Northwest Florida, a free business-networking organization.

For Fell, the Home & Boat Show continues a tradition of bringing local businesses and residents together, allowing companies to explain what they do while homeowners move beyond online searches and speak directly with people who can help bring a project to life.

The show will be held at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center, 1250 Miracle Strip Parkway SE in Fort Walton Beach. Look for our Life Media table, come by to say hi and register for a FREE giveaway!

For more information, contact Wes Fell at 850-353-2832 or wesfell@cox.net, or visit ParadisePromotionsFL.com.



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KELLEY'S

continued from previous page

Shoppers can find domestic and imported beers, including IPAs, stouts, porters, pilsners, lagers, Belgian-style ales, and low-alcohol or nonalcoholic options. Local and regional craft beers—often in cans preferred for beach, boat, and pool use—are highlighted so visitors can sample local flavors. Hard seltzers have also become a major category, appealing across genders for their lower calorie and carb profiles and convenience.

Spirits cover leading national brands as well as harder-to-find specialty items. Categories include whiskey and bourbon

(with notable depth), tequila (described by the owners as the “new bourbon,” especially aged expressions), vodka, Scotch, moonshine, and more. Accessories, mixers, wine glasses, gifts, and related items round out the inventory.

In recent years, the stores have also added popular new lines of hemp-derived THC beverages and gummies. These legal products (compliant with Florida's hemp rules) include flavored THC seltzers and other ready-to-drink options, along with THC gummies, offering customers nonalcoholic alternatives that have grown quickly in demand alongside traditional beer, wine, and spirits.

Over the years, the Kelleys have adapted to changing shopping habits. The company upgraded its website and launched a smartphone app many years ago, positioning itself for online ordering and delivery through partners. Tastings and community events further strengthen customer relationships.

Today, Kelley's Beach Liquors remains a locally owned fixture along the Northwest Florida coast, combining family management, wide product variety, and a focus on service for both everyday shoppers and seasonal visitors.

To learn more about Beach Liquors, visit beachliquors.net.

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

Baytowne Wharf Beer Fest!

Friday, Oct. 16-Saturday, Oct. 17 | Tickets on sale now! | BaytowneBeerFestival.com

Roll out the barrel! The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin welcomes the 18th Annual Baytowne Beer Fest, one of the Emerald Coast's favorite fall traditions. The two-day celebration features American specialty beers, Seltzer Lane, bourbon tastings, food pairings, live music and more, plus the new Baytowne Backyard Bash with cozy bonfires.

Friday, Oct. 16 | Baytowne Backyard Bash | 6-8 p.m.

Kick off Beer Fest weekend tailgate-style with football on the big screen, ice-cold beer, bourbon, food, bonfires and live music from 55 South.

Tickets: \$55 presale; \$65 day of event, if not sold out. Friday admission only.

Saturday, Oct. 17 | Grand Craft Beer Tasting | 2-5 p.m.

Sample 150+ domestic and international craft beers and meet brewery representatives while discovering everything from crisp lagers to bold ales. Enjoy new food options, returning favorite Seltzer Lane, local brews at Beer From Around Here, global flavors at Import Lane and live music throughout the afternoon.

Tickets: Early Bird General Admission, \$50 (limited availability); Presale General Admission, \$45; Day-of General Admission, \$55. Saturday admission only.

Pour Pass | \$80

Skip the festival entrance lines with dedicated entry, plus receive Baytowne Beer Fest swag and access to an exclusive specialty tasting experience. Limited availability. Includes Pour Pass admission and Saturday's 2-5 p.m. Grand Craft Beer Tasting.

2-Day Ticket | \$95

Includes admission to Friday's 6-8 p.m. event and Saturday's 2-5 p.m. Grand Craft Beer Tasting.



A beer tasting glass is included with all tickets. Please drink responsibly.

A portion of proceeds benefits Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and the Sandestin Foundation for Kids.

Visit BaytowneBeerFestival.com for tickets, updates and full beer and food lineups. Event is rain or shine. No refunds.

Save the Date for Tribute Weekend!

Friday, Nov. 6 & Saturday, Nov. 7 | 7-9 p.m. each night | FREE!

Rock out The Village of Baytowne Wharf's Tribute Weekend and enjoy live music from great tribute bands. Grab your blankets and lawn chairs and meet on the events plaza lawn for a jam-packed weekend of incredible talent.

Friday, November 6 | PANDORA'S BOX

Dream On... as Pandora's Box brings the iconic hits, electrifying energy, and rock 'n' roll spirit of Aerosmith to Baytowne Wharf!! Grab your friends and get ready to sing along!

Saturday, November 7 | THE 77 EXPERIENCE

Step back in time with The 77 Experience! Relive the unforgettable music, iconic moments, and pop culture of 1977 as this high-energy tribute brings the soundtrack of a generation to life. Grab your lawn chairs and join us for an unforgettable night at Baytowne Wharf!

The Village of Baytowne Wharf October Events!

Wednesday Night Concert Series

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

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

October 7: Funky Lampshades
October 14: Storm Folk
October 21: The Aces
October 28: Forrest Williams

Bubbly Baytowne

Thursday, Oct. 15 | 5-7 p.m. | FREE!

Bubbly Baytowne is back!



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

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

Hocus Pocus - Movie on the Lawn

Friday, October 30th | Settle in at 6:30 | Movie Showing 7 p.m. | Events Plaza | FREE!

IT'S JUST A BUNCH OF HOCUS POCUS! Kick off Halloween weekend with a FREE movie night under the stars at the Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Join us for a showing of the Halloween classic Hocus Pocus at 7 PM on the big screen. Bring your blankets and lawn chairs and enjoy a fun, family-friendly night before Trick or Treat Street on Saturday.



Trick or Treat Street

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

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

Beach TV LIVE!

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

Trends & Treasures!



Tresses for Tailgates & Touchdowns

Pure & Couture Salon

Want your best game-day look—or simply a touch of fall flair? Pure & Couture's certified IBE stylists specialize in prettied-up ponytails, braids and Invisible Bead Extensions to add volume, length and versatility.

And believe me, I know! Owner Adrienne Brackett recommended extensions and refreshed color for my recent wedding, and I am simply in love. I've discovered that extensions make my hair behave, give me so much versatility and are just plain fun!

Fall is also a great time for a color refresh. Think bronzed curls, rich reds, chocolate tones, caramel dimension or balayage highlights for a softer seasonal change. Pure & Couture also offers airbrush makeup, lash extensions, blowouts, spray tanning and full hair services, from cuts and trims to root touch-ups and corrective color.

Gift cards and beauty products are also available.

(850) 424-3935 | pureandcouture.com (City Market Beachside) | purecollectivesalon.com (Grand Boulevard at Sandestin)

Holiday Cheer Starts Here Frill Seekers Gifts

The holidays are near, and personalized gifts are always worth planning ahead! Fine stationery makes an especially thoughtful gift, from monogrammed fold-over notes to

classic flat correspondence cards. Choose from beautiful printing styles, including thermography, letterpress and engraving, and order early to beat the December rush.

Frill Seekers also offers custom monogrammed necklaces, bracelets, earrings and monogrammed gifts. Their current collection includes everything from pavé and turquoise monogram pendants to pearl necklaces and personalized jewelry pieces. Frill Seekers also offers exquisite gift tags, notecards and notepads. And with holiday entertaining just around the corner, Frill Seekers can personalize cups, napkins, favors and other party details to make your gatherings uniquely yours. Personalized presents take time to design and craft, so start now.

Not sure what gifts your loved ones would choose? A gift card lets your recipient have the fun of designing or selecting something themselves. Shop online or visit Frill Seekers in City Market Bayside.

(850) 460-2700 | FrillSeekers-Gifts.com

Fall for a Little Sparkle Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Diamonds never go out of season, and Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry has a sparkling new arrival worth a closer look: a 14-karat yellow- and white-gold hinged bangle featuring 1.52 total carats of diamonds. Currently highlighted as a best

seller, it's the kind of statement piece that can move effortlessly from everyday elegance to holiday celebrations.

Looking for something truly one of a kind? Owner Ashleigh Woolly specializes in custom design, helping clients turn their ideas into jewelry created especially for them. Beyond Measure offers natural and lab-grown diamonds, engagement rings, wedding bands, earrings, necklaces, bracelets and its distinctive Sea Life Collection.

Whether you're beginning your holiday wish list, searching for a meaningful gift or finally treating yourself to that special piece, stop by the Destin showroom and discover a little sparkle "beyond measure."

(850) 424-7011 | beyondmeasurejewelry.com

NOW OPEN! Great Coffee and Community Come to Destin

Lucky Goat Coffee Destin

Lucky Goat Coffee Destin recently celebrated its ribbon cutting with the Destin and Walton Area chambers of commerce, bringing expertly roasted coffee, handcrafted drinks and warm hospitality to the Emerald Coast.

Husband-and-wife team Tom and Koley Houle are bringing Lucky Goat's simple philosophy—make great coffee—to Destin while creating a welcoming gathering place for the community. The café serves classic espresso drinks, drip coffee,

single-origin roasts and cold brew, along with the fan-favorite Luckyccino. Guests can also enjoy chai, matcha, pastries and rotating seasonal favorites. More than a coffee stop, Lucky Goat offers a comfortable place to meet friends, catch up, work or simply recharge. And with fall here, it might just become your new favorite place for that morning cup or afternoon pick-me-up.

36150 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Ste. 107, Destin

(850) 460-9981 | luckygoatcoffee.com | Instagram: @luckygoatcity-market

Fall Into a Winning Home Sale

Brian K. Locicero, REALTOR® | BeOnTheCoast.com

Want to know the strategies successful sellers use to maximize their home sale? REALTOR® Brian K. Locicero shares them in his book, packed with practical guidance designed to help homeowners prepare for a successful transaction. "I've provided an effective guide to ensure the most successful transaction possible," Brian shares. His expertise and negotiating skills have already made a difference for clients. One Destin seller noted, "Because of Brian's efforts, we quickly sold our home and purchased a 30A beachfront property below asking price."

Thinking about selling? Fall might be the perfect time to

pick up a few proven strategies before putting that "For Sale" sign in the yard.

(850) 739-3800 | BeOnTheCoast.com

Touchdown Treats & Sweet Wins

Smallcakes of Destin

Cupcakes and football? Now that's a winning combination! And Smallcakes Destin has another reason to celebrate this fall—it was recently named Best of Florida 2026 for Cupcake Bakeries.

Smallcakes bakes gourmet cupcakes with 13 signature flavors available daily, along with rotating monthly specialties and holiday-themed creations. Favorites range from Red Velvet and Wedding Cake to Lemon Drop, Strawberry, Cookies-n-Cream and Peanut Butter Cup. Brownies, cookies, cookie sandwiches and Pupcakes for furry fans add even more ways to satisfy a sweet tooth. Planning a tailgate, birthday, wedding or fall gathering? Smallcakes also creates custom cakes and cupcakes, and October is one of its busiest times for fall vacations, weddings, birthdays and special events—so ordering early is a good idea. Grab cupcakes for the football crowd or have the team create something custom for your next celebration.

Open Monday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; closed Sunday.

(850) 842-9002 | Smallcakes-Destin.com | @SmallCakesofDestin



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Tequila Lesson 201

BY LARRY MCCRARY,
PRESIDENT, AGAZUL USA

Mexico manages to make a massive amount of tequila due to the popularity of the drink. It currently produces more than 500 million liters per year, or more than 650 million bottles' worth. While not all of that would be 100% agave tequila, that is still around 100 million agave plants' worth. Considering that most agave for tequila is harvested by hand, it puts into context the massive amount of work it takes to get a bottle to your local liquor store. And all that comes from one very special Blue Weber agave plant.

Unless you've had the opportunity to stand in a field of agave plants in Mexico, you aren't prepared for just how big they are. By law in Mexico, tequila can be made only from Blue Weber agave. That's because, like Champagne in France, Prosciutto di Parma in Italy and other historically significant products, tequila is governed by strict laws to protect the purity of its origins and flavors. Blue Weber was the agave first used



to distill the spirit in the town of Tequila hundreds of years ago and gives a unique taste due to a level of sweetness well above most other agave plants.

The wide range of tequila yields from a single Blue Weber agave plant comes from the range of sizes they can grow to. Blue Weber can grow leaves that reach heights of up to 6 feet, but what really matters to tequila yield is the piña. This is the center ball of the agave plant

that the spiky leaves grow from, and it gets that name because, once it's trimmed for tequila, it resembles a massive pineapple.

On average, it takes five to seven years for one to mature to the point of making good tequila. And there are also limits on where tequila can be made. Not only can tequila be legally produced only in Mexico, but the country limits production to five states. Jalisco, Guanajuato, Tamaulipas, Michoacán and Nayarit are the five tequila-producing states, although Jalisco is by far the dominant one. The area of production is limited because, just like wine grapes, the taste of tequila is highly tied to the type of geographic region it's produced in, such as highland and lowland tequila, so only proper growing conditions produce proper tequila.

The piña, or the heart, represents about 50% of the mass of the whole agave plant, and at harvest time, it can weigh

anywhere from 20 to more than 200 pounds. The piña must be cooked to concentrate the sap into sugars, which can then be extracted for fermentation and distillation. The way piñas are roasted can also determine the final flavors of the tequila. While agave syrup is obviously sweet, it isn't that concentrated in the piña, so even those massive yields produce only a moderate amount of juice. By law, tequila is only required to be made with a minimum of 51% agave, and many more affordable tequila brands are filled out with things like corn syrup or cane sugar. That means the amount of tequila they can squeeze out of a plant is theoretically higher, but if you are sticking with the 100% version, and ideally the additive-free options that many people consider true tequila, a half-dozen bottles is standard.

In the end, it takes around 7 kilograms, or 15 pounds, of piña to produce a liter of tequila. A typical 750-milliliter bottle takes only around 5 kilograms, or 11 pounds, to produce.

Visit **Agazultequila.com**.

Where to Buy Agazul Tequila Locally

You don't have to travel far to enjoy Agazul — bottles are available right here in our area:

Retailers:

- Total Wine – Destin and all across Florida
- Cash's – Okaloosa Island
- Cash's – Destin
- Cash's – Bluewater Bay
- Cash's – Freeport
- Cash's – DeFuniak Springs
- Cheers Wine & Liquor – Bluewater Bay (Niceville), next to Pepito's
- Cheers Wine & Liquor – Pensacola

Restaurants:

- Nick's Seafood Restaurant – Freeport
- Cajun Corner Sports Bar & Grill – Santa Rosa Beach
- Mambos Restaurant – FWB
- G.I. Jade Tiki Bar & Bistro – FWB
- Downtown Music Hall – FWB
- Brothers Kitchen – Bluewater Bay



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Five Things to Review During Medicare Open Enrollment for 2027

Medicare Open Enrollment runs October 15 through December 7.

If you live in Okaloosa or Walton County, here are five things to review before deciding whether to keep your coverage for 2027.

By Max Zlobin, Founder and Licensed Insurance Agent, SwitchBlue Insurance Agency

Medicare Open Enrollment runs from October 15 through December 7, 2026. Changes made during this period generally take effect January 1, 2027. You can change Medicare Advantage plans, change prescription drug coverage, or move between Medicare Advantage and Original Medicare.

Even if your current plan worked well this year, take a few minutes to see what is changing before deciding to keep it.

1 Read your Annual Notice of Change

If you have a Medicare Advantage or Part D plan, your plan sends an Annual Notice of Change, or ANOC, each fall. It outlines changes for the following year, including premiums, deductibles, copays, drug coverage and provider networks.

Start with the things that affect you most: your doctors, hospital, pharmacy and prescriptions.

2 Check your doctors, pharmacies and prescriptions

Networks and drug formularies can change each year. Confirm that your doctors, specialists, hospitals and pharmacy will still be covered in 2027.

For each prescription, check that it remains covered, review its formulary tier, and see whether your plan uses preferred pharmacies with lower copays.

3 Look beyond the monthly premium

A \$0 plan premium does not mean there will be no out-of-pocket costs.

Review what you may pay for doctor visits, hospital stays, outpatient care, prescriptions and deductibles. Also check the plan's annual maximum out-of-pocket amount for covered medical services. This shows the most you could pay for covered Part A and Part B services during the year. Prescription drug costs follow separate Part D rules.



Primary-care and specialist visits



Hospital stays and outpatient care



Prescription drugs



Deductibles, co-payments and coinsurance



The plan's annual maximum out-of-pocket limit

4 Understand Medigap and TRICARE rules

If you are considering moving from Medicare Advantage to Original Medicare, you may also want a Medicare Supplement, or Medigap, policy to help pay costs Original Medicare does not cover.

Florida has certain protected enrollment situations in which you may have guaranteed-issue rights for a Medigap policy. Outside those situations, an insurer may ask health questions, use medical underwriting, and may decline an application. Florida does not have a broad annual "birthday rule" that lets people switch Medigap plans each year without underwriting.

Florida Medigap policies are issue-age rated. Your premium is based on your age when you buy the policy and does not increase simply because you get older. Premiums can still increase for other reasons, including medical costs, claims experience or rate changes affecting a group of policyholders.

If you have TRICARE For Life, you generally need Medicare Parts A and B to keep that coverage. Medicare generally pays first for covered services, and TRICARE For Life generally pays after Medicare. TFL includes prescription drug coverage, so you do not need Medicare Part D to have prescription coverage. In some cases, however, Part D may provide coverage for drugs TFL does not cover. Check with TRICARE before making a Medicare Advantage or Part D change.

5 Start early

Do not wait until December. Gather your current plan information, medication list, doctors' names, hospital preferences and pharmacy information so you have time to review what is changing.

If you are enrolled in Medicare Advantage, you also have a Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period from January 1 through March 31. During that time, you may switch to another Medicare Advantage plan or return to Original Medicare. If you return to Original Medicare, you may also be able to join a separate drug plan.

Max Zlobin is the founder of SwitchBlue Insurance Agency, an independent agency that helps beneficiaries compare coverage without charging a separate fee. The agency is compensated by the carriers it represents. This article is for educational purposes and is not a recommendation of any specific plan.

*This is a solicitation for insurance. Not affiliated with the U. S. government or federal Medicare program.

IMPORTANT: We do not offer every plan available in your area. Currently we represent eight organizations which offer 30 products in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all of your options.

MEDICARE QUESTIONS?

We can help you navigate Medicare with confidence.

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Max Zlobin,
Licensed Insurance Agent
NPN:17325304
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— 2026 TOAST TO THE TOP —

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Grateful and humbled by this recognition. This award may have my name on it, but it represents so many people—my incredible team, our clients who trust us, and the agents, lenders, title partners, and leadership on the other side of every transaction who help make every closing possible. Production is never a solo accomplishment. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the Emerald Coast.

*Thank you, Emerald Coast Real Producers,
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A Story Rooted in Family

Care becomes personal when it touches someone you love. For Todd Harrell, helping care for his grandfather brought first-hand understanding of the responsibilities families carry. The practical tasks mattered, but so did patience, trust, and knowing that someone cared.

That perspective remains part of the story of Home Instead in Fort Walton Beach. Since opening in March 2002, the local office has focused on helping older adults receive support in the place they call home.

Meet Todd and Carly

Todd and Carly Harrell are Florida State University graduates and parents of three sons: Brody, Wade, and Jack. Todd studied criminal justice and played baseball; Carly earned a marketing degree.

Carly joined the business in 2003, contributing across marketing, staffing, training, and administration. Their experiences



as a family and as local business owners shape a shared commitment to care that recognizes the individual behind every request for help.

What Personal Care Means

Personalized support begins with everyday details. How does someone like to start the morning? Which activities bring enjoyment? What feels difficult, and what would they prefer to continue doing themselves?

Home Instead offers companionship, personal care, meal preparation, light housekeeping, and respite for family caregivers. The conversation starts with listening, so assistance can reflect the older adult's routines, preferences, and needs.

Grateful for Your Trust

We are grateful to the local families who have welcomed Home Instead into their homes. Their trust inspires us to listen closely, honor familiar routines, and build caring relationships through everyday acts of kindness.

For Todd, Carly, and the local Home Instead team, the purpose remains personal: helping older adults feel supported and families feel heard. If your family is beginning to explore care, we would welcome the chance to learn your story and talk about what home means to you.





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Mayor Bobby Wagner and
PIO Tamara Young, PhD

“Reel Talk” from the City of Destin

Home Is Where the Heart Is

This month, Mayor Bobby Wagner and Public Information Director Dr. Tamara Young sat down to discuss home rule and its significance for Destin.

TY: Home rule can sound abstract. In plain terms, what does it mean for a resident of Destin?

BW: Home rule means the people closest to a problem get to solve it. Florida voters wrote it into the state constitution in 1968, and the Legislature spelled it out in 1973: A city can govern itself on local matters unless state law says otherwise. For Destin, that is the whole reason we exist. This community incorporated in 1984 because folks here wanted a say in their own future instead of waiting

on decisions made somewhere else.

TY: What decisions does Destin get to make for itself today because of home rule, and what would change if that authority were weakened?

BW: Today we set our own zoning and building heights, run our own police through the sheriff contract, manage our harbor and beaches, write our budget and set our millage rate. Every one of those is a decision made in a public meeting you can walk into on a Monday night. If that authority were weakened, those calls would move to Tallahassee or Okaloosa County, made by people who may never have walked the harbor boardwalk or sat in traffic on 98 in July. The rules would get more generic, and generic is the enemy of a place as specific as Destin.

TY: Why is this such a hot

topic now around the state of Florida, not just Destin?

BW: Because the pace of preemption has picked up. This past session alone, the Legislature expanded the Live Local Act to further limit how cities regulate height and density, passed HB 399 restricting what local governments can weigh when reviewing a development and extended SB 180, which freezes cities in hurricane-affected counties from adopting stricter land-use rules through October 2027. I hear it from mayors in towns of 800 people and cities of 80,000. What I find hardest to square is that much of this has come from a Legislature led by the party of limited government. I believe



most of those leaders mean it when they say it, and I share that value. But a rule written in Tallahassee that overrides a decision made on our own streets is more government, not less, no matter who signs it. Limited government has to include trusting the government closest to home. Nobody is asking for less accountability. We are asking to stay accountable to our own residents.

TY: Can you give an example of a decision where local control made a real difference for Destin?

BW: Building height is the clearest example I know. In 2020, this council put a charter amendment on the ballot that caps new construction at six stories and requires 60% of Destin voters to approve anything taller. It passed with nearly 83% of the vote. Think about that. Residents did not just weigh in on a zoning case. They wrote the rule into our charter themselves, and now no council, no developer and no future mayor can quietly undo it. That is home rule in its purest form. Compare that to this year's Live Local changes, which tell cities how they may and may not regulate height. When the decision stays in Destin, the people who live with the skyline get the final say.

TY: What does “fighting for home rule” look like day to day? Is it lobbying, legal action, coalition-building or public engagement?

BW: All of it, but mostly relationships. Legal action is the last resort and the most expensive. The real work happens in Tallahassee during session, where I sit down with our delegation and explain what a bill actually does to a beach town. It happens when neighboring cities compare notes and decide to speak with one voice instead of several quiet ones. And it happens right here, because a legislator will listen to 500 Destin residents long before they listen to one mayor. When you show up to a council meeting, sign a petition or email your representative about a bill, you are fighting for home rule. That is not a figure of speech.

TY: Is there a common misconception surrounding home rule that you'd like to correct?

BW: The biggest one is that home rule means cities want to be left alone to do whatever they please. That is not it. We follow state law, we welcome oversight and we post every dollar we spend. Home rule simply means that when a decision is local, it stays local. The second misconception is that this is a fight between governments. It is not. It is a question about you. Do you want the person deciding what gets built next to your house to be someone you can look in the eye at Publix or a legislator from Miami who has never set foot in the Panhandle? I know my answer. That is worth fighting for.

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At Gasworks, we believe the right gas system is about more than function—it's about creating spaces where people gather, relax, entertain and enjoy their homes. Whether you're building a new home, renovating an existing property or adding the finishing touches to an outdoor living space, our experienced team is here to help bring your vision to life.

Our expertise covers the

complete process, from gas line installation and piping to the installation of beautiful, high-quality fireplaces, outdoor kitchens, and gas lighting. By offering these services under one roof, we make it easier for our customers to create a cohesive, dependable, and beautifully finished project.

Designed for the Way You Live

The Florida Panhandle is known for its beautiful homes, coastal lifestyle, and incredible outdoor spaces. Gasworks helps homeowners take full advantage of that lifestyle with custom solutions designed for both indoor comfort and outdoor entertaining.

A fireplace can transform a room into a warm and inviting



gathering place. A professionally designed outdoor kitchen can turn a patio into an extension of your home. Gas lighting can add warmth, character, and timeless appeal to outdoor spaces. Behind it all, properly installed gas

piping provides the dependable foundation that makes these features possible.

We understand that every property and every customer is different. That's why we take the time to listen, understand your

goals, and provide solutions tailored to your home and lifestyle. Our approach combines quality products, knowledgeable service, attention to detail and local experience.

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After 11 years in business, Gasworks has built its reputation one project and one customer at a time. We're proud to be part of the communities we serve and to work with the homeowners, contractors, and businesses who make the Florida Panhandle such a special place.

Visit our showroom at 3214 US Hwy 98, Suite 402 Santa Rosa Beach, to explore options, get inspired and talk with our team about your next project. Gasworksfl.com | 850.603.2550



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Fall Is Prime Painting Season on the Emerald Coast



By KYLE SPARKS,
OVATION PAINTING

If you've been waiting for the right time to tackle a larger painting project, October may be it. Here along the Emerald Coast, fall gives us a welcome break from the intense summer heat and humidity—and it gives homeowners a good opportunity to see what another Florida summer has done to their homes.

Take a walk around your



house and look closely. Our strong sun can fade exterior paint surprisingly quickly, especially on the sides receiving the most direct exposure. Add salt air, humidity, wind and summer storms, and you may notice chalking, peeling, cracking or areas where the finish simply looks tired.

Paint, of course, makes a home look beautiful, but exterior paint has another important job: protecting what's underneath. When a painted surface begins to fail, moisture can find its way into places you don't want it. Addressing those areas early can help prevent a cosmetic problem from becoming a more expensive repair.

October is also a great month to think bigger. Maybe your home's exterior color feels dated, or several interior rooms no longer flow together. A whole-

home exterior or substantial interior repaint can dramatically update a property without the cost and disruption of remodeling.

And coastal doesn't have to mean the same familiar blue and white. We're seeing homeowners embrace warm whites, soft natural neutrals, muted greens and deeper accent colors that work beautifully with our Northwest Florida surroundings.

Kyle's Tip: Don't choose an exterior color from a tiny paint chip alone. Florida sunlight can dramatically change how a color appears. Test larger samples on different sides of your home and look at them in

morning, midday and late-afternoon light before making your final decision.

At Ovation Painting, preparation is just as important as the finish coat. Proper cleaning, repairs, surface preparation and choosing products suited for our climate all contribute to a paint job designed to last.

If summer left your home looking a little worse for wear, fall is a great time to give it some attention—and enjoy the results well beyond the season.

Call or text Kyle Sparks at Ovation Painting at 850-830-9668 to discuss your next painting project. Military and first responder discounts are available.



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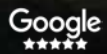
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Football. Food. Fun. Fans. Let the Games Begin...

Local Fan Favorites



By SCOTT MILLER

September college football can seem like the preseason as the powerhouse teams often get to beat up on the not so mighty. October football has a different feel to it. Now, it's time for teams to prove whether they truly belong in the top 10. As of October 1, the rankings look like this: Texas, Georgia, Notre Dame, Miami (FL), Ohio State, Indiana, Alabama, Florida, Ole Miss and BYU. It's always fun to watch how this plays out. So, fans, let the October games begin!

And, there's no better place to watch the action than Destin. Some of the best sports bars and restaurants anywhere are right here in our own back yard. They're ready to welcome us in, serve up some really great food, cold beer and delicious specialty drinks, and make every game feel like a championship. Here are a few of my favorites. So, grab your crew, claim your spot and get in on the action—I'll see you there!

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

Football season is back, and there's no better place to catch the action than right on the Destin Harbor. For more than 40 years, AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters, refreshing drinks and plenty of local flavor. What began as a popular hangout for fresh oysters and cold beer—with oysters shucked from the deck behind a small trailer—has



grown into one of the Destin Harbor's most iconic hot spots. Today, AJ's has four locations along the Emerald Coast, serving fresh seafood, live music and memorable waterfront experiences.

Die-hard football fans can settle in beneath the one-and-only Jumbotron on the Destin Harbor and watch their favorite college and professional teams play on the big, big screen. Surrounded by the energy and beauty of the harbor, it's

a game-day atmosphere that's hard to beat.

Whether you're arriving early for kickoff, staying through the final whistle or celebrating a big win afterward, AJ's has delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks and live music to keep the good times going. Don't miss a minute of the action—make AJ's part of your football tradition all season long.

(850) 837-1913

116 Harbor Blvd., Destin

ajsgdestin.com

Austons on 98

Build your perfect game-day lineup at Austons on 98, home to an impressive raw oyster bar, one of the best happy hours in town and a massive 102-foot bar with 32 beers on draft.

The menu features little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder, jumbo shrimp cocktail and plenty of other favorites to

keep your football crew well-fed. Add Austons' own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce" when you want to bring a little extra heat to the game.

With big-screen televisions throughout the restaurant, there's no bad seat in the house. Grab your friends, choose your team and settle in for college and professional football all season long.

Happy hour is offered daily from 3–6 p.m., with \$2 off all bar drinks. Bucket specials are available all day, every day. From 3–5 p.m. Monday through Friday, guests can also enjoy \$3 off a dozen raw oysters.

Austons on 98 is open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. View the complete menu online.

(850) 842-3200

125 Poinciana Blvd.,

Miramar Beach

AustonsOn98.com

Continued on page 25



FOOTBALL IS BACK!



WATCH

THE **BIG** GAMES
NFL SUNDAY TICKET
& COLLEGE GAMEPLAN

EAT

SPECIAL FOOTBALL
MENUS AT EACH LOCATION

DRINK

BEER SPECIALS & GREAT DRINKS!



2026 Pro Football Schedule

WEEK 4 (OCT. 1-5)

Thursday, Oct. 1:

Pittsburgh Steelers at Cleveland Browns — 7:15 pm, Prime Video

Sunday, Oct. 4:

Indianapolis Colts vs. Washington

Commanders (London) — 8:30 am, NFL Network

New England Patriots at Buffalo Bills — Noon, CBS

New York Jets at Chicago Bears — Noon, FOX

Jacksonville Jaguars at Cincinnati Bengals — Noon, CBS

Arizona Cardinals at New York Giants — Noon, CBS

Los Angeles Rams at Philadelphia Eagles — Noon, FOX

Green Bay Packers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers — Noon, FOX

Tennessee Titans at Baltimore Ravens — Noon, CBS

Dallas Cowboys at Houston Texans — Noon, FOX

Miami Dolphins at Minnesota Vikings — 3:05 pm, FOX

Kansas City Chiefs at Las Vegas Raiders — 3:25 pm, CBS

Denver Broncos at San Francisco 49ers — 3:25 pm, CBS

Los Angeles Chargers at Seattle Seahawks — 3:25 pm, CBS

Detroit Lions at Carolina Panthers — 7:20 pm, NBC

Monday, Oct. 5:

Atlanta Falcons at New Orleans Saints — 7:15 pm, ESPN

WEEK 5 (OCT. 8-12)

Thursday, Oct. 8:

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Dallas Cowboys — 7:15 pm, Prime Video

Sunday, Oct. 11:

Philadelphia Eagles vs. Jacksonville Jaguars

(London) — 8:30 am, NFL Network

Chicago Bears at Green Bay Packers — Noon, FOX

Cincinnati Bengals at Miami Dolphins — Noon, FOX

Las Vegas Raiders at New England Patriots — Noon, CBS

Minnesota Vikings at New Orleans Saints — Noon, FOX

Cleveland Browns at New York Jets — Noon, CBS

Indianapolis Colts at Pittsburgh Steelers — Noon, CBS

Houston Texans at Tennessee Titans — Noon, CBS

New York Giants at Washington Commanders — Noon, FOX

Denver Broncos at Los Angeles Chargers — 3:05 pm, CBS

Detroit Lions at Arizona Cardinals — 3:25 pm, FOX

San Francisco 49ers at Seattle Seahawks — 3:25 pm, FOX

Baltimore Ravens at Atlanta Falcons — 7:20 pm, NBC

Monday, Oct. 12:

Buffalo Bills at Los Angeles Rams — 7:15 pm, ESPN

Byes: Carolina Panthers, Kansas City Chiefs

WEEK 6 (OCT. 15-19)

Thursday, Oct. 15:

Seattle Seahawks at Denver Broncos — 7:15 pm, Prime Video

Sunday, Oct. 18:

Houston Texans vs. Jacksonville Jaguars

(London) — 8:30 am, NFL Network

Chicago Bears at Atlanta Falcons — Noon, FOX

Baltimore Ravens at Cleveland Browns — Noon, CBS

Tennessee Titans at Indianapolis Colts — Noon, CBS

New York Jets at New England Patriots — Noon, CBS

New Orleans Saints at New York Giants — Noon, FOX

Carolina Panthers at Philadelphia Eagles — Noon, FOX

Pittsburgh Steelers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers — Noon, CBS

Arizona Cardinals at Los Angeles Rams — 3:05 pm, FOX

Los Angeles Chargers at Kansas City Chiefs — 3:25 pm, CBS

Buffalo Bills at Las Vegas Raiders — 3:25 pm, CBS

Dallas Cowboys at Green Bay Packers — 7:20 pm, NBC

Monday, Oct. 19:

Washington Commanders at San Francisco 49ers — 7:15 pm, ESPN/ABC

Byes: Cincinnati Bengals, Detroit Lions, Miami Dolphins, Minnesota Vikings

WEEK 7 (OCT. 22-26)

Thursday, Oct. 22:

New England Patriots at Chicago Bears — 7:15 pm, Prime Video

Sunday, Oct. 25:

Pittsburgh Steelers vs. New Orleans Saints

(Paris) — 8:30 am, NFL Network

San Francisco 49ers at Atlanta Falcons — Noon, FOX

Cincinnati Bengals at Baltimore Ravens — Noon, CBS

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Carolina Panthers — Noon, FOX

New York Giants at Houston Texans — Noon, FOX

Indianapolis Colts at Minnesota Vikings — Noon, CBS

Miami Dolphins at New York Jets — Noon, CBS

Cleveland Browns at Tennessee Titans — Noon, CBS

Denver Broncos at Arizona Cardinals — 3:05 pm, CBS

Green Bay Packers at Detroit Lions — 3:25 pm, FOX

Los Angeles Rams at Las Vegas Raiders — 3:25 pm, FOX

Kansas City Chiefs at Seattle Seahawks — 7:20 pm, NBC

Monday, Oct. 26:

Dallas Cowboys at Philadelphia Eagles — 7:15 pm, ESPN

Byes: Buffalo Bills, Jacksonville Jaguars, Los Angeles Chargers, Washington Commanders

WEEK 8 (OCT. 29-NOV. 2)

Thursday, Oct. 29:

Carolina Panthers at Green Bay Packers — 7:15 pm, Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 1:

Baltimore Ravens at Buffalo Bills — Noon, CBS

Tennessee Titans at Cincinnati Bengals — Noon, CBS

Atlanta Falcons at Tampa Bay Buccaneers — Noon, FOX

Minnesota Vikings at Detroit Lions — Noon, FOX

Indianapolis Colts at Jacksonville Jaguars — Noon, CBS

Las Vegas Raiders at New York Jets — Noon, FOX

Cleveland Browns at Pittsburgh Steelers — Noon, CBS

Arizona Cardinals at Dallas Cowboys — Noon, FOX

Los Angeles Chargers at Los Angeles Rams — 3:05 pm, FOX

Kansas City Chiefs at Denver Broncos — 3:25 pm, CBS

New England Patriots at Miami Dolphins — 3:25 pm, CBS

Philadelphia Eagles at Washington Commanders — 7:20 pm, NBC

Monday, Nov. 2:

Chicago Bears at Seattle Seahawks — 7:15 pm, ESPN

Byes: Houston Texans, New Orleans Saints, New York Giants, San Francisco 49ers

WEEK 9 (NOV. 5-9)

Thursday, Nov. 5:

Jacksonville Jaguars at Baltimore Ravens — 7:15 pm, Prime Video

Sunday, Nov. 8:

Cincinnati Bengals vs. Atlanta Falcons

(Madrid) — 8:30 am, NFL Network

Denver Broncos at Carolina Panthers — Noon, CBS/FOX regional

Dallas Cowboys at Indianapolis Colts — Noon, CBS/FOX regional

New York Jets at Kansas City Chiefs — Noon, CBS/FOX regional

Detroit Lions at Miami Dolphins — Noon, CBS/FOX regional

Cleveland Browns at New Orleans Saints — Noon, CBS/FOX regional

New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles — Noon, CBS/FOX regional

Los Angeles Rams at Washington Commanders — Noon, CBS/FOX regional

Houston Texans at Los Angeles Chargers — 3:05 pm, CBS/FOX regional

Las Vegas Raiders at San Francisco 49ers — 3:05 pm, CBS/FOX regional

Green Bay Packers at New England Patriots — 3:25 pm, CBS/FOX regional

Arizona Cardinals at Seattle Seahawks — 3:25 pm, CBS/FOX regional

Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Chicago Bears — 7:20 pm, NBC

Monday, Nov. 9:

Buffalo Bills at Minnesota Vikings — 7:15 pm, ESPN/ABC

Byes: Pittsburgh Steelers, Tennessee Titans

WORLD FAMOUS



Your GAME DAY HEADQUARTERS

Looking for a local spot to catch the game? CJ's Hangout delivers great food, cold drinks and a friendly neighborhood atmosphere. Enjoy game-day favorites like wings, pizza, smash burgers, home-made chips, sandwiches, salads and more, with extra football fare available on weekends.

DAILY Specials

MONDAY	99¢ Wings
TUESDAY	\$9.99 Meatloaf
WEDNESDAY	\$9.99 Burger Specials
THURSDAY	\$9.99 Country Fried Steak
FRIDAY	\$9.99 Fried Chicken Friday

SATURDAY & SUNDAY GAME DAY Menu

Nachos
Chili Dogs
BBQ Sandwiches
and More!



CJ'S *Live!* WEEKLY

Music Bingo (Wednesday) • Open Mic Comedy
Live music three days a week • Karaoke

Sunday BREAKFAST

Open early for NFL morning kickoffs in October!



Gather with friends. Cheer. Stay awhile. Whether it's College Football Saturday or NFL Sunday, CJ's Hangout is your go-to game-day spot.

AS THEY LIKE TO SAY AT CJ'S...

Love you mean it!

(850) 888-9464 • 385 Harbor Blvd., Destin • cjshangout.com



FAN FAVORITES

continued from page 23

Boathouse Oyster Bar

Some football weekends call for more than a sports bar. Sometimes you want fresh oysters, live music and the kind of laid-back local atmosphere that makes every game-day weekend feel like a coastal getaway.

Located in the heart of Destin on the Destin Harbor, Boathouse Oyster Bar is where the locals go. Its specialty is turning oysters into a true delicacy, served raw, steamed or baked just the way you like 'em. The menu also features Boathouse's signature gumbo, made from a recipe written by Mama Gumbo herself.

Stop in before the game to fuel up, or mosey over afterward to celebrate a win, shake off a tough loss and hang out with the locals. With live entertainment every night, the fun continues long after the final play.

On the first Friday of each month, the Boathouse hosts a locals' gathering on the Destin Harbor from 5-7 p.m. See the ad for featured bands and performance times. Music schedules are subject to change, so follow Boathouse Oyster Bar on Facebook for the latest updates.

(850) 837-3645

288-B Harbor Blvd., Destin
BoathouseOysterBarDestin.com

CJ's Hangout

Looking for a true locals' spot to watch your favorite team? CJ's Hangout brings together everything football fans want on game day—plenty of sports, great food, cold drinks and a friendly neighborhood atmosphere where locals meet.

CJ's is a full-service, family-friendly sports bar serving up some serious game-day favorites, including wings, pizza, smash burgers, sandwiches, salads and house-made chips. On Saturdays and Sundays, the game-day menu adds even more football fare, including nachos, chili dogs, barbecue sandwiches and more. And on select Sundays in October, CJ's will open early for NFL games with breakfast available for those morning kickoffs.

There's something happening throughout the week, too. Daily specials include 99-cent wings on Mondays, \$9.99 meatloaf on Tuesdays, burger specials on Wednesdays, \$9.99 country-fried steak on Thursdays and \$9.99 fried chicken on

Fridays. Pair your meal with a cocktail or choose from a wide selection of draft and bottled beers.

The fun doesn't end when the game does. CJ's keeps the week lively with Music Bingo, live music three days a week, karaoke and open mic comedy. Whether you're meeting friends and neighbors, settling in for college football Saturday or spending Sunday watching the NFL, CJ's Hangout makes it easy to eat, cheer and stay awhile.

As they like to say at CJ's: "Love You Mean It!"

(850) 888-9464

385 Harbor Blvd., Destin
cjshangout.com

Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Hey, football fans—Tailfins Waterfront Grill is calling your name! Destin's favorite season is here, and Tailfins has everything you need for a winning game day on the harbor.

If your team has an early kickoff, start the day with a local-favorite breakfast served from 8-11 a.m., seven days a week. Choose a classic plate of bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet, or a smiley pancake for the youngest fans. Add a round of mimosas or Bloody Marys and get ready for kickoff.

When it's game time, Tailfins is one of Destin's go-to sports-watching destinations, with more than 100 big-screen televisions showing college and professional matchups. Fans can also catch the action on the outdoor Jumbotron overlooking the docks. With so many screens, you won't have to miss a single touchdown, field goal or game-changing play.

Tailfins offers early-bird dinner specials from 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Happy hour is also available from 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday, featuring \$24 domestic beer buckets, \$7 house wines and well drinks, and \$7 Long Island iced teas.

Come early, stay late and enjoy live music on the docks seven days a week. Whether you're gathering before the game, cheering through all four quarters or celebrating after the final whistle, Tailfins brings together football, food, drinks and waterfront fun.

(850) 650-1111

172 Harbor Blvd.,
on the Destin Harbor
tailfinsdestin.com

Daily Cruises



Turn your football weekend into a complete Destin Harbor adventure with Tailfins' Tikis.

Tailfins' newest one-of-a-kind tiki boat features onboard restrooms and certified captains, making it easy to relax and enjoy the water.

Talk of the Town tikis are the only Coast Guard-certified tiki boats in the United States. Experience the Destin Harbor and Crab Island like never before by choosing a three-hour

tour, a sunset cruise or Thursday night's spectacular fireworks cruise.

Book your cruise online at tailfinsislandadventure.com.

(850) 842-3333

172 Harbor Blvd.,
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RAW BAR!

Open 7 Days a
Week
11 AM - 9 PM



Home of the 102 ft. bar
including 32 beers on draft!

LIVE MUSIC!

Every Night Except Thursday
6-9 PM

TRIVIA

Thursdays 7-9 PM

HAPPY HOUR!

Everyday 3-6 PM

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



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Voted Best Sports Bar!



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

SEC Football Schedule

SEC	Oct 10	Oct 17	Oct 24	Oct 31	Nov 7	Nov 14	Nov 21	Nov 28
Alabama	UGA	@TENN	A&M	OPEN	@LSU	@VANDY	UTC	AUBURN
Arkansas	TENN	@VANDY	OPEN	MIZZOU	@AUB	S CAR	@TEX	LSU
Auburn	OPEN	@UGA	LSU	@OLE MISS	ARK	@MISS ST	SAMFORD	@BAMA
Florida	S CAR	@TEX	OPEN	UGA (ATL)	OKLA	@UK	VANDY	@FSU
Georgia	@BAMA	AUB	OPEN	FLA (ATL)	@OLE MISS	MIZZOU	@S CAR	GA TECH
Kentucky	LSU	@OKLA	VANDY	OPEN	@TENN	FLA	@MIZZOU	LOUISVILLE
LSU	@KU	MISS ST	@AUB	OPEN	BAMA	TEXAS	@TENN	@ARK
Ole Miss	@VANDY	MIZZOU	@TEXAS	AUB	UGA	@OKLA	WOFFORD	MISS ST
Miss St	OPEN	@LSU	OKLA	@TEX	VANDY	AUB	TENN TECH	@OLE MISS
Missouri	A&M	@OLE MISS	OPEN	@ARK	TEX	@UGA	KU	OKLA
Oklahoma	TEX (DAL)	KU	@MISS ST	S CAR	FLA	OLE MISS	A&M	MIZZOU
S Carolina	@FLA	OPEN	TENN	@OKLA	A&M	@ARK	UGA	@CLEMSON
Tennessee	@ARK	BAMA	@S CAR	OPEN	UK	@A&M	LSU	@VANDY
Tex A&M	@MIZZOU	CITADEL	@BAMA	OPEN	@S. CAR	TENN	@OKLA	TEX (11/27)
Texas	OKLA (DAL)	FLA	OLE MISS	MISS ST	@MIZZOU	@LSU	ARK	A&M (11/27)
Vanderbilt	OLE MISS	ARK	@KU	OPEN	@MISS ST	BAMA	@FLA	TENN



Scott's October Game-Day Picks

Week 5, October 3
Penn St. @ Northwestern 7pm, Fri. 10/2, FOX
Auburn @ Tennessee, TBD
Alabama @ Mississippi St., TBD
Florida @ Missouri, TBD
Notre Dame @ N. Carolina, TBD
Miami @ Clemson, TBD
Virginia @ Florida St., TBD

Week 6, October 10
USC @ Penn State, 6:30 pm, NBC
Georgia @ Alabama, TBD
LSU @ Kentucky, TBD
Ole Miss @ Vanderbilt, TBD

S. Carolina @ Florida, TBD
Texas @ Oklahoma 2:30 pm, ESPN

Week 7, October 17
Auburn @ Georgia, TBD
Florida @ Texas, TBD
Mississippi St. @ LSU, TBD
Alabama @ Tennessee, TBD
Penn State. @ Michigan, TBD
Ohio State @ Indiana, TBD

Week 8, October 24
LSU @ Auburn, 11 am, ESPN
Ole Miss @ Texas, TBD

Texas A&M @ Alabama, TBD
Pittsburgh @ Miami (FL), TBD
Indiana @ Michigan, TBD
Tennessee @ S Carolina, TBD

Week 9, October 31
Auburn @ Ole Miss, TBD
Florida @ Georgia, 2:30 pm, ABC
Mississippi St. @ Texas, TBA
Ohio State @ USC, TBD
Purdue @ Penn State, TBD



2026 High School Football Schedules

Destin High School Sharks
August 14: vs. Arnold (Kickoff Classic)
August 21: vs. Port St. Joe
August 28: @ Baker
September 4: vs. North Bay Haven
September 11: @ Marianna
September 18: Bye / Open Week
September 25: vs. Pensacola Catholic (District Game)
October 2: @ Northview
October 9: @ Walton (District Game)
October 16: vs. Graceville
October 23: @ Freeport (District Game)
October 30: vs. Bozeman (District Game)

Fort Walton Beach Vikings
Aug 13: vs. Niceville (Kickoff Classic), 7:00 PM
Aug 21: vs. Pensacola, 7:00 PM
Aug 28: vs. South Walton, 7:00 PM
Sep 4: at West Florida Tech, 7:00 PM
Sep 11: vs. Milton*, 7:00 PM
Sep 18: vs. Walton, 7:00 PM
Sep 25: at Gulf Breeze*, 7:00 PM
Oct 2: at Navarre, 7:00 PM
Oct 9: at Choctawhatchee*, 7:00 PM
Oct 16: vs. Escambia*, 7:00 PM
Oct 23: at Booker T. Washington*, 7:00 PM
Oct 30: Open Week
* Denotes District Game.

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

Sunday, Aug. 30, 8-11pm: Chris Kuczynski

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

Pirates + Food + Booze = Fun

Pirate Brew Fest 2026

Brew Fest Returns to Destin

Ahoy, mateys! Pirate Brew Fest is returning to Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill in Destin on Saturday, November 7, 2026, for five hours of pirate-themed fun, live entertainment, local shopping, food, and cold drinks. The festival runs from 11 AM to 4 PM, and admission is completely free.

This year's event brings together everything needed for a proper coastal celebration: live music, food trucks, artists, vendors, beer memorabilia, drinks, and games for kids. Families can explore the festival, browse one-

the most colorfully crewed pirate port on the Emerald Coast.

Families can also look forward to games for kids and plenty of room to enjoy the atmosphere. With free admission, Pirate Brew Fest makes it easy to bring the whole crew, spend the afternoon together, and choose the food, shopping, and ticketed experiences that suit your group.

Brews, Bites, Music, and More

For adults ready to raise a glass, VIP drink tickets start at just \$10. Admission to the festival remains free, so guests can enjoy the entertainment and explore

the music with friends, there will be plenty to explore between 11 AM and 4 PM.

A Pirate Festival at a Destin Landmark

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill has been a Destin landmark since 1982, known for family dining, colorful coastal character, and memorable experiences. The restaurant is also home to Gator Beach, where visitors can see live alligators

and learn more about the animals that have become part of the Fudpucker's story.

That mix of family fun, local flavor, and larger-than-life personality makes Fudpucker's a natural home port for Pirate Brew Fest. The festival adds vendors, artists, music, games, food trucks, drinks, and pirate pageantry to the venue's already unmistakable Destin atmosphere.

Make Plans to Join the Crew

Pirate Brew Fest 2026 takes place Saturday, November 7, from 11 AM to 4 PM at Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill, located at 20001 Emerald Coast Parkway in Destin, Florida. Admission is free, and VIP drink tickets start at \$10.

SO, STOP BY AND HAVE A SOME FUN AT PIRATE BREW FEST – YA SCALAWAGS!



of-a-kind finds, grab something delicious to eat, and enjoy a lively afternoon at one of Destin's best-known family attractions. Guests are strongly encouraged to arrive in pirate attire - whether that means a full captain's coat and tricorne hat or simply an eye patch and a convincing 'Arrr!'

Dress Like a Pirate and Claim Some Booty

The first 100 guests who arrive dressed like pirates will receive a free gift. Pirate attire is encouraged throughout the event, giving visitors of every age a chance to become part of the spectacle. Break out the bandanas, striped shirts, boots, hats, sashes, and other seaworthy accessories. The goal is simple: help turn Fudpucker's into

the event without purchasing a ticket. Those who want to take part in the featured drink experience can select the VIP ticket option that works for them.

A lineup of food trucks will be serving festival favorites throughout the day, giving guests plenty of choices when hunger strikes. Live music will provide the soundtrack, while artists and vendors offer hand-crafted goods, local creations, collectibles, and other treasures worth taking home.

Beer fans can browse displays of beer memorabilia and collectibles - a fitting addition to a festival that celebrates brewing culture alongside Destin's playful pirate spirit. Whether you come to discover a rare piece, support a local artist, sample the food-truck fare, or simply enjoy

FREE ADMISSION

DRINK UP, YE SCURVY DOGS!

PIRATE BREW FEST

SATURDAY
Nov 7th, 2026
11am - 4pm
at Fudpucker's

www.PirateBrewFest.com

Food, Fun & Games, Live Music
Artists/Vendors, Alcohol Samples
Pirate Costume Contest • Beer Memorabilia
Pirate Magician

PIRATE ATTIRE ENCOURAGED
GIFTS FOR THE FIRST 100 PIRATES!

FUDPUCKER'S
 BEACHSIDE BAR & GRILL

BCCA
 BEER COLLECTIBLES CLUB of AMERICA

More information at:

www.PirateBrewFest.com

Café Destin

Looking for a place the entire family can enjoy—or a comfortable spot to work with free Wi-Fi while sipping a cup of coffee? Café Destin offers an expansive breakfast and lunch menu featuring pancakes, Nutella waffles, omelets, eggs Benedict, biscuits and gravy and more. For something lighter, choose from specialty toasts, including avocado and salmon, along with pastries and muffins.

The lunch menu includes a variety of burgers, sandwiches and salads. Café Destin also has

a full-service coffee bar serving fresh, locally roasted Amavida coffee, hot or iced, as well as espresso drinks, lattes, fresh fruit smoothies and a tempting selection of teas. A special kids menu is available, too. Guests can enjoy indoor seating or relax outside on the large, covered patio. The café is also available after hours for private events and special occasions.

Open daily for breakfast and lunch from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

(850) 424-6777

985 U.S. 98 E., Destin
cafedestin.com

**Coastal Protein & Energy**

Fuel your day the healthy way at Coastal Protein & Energy, Destin's popular spot for clean caffeine and protein-packed treats. Sip on energizing loaded teas, protein coffee and shakes, or enjoy protein waffles, smoothie bowls and better-for-you protein donuts—all crafted to keep you going strong. Located along Harbor Boulevard in Norred Plaza, across from Boshamps, this bright, beachy hangout has quickly become a favorite among locals looking for fast, feel-good fuel between school runs, gym sessions, classes and days on the water. Seasonal flavors are also available for a limited time.

Beginning in September, Coastal Protein & Energy will open at 6:30 a.m. Monday through Friday and introduce two new fall menu drops.

September also brings Social Media Saturdays. Post about or check in at Coastal Protein & Energy each Saturday and receive \$2 off any drink.

First-time visitors can receive \$5 off their first purchase of \$9 or more by joining the loyalty program.

Take it from a regular: these crave-worthy drinks and treats can easily become part of your daily routine. Stop by for morning energy, a midday pick-me-

up or a post-workout refuel and discover why everyone is talking about Coastal Protein & Energy.
(850) 904-9738

501 Harbor Blvd., Ste. F, Destin
Facebook.com/coastalprotein |
coastal-protein-co.square.site

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

The motto says it all: "Ya Ain't Been Pucked 'Til Ya Been Fudpucked!"

Locally owned and operated since 1982, Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill is built around its owners' three favorite "F" words: Food, Fun and Family. More than a restaurant or bar, Fudpucker's offers a one-of-a-kind dining and entertainment experience for locals, visitors, children and families of all ages.

Bring the family for the food and stay for the fun. A Fudpucker's gift card makes a great birthday present, and the restaurant's gift shop is filled with distinctive gifts, souvenirs and branded merchandise.

This fall, Fudpucker's is going all out with its Pirate Brew Fest, happening Saturday, Nov. 7, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Guests can enjoy live music, local food trucks serving coastal favorites, talented artists and vendors, beer memorabilia, drinks and games for children.

The festival marketplace will showcase handcrafted goods, unique collectibles and plenty of treasures worth taking home. Craft beer enthusiasts can also explore a diverse selection of brewing memorabilia and collectibles that bring together local beer culture and Destin's leg-

endary pirate spirit. Pirate attire is highly encouraged, and the first 100 swashbucklers through the gate will receive special gifts. Admission is free, while VIP drink tickets for adults start at just \$10. Gather your crew and get ready for a lively afternoon of food, music, shopping and family-friendly fun.

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Hours: Thursday and Friday, 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday pickup, 8-10 a.m.

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Dinner, a Show and a Little Elton John Magic at Old Florida Fish House

BY PUBLISHER LORI MILLER

I've experienced this dinner and show at Old Florida Fish House, and let me tell you—it is an awesome night out! Amazing food, the music of Elton John and an evening that makes you want to sing along...what more could you ask for?

Still Standing: A Tribute to Elton John takes the restaurant's main stage Nov. 8 and

it the full dinner-and-show experience. Dinner ticket holders receive preferred seating closer to the stage and should arrive at 5 p.m. Start with Gulf Coast she-crab soup or a red romaine Caesar salad, then choose from three delicious-sounding entrées: prawn risotto with roasted acorn squash, fava beans and citrus beurre blanc; herb-and-garlic-roasted tri-tip with

lime pie and a black-and-white petit four! The menu is subject to change.

Coming for the show only? Plan to arrive between 6 and 6:30 p.m. If you'd like to enjoy dinner from the restaurant's reg-

ular menu first, reserve a table between 4:30 and 5 p.m. so you have plenty of time before the music starts. Dining reservations are available through Resy.

I had such an amazing time, and I'm excited for you to expe-

rience it, too! Tickets are limited and nonrefundable, so visit oldfloridafishhouse.com to get yours before they're gone. You'll also find schedules for other upcoming events and more information—all in one place!



Dec. 6, with each performance running from 6:30 to 9 p.m. If you're looking for a fun date night or an excuse to get your friends together, this is it!

My recommendation? Make

dauphinoise potatoes and pink peppercorn cognac cream; or chicken Florentine with creamy Pernod spinach, saffron capellini and balsamic-glazed asparagus. And save room for dessert—Key



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December

- 5 Christmas Wine Market
- 5 Breakfast with Santa Buffet
- 6 Still Standing: Elton John Tribute Show
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- 24 Christmas Eve Dinner
- 25 Christmas Day Dinner
- 31 NYE Dinner and Party

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Visit OldFloridaFishHouse.com
for schedules, tickets and more information

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Off the Hook

FISHING RODEO

continued from page 2

their commitment. "It's an intensive undertaking for them.

"I like working on the guide. We try to make it unique each year," he says. "I've gotten to re-touch a lot of the older poster art, and that's been really cool.

"The fishing community is the backbone of this whole town. Any day you get to go down to the docks and see everyone at the weigh-ins is very rewarding for me."

For the uninitiated, Berte says the appeal of the Destin Fishing Rodeo "depends on how much they're into fishing. You can



bring your own boat or get on one of the many charter boats and bring in a bunch of fish. You can just kick it and have a great experience with these captains for as long as you want and as far as you want.

"You can get some huge fish going just 20 miles out, some big grouper and tuna. That's why

this is 'The World's Luckiest Fishing Village.'"

Destin Fishing Rodeo: Dates to Remember

OCTOBER 2026

78th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo | October 1-31

Daily weigh-ins behind AJ's, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

Kids Fall Movie Festival | Monday, October 12

School's out for Columbus Day! AJ's will show a FREE movie on its famous JumboTron, with hot dogs, popcorn and snow cones for the kids. Details: www.ajsdestin.com.

Bruce Cheves Day | Friday, October 16

Come to the docks to celebrate the date the City of Destin declared "Bruce Cheves Day." Honor the Rodeo's late weighmaster, remembering his best tales and the legacy he built over 41 years.

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

Held annually on Bruce Cheves Day, this tribute celebrates the lives and legends of those lost during the year.

Larry Hatchett Fishing Foundation Day | Saturday, October 17

The foundation brings children in foster care to fish and learn about marine habitats and environmental awareness. Sponsors include The New Florida Girl's American Spirit, Fish Florida, AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, Pilot Company, Zup-Med Memphis and Destin Realty.



4th Annual Miss Destin Mingle | Saturday, October 24

Miss Destin's from near and far reunite to welcome the newest member of their "club," reminisce on an afternoon harbor cruise and enjoy photo opportunities at the weigh-in. Come celebrate these incredible women!

Halloween on the Harbor | Saturday, October 31

Wear your costume and join Rodeo captains, anglers, judges, Miss Destin and volunteers for the largest Halloween party on the Destin Harbor!

NOVEMBER 2026

78th Annual Destin Fishing Rodeo Awards | Thursday, November 5, 5:30 p.m.

Anglers, captains and mates will receive awards and prizes at a festive, fun and casual gathering in the downstairs restaurant of AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar!

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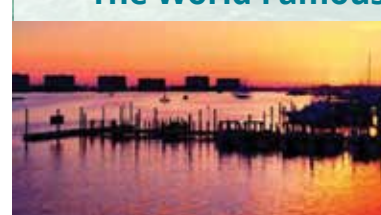
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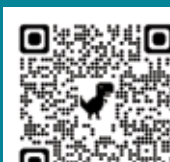



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Meet 2026 Miss Destin Kaylynn Hayles at the Destin Fishing Rodeo!

BY KAYLYNN HAYLES

My name is Kaylynn Hayles, and I am incredibly honored and grateful to serve as your Miss Destin 2026. Being born and raised in Destin, this community has always held such a special place in my heart, and becoming Miss Destin is truly a dream come true. I feel so blessed to represent the town that has shaped me into the person I am today. "One of the biggest parts of my life has always been fishing."

I am the daughter of Eric and Angela Hayles and have an older brother, Maddox, who has always been someone I look up to. Growing up in Destin gave me the opportunity to experience an amazing childhood surrounded by a close-knit community, beautiful beaches and lifelong friendships.

From a young age, I have always loved being involved in the community and participating in activities that helped me grow both as a leader and teammate. I cheered for the Destin Dolphins football team and participated in local dance and gymnastics programs.

Giving back to the community means so much to me. I enjoy volunteering as a coach for the Destin Dolphins and Destin Marlins cheer teams and mentoring younger athletes in the same programs that helped shape me growing up.

Outside of volunteering, I love spending time with family and friends, being out on the water, relaxing at the beach, and taking my dog, Bettie, on walks. I also work two jobs: hostessing at Harbor Docks and making snow cones on the beach with Sunrise Beach Chair Company.

I attended Destin Elementary School and later Destin Middle School, where I became heavily involved in athletics and extracurricular activities. During middle school, I served as president of the fishing club, was a four-year member of the cheer team, and competed on the track and field team for four years. I ran the 800-meter race and threw discus, and one of my favorite memories was qualifying for the state competition in eighth grade with my school's 4x8 relay team.

This upcoming year, I will be a senior at Niceville High School. I am an honors student with a 4.2 weighted GPA and a proud four-year member of the nationally and state-ranked Niceville High School cheerleading team. I am also involved in several organizations including Beach Clean Up Club, National Honor Society, Women in Sports Association, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and Leadership, where I have had the opportunity to give back to the community.

One of the biggest parts of my life has always been fishing.



I grew up spending countless hours on the boat with my dad, whether it was joining him on fishing trips or spending time with my family on our boat. A favorite memory of fishing of mine would be during Harbor Docks Cobia Classic when I was younger and I caught the biggest one out of everyone!

October has always been one of the most exciting times of the year in Destin because of the Destin Fishing Rodeo. I always joke that I was born September 30th, the day before October started, just so I could enjoy all 31 days of rodeo season! I am beyond excited to be part of the 78th Destin Fishing Rodeo and welcome everyone with open arms. Serving as Miss Destin 2026 is an honor I will never take for granted, as I am the luckiest girl in "The World's Luckiest Fishing Village."

Awards:

Miss Destin 2026 + \$5,000

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Bonnie Orr Memorial Award: Estella Scoma
2nd Runner-Up + \$750 Scholarship: Kallie Causton

3rd Runner-Up + \$500 Scholarship: Kendra Quaranto
Most Photogenic Award: Andreia Barcelos
The Nancy Cheney Congeniality Award: Estella Scoma
The Peyton LoCicero-Trist

Humanitarian Award: Estella Scoma
Video Excellence Award: Estella Scoma

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Destin High Seniors Lead Sharks' Football Momentum

By KATIE DUBNIK

Destin High School football players and coaches had a feeling that the 2026 campaign would be momentous. A senior-laden squad, an historic foray into district play, support from a nationally known foundation and playing in memory of an assistant coach — all the ingredients were in place for something special.

So far, coach E.G. Green says the young season is living up to the Sharks' hopes — but maybe not exactly in the way you might think. Destin opened the 2026 campaign 2-1 with lopsided victories over Port St. Joe (53-13) and North Bay Haven Academy (59-37). But, as far as Green is concerned, the outcomes are not what is driving his squad forward. “The 2026 Destin High School football season is about more than wins and losses. For us, this season represents years of work, growth, sacrifice, and belief from a senior class that has helped build the foundation of our football program,” Green said.

After a two-week break due to a scheduling quirk, the Sharks returned to the field Sept. 24 against Pensacola Catholic. No matter what happens from here, Destin High football knows its future is bright, thanks to a group of players determined to leave a lasting imprint. “Both our upperclassmen and underclassmen have continued to hold the high standard we set for ourselves,” said Green, in his fifth season of helping shape a program that began play in 2021. “We are becoming a player-led football team, and that is something we have emphasized since the offseason.”

Leadership has not been in short supply, due in large part to an impressive senior class — 27 of the 53-player roster — that takes pride in building something new. “There is something special about this senior class, and I am proud to have the opportunity to be their head coach,” Green said. “Players such as Chase Wandrick, Jayson Dickerson, Kellen Ramsey, Brody Hipp, Nate Sills, and the



rest of our veteran group have helped set that standard.”

Ramsey's work on the field has been impressive, with 417 passing yards, eight touchdowns and zero interceptions through three games, along with three rushing touchdowns. His leading receiving targets include seniors Jayden Phillips (nine receptions, 102 yards), Wandrick (eight receptions, 120 yards, five touchdowns) and Cameron Kerns (four receptions, 103 yards, two touchdowns). Senior Donnie Couitt leads the rushing attack with 473 yards and four

touchdowns on 40 carries. Destin's defense is also senior-led, with playmakers including Kynlee Cuchens, Hipp, Tristan May, Sills and Dom Ogletree. “They understand that leadership is about being dependable, showing up every day, working when no one is watching, and doing what is best for the team,” said Green, who has instilled a culture centered on hard work, discipline and putting the team first.

That determination has helped Destin High maintain forward momentum through the challenges of creating a new program. “Destin High School football is still a young program, but we're excited about where we are and where we're headed. Since opening our doors in 2021, we've been focused on building the program the right way — developing young men of character, creating a culture of accountability, and establishing a standard that will last for years to come,” Destin High School Athletic Trainer Skylar Walden said. “As with any new program,

there have been challenges, but each season has brought measurable growth in participation, experience, competitiveness, and community support.”

Support has come from many sources over the years, including from outside the program. This summer, Destin football learned it would be one of three high school programs in Florida to receive a fully funded team outfitting from the Taylor Haugen Foundation.

The Sharks received the foundation's full support through its YESS© Program (Youth Equipment for Sports Safety), providing the latest protective gear for each team member, including EvoShield Rib Shirts. “The support meant a great deal to the Destin Football Program. As a young school, every opportunity to provide our athletes with better equipment, resources and experiences makes a difference. More importantly, the Taylor Haugen Foundation represents something much bigger than a

Continued on page 42

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Fort Walton Beach residents will soon be able to find it all under one roof.

Crunch Fitness is transforming the former retail space at 546 Mary Esther Cut Off NW in Longhorn Plaza into a \$5 million, 37,000-square-foot fitness destination that combines the energy, coaching and community of boutique fitness studios with everything members expect from a full-service gym.

Expected to open this winter, Crunch Fort Walton Beach will serve Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Destin and communities around Choctawhatchee Bay, including residents connected to Hurlburt Field and Eglin Air Force Base.

Two of the biggest additions will be Crunch's latest boutique-style fitness concepts. The Crunch Reform Pilates™ Studio will combine instructor-led coaching with integrated digital guidance for a modern reformer Pilates experience, bringing one of today's most popular boutique workouts into a full-service gym without the premium price tag.

The club will also be one of the first to feature the new Crunch Pump™ Strength Studio, a dedicated space for progressive strength training through structured, coach-led programming with integrated digital guidance. Members can build strength, track progress and train in a focused, motivating environment. Both studios are included with Peak Results memberships.

Classes offer more than a great workout. Training alongside others can create community, accountability and commitment. There is an instructor leading the way, people working alongside you and a reason to keep showing up.

It is the kind of experience people often seek from individual boutique studios, but Crunch is bringing multiple ways to train together in one place, without the serious prices that can come with joining several different studios. And the membership doesn't stop at the studio door.

Members will also have access to expansive cardio, strength and functional training areas, Olympic lifting platforms, indoor turf, TRX®, advanced HIIT classes, Power Half Hour circuit training, personal training and Crunch's signature group fitness classes. The Hot Studio will offer heated classes including Hot Yoga, Hot Pilates and other hot fitness formats.

"The Crunch experience is a natural fit for the area's active coastal lifestyle and strong, family-friendly, military-connected community," said Mike Goodsell, Chief Officer for Fit Fusion, the Crunch Fitness franchisee opening the club. "We're bringing together so many different ways to work out, but what makes class-

es special is the community that forms around them. People motivate each other, hold each other accountable and have fun while getting stronger."

Recovery is part of the experience, too. Crunch's Relax & Recover® area will feature HydroMassage® beds, red light therapy and cryotherapy. Members will also find tanning, a sauna, full-service locker rooms with showers and Kid's Crunch babysitting. The club will be open and staffed 24 hours a day, providing flexibility for military members, shift workers, busy parents and anyone with a nontraditional schedule.

Memberships start at \$9.99 per month, and Crunch Fort Walton Beach will offer an exclusive, limited-time promotion for founding members. The first 500 members can join for only \$1 and receive their first month free, a limited-edition founding member T-shirt and free Crunch swag. To become part of the Founding 500, reserve your rate at info.crunch.com. Prospective mem-

bers can also enter to win one of 10 free one-year memberships.

Local businesses can get involved, too. Crunch's Corporate Membership and Perks Partner programs offer employee discounts and opportunities for local businesses to reach Crunch members through the Crunch app, in-club events, gym TVs and social media. Learn more about Crunch partnerships.

Think Crunch sounds like a great place to work? Explore career opportunities with Fit Fusion.

For Fort Walton Beach, the new Crunch will bring Pilates, strength training, hot classes, HIIT, group fitness, a full gym and recovery together in one place, giving the community more ways to find a workout they love, people to do it with and a reason to keep coming back.

To learn more visit: CrunchFortWaltonBeach.com

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Destin High Students Build Futures Through CTE

By KATIE DUBNIK

At Destin High School, the goal for students isn't just success in the classroom – it's success in life. That is why school administrators and teachers have developed a well-rounded curriculum that includes an innovative approach to Career and Technical Education (CTE), including business and cybersecurity instruction.

Destin High School's CTE faculty has honed coursework based on Florida state standards and their own in-depth knowledge, resulting in hands-on, practical training designed

to deliver academic and career success. "We believe that Career and Technical Education offers a type of instruction that is both unique and can make an immediate impact in the lives of our students. That's why the leadership at Destin High wants to make sure that we offer CTE courses that are not only fun for students but valuable in terms of life and career skills," said Dr. Willy Williams, executive director of Destin High School (DHS). "Our CTE teachers are fully supportive of our mission, and that's why they go out of their way to design courses that

are informative and fun. Their whole goal is to help our students excel in life and prepare them for success."

Destin High CTE teachers Kelly Tucker (business) and Jimaco (JC) Hollis (cybersecurity) continually assess and adapt their curricula to changes in their respective fields. "Every summer we analyze our program. We ask how the job market is developing and try to determine where our students will be in four to five years," said JC Hollis. "Most schools teach cybersecurity as it is/was. We teach it as it will be, so

our students walk out the door both college-ready and job-ready. The coursework never sits still, and we rebuild every summer; it keeps me sharp and keeps students on the edge of what's real."

Tucker also believes the key for her students is an innovative and responsive lesson plan based on the realities of the modern marketplace. "What makes teaching business courses especially rewarding is the opportunity to connect classroom learning to the real world," Tucker said. "Whether I'm teaching entrepreneurship, marketing, business management, or leadership, I want my students to understand that business is more than textbooks, terminology, and assignments."

After spending more than 20 years in corporate roles and earning a master's degree in business management and leadership, Tucker understands what it takes to succeed in the business world. She uses hands-on projects, digital textbooks, online simulations and coaching from industry professionals in her classes. Students also have the chance to gain three transferable college credits and test for industry certifications. "I decided to make a very intentional career transition into education. I wanted to take the knowledge, experiences, successes, and even lessons learned from my years in the business world and use them to help prepare the next generation for their own professional journeys," Tucker said. "I am now in my fifth year teaching business education here, and I can honestly say that I love what I do."

Tucker also serves as the school's liaison for Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), where students develop leadership skills and participate in competitive events. DHS's FBLA chapter recently completed its statewide competition in Orlando and earned the "Gold Seal Chapter Award" for its accomplishments. "The talent level at state this year was insane, but I can honestly say that this group showed up and showed



out in support of each other," Tucker said. "We are making waves and others are taking note! I am beyond proud of this group of business Sharks!"

Destin High students are putting their knowledge to work, starting businesses such as lawn care companies, waste bin washing services and apparel design. Two Shark alumni have already found success with their own companies: Kaison Maufrey runs golf cart rental business Hi Tide Rentals, and Ella Harris opened the online Alice Faith Boutique.

Upon realizing her dream, Harris contacted Tucker to thank her, telling her former teacher, "You are the one who inspired me to pursue this journey, so I thought I should tell you! Thank you for all you did for me through school and the insight you shared." Harris's boutique can be found at alicefaith.com.

Tucker expects an eager group of 30-plus students in her 2026-27 entrepreneurship class.

Meanwhile, Destin High's cybersecurity program is only in its second year. Launched in fall 2025 with a \$100,000 Florida CAP workforce grant, DHS's cybersecurity pathway is built around four domains: cyber defense and detection engineering, AI security and governance, intelligent infrastructure and quantum fundamentals. "Our cybersecurity program follows Florida's Applied Cybersecurity pathway, and that alone puts our students in rare company," Hollis said. "Nationally, only about one percent of high school students have access to a complete cybersecurity pathway. At Destin High, 100 percent of our students do. Our goal is simple: students graduate with real, verifiable skills, not just exposure.

Continued on page 46

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Better Sleep with Bioidentical Hormone Pellets



By DR. RICHARD CHERN

Getting enough quality sleep is essential for physical health, emotional well-being, memory, and daily energy. Yet, sleep problems become increasingly common as men and women age, particularly when natural hormone levels begin to change. Bioidentical hormone therapy (BHRT) helps improve sleep by addressing hormonal imbalances and symptoms that interfere with restful sleep.

Bioidentical hormones are designed to have a molecular structure identical or very similar to hormones naturally produced by the body. Depending on an individual's needs, hormone therapy may involve estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, or a combination of hormones. Treatment should be individualized based on symptoms, medical history, laboratory blood testing, and an assessment of potential risks and benefits.

How Hormones Affect Sleep

Hormones play an important role in regulating the body's sleep-wake cycle. Changes in hormone levels can contribute to nighttime awakenings, difficulty falling asleep, reduced sleep quality, and daytime fatigue.

For women, declining estrogen and progesterone during perimenopause and menopause can contribute to hot flashes, night sweats, anxiety, and other symptoms that disrupt sleep. Estrogen therapy reduces hot flashes and night sweats, potentially allowing women to sleep more consistently. Progesterone may also have calming effects on the nervous system and has been studied for its potential influence on sleep.

Men can experience changes in testosterone levels as they age. Low testosterone may be associated with fatigue, changes in mood, reduced energy, and other symptoms that can affect overall sleep and quality of life. For men with clinically confirmed testosterone deficiency, testosterone replacement therapy improves certain symptoms and, in some cases, sleep-related quality of life.

An Individualized Approach

For individuals whose sleep difficulties are related to changing hormone levels, properly

managed hormone therapy may be one part of a comprehensive approach to better sleep. Combining appropriate medical treatment with healthy sleep habits, regular physical activity, stress management, and evaluation for sleep disorders can provide a

more complete strategy for improving restorative sleep.

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A Superior Mechanical Hosts Second Veterans & First Responders Event

Okaloosa and Walton communities are coming together again to give recognition and thanks to our first responders, veterans, and active military. A Superior Mechanical will hold its inaugural Veterans and First Responders Appreciation Lunch at the Niceville Community Center, 204 Partin Drive North, Niceville 32578 on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please save the date!

During the event, A Superior Mechanical will donate a new Hot Water Heater complete with installation to one First Responder or Veteran in need. This giveaway is open to all who have served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and all first responders including

EMT/Medics, Police, Sheriffs and Fire Fighters. Register to win at ASuperiorMechanical.com and go to About Us > HVAC Giveaway.

The event includes a delicious hot lunch catered by Swiftly Catered, a brief welcome from the sponsors and supporters, and the Hot Water Heater. This event is supported and sponsored by the City of Niceville and Niceville Community Center, Niceville High School (who will present the colors), Rocky Bayou Christian School (who will sing the National Anthem), Walton and Okaloosa County businesses are encouraged to sponsor; for more information contact Marta Thorpe at (850) 814-3822.

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Wellness

Self-Care Corner: **It's Peel Season!**

By KRISY ANDERSON, OWNER,
BEVERLY HILLS DAY SPA

Fall is here, and while we may not see dramatic changes in the leaves along the Emerald Coast, our skin definitely knows summer is over! Months of sunshine, heat, humidity, sunscreen

and outdoor fun can leave skin looking dull, uneven or simply ready for a refresh.

That's one reason fall is known as "peel season"—and one of the treatments I'm excited about is **BioRePeelCl3**, an Italian-developed professional peel designed to improve the appearance and texture of the skin with minimal downtime.

When people hear "chemical peel," they sometimes picture days of redness, heavy peeling and hiding at home. BioRePeelCl3 takes a different approach. Its biphasic formula contains trichloroacetic acid (TCA), along with amino acids, vitamins and antioxidants, and is designed to encourage skin renewal without the aggressive visible peeling associated with some traditional peels.

The treatment itself takes approximately 15 minutes and is needle-free. While individual experiences vary, downtime is generally minimal, although some people may experience temporary light flaking as the skin renews.

What can it help with?

BioRePeelCl3 may be used to address concerns such as sun damage and photoaging, hyperpigmentation, melasma, acne and acne scarring, enlarged pores, uneven texture and signs of aging. It can also be used simply as a glow treatment when your skin needs a little pick-me-up.

And BioRePeelCl3 isn't just for the face. There are two formulations with different treatment areas:

- **BioRePeelCl3 Blue** is a 30% modulated TCA formulation designed for the face, neck and décolleté.

- **BioRePeelCl3 Gold** is a 50% modulated TCA formulation intended for areas of the body, including the hands, elbows, knees, feet and buttocks.

Although you may notice a brighter, smoother appearance after one treatment, a series is typically recommended for more significant concerns. The suggested protocol is four to six treatments spaced seven to 14 days apart, depending on your

skin and your goals.

One thing I particularly like is that BioRePeelCl3 can be incorporated into a broader skin care plan rather than being treated as a one-size-fits-all solution. A professional consultation can help determine which treatment—and which formulation—is appropriate for you.

As we trade beach days for cooler weather and start looking ahead to holiday parties, family photos and special gatherings, this is a wonderful time to give some attention back to the skin that carried you through another Emerald Coast summer.

After all, self-care sometimes means shedding a little of the old and making room for something fresh. And what better season for that than fall?

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ACUPUNCTURE

continued from page 4

remarkably fine and meticulously placed.

Facial rejuvenation acupuncture

is considerably more sophisticated than placing a few needles around a wrinkle. Precise needling creates controlled stimulation within the tissues, supporting local circulation and

the body's normal tissue-repair response. Research continues to explore its potential influence on skin elasticity and other features associated with facial aging.

This is typically a progressive approach, with sessions building upon one another as the practitioner monitors the response over time. It may appeal to someone noticing that stress, hormonal changes and time are showing differently in the mirror—or someone interested in complementing an established aesthetic or skin-health routine.

Eastern medicine brings an interesting perspective to aesthetics: the face does not exist independently from the person attached to it. Sleep, chronic stress, hormonal transitions, nutrition and overall health eventually show up in how we look and feel. The goal is not to make someone look like a different person, but to support the face while still paying attention to the whole person.

Herbal Medicine: More Than "Natural"

No October discussion of Eastern medicine would be complete without a few herbs.

Continued on next page

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We want to THANK our patients in Destin and surrounding areza for the opportunity and privilege of being your family physicians. We've been in this community for years, and we are STILL here serving the community.

For many people, the ideal physician knows them well, takes time to listen, and partners with them to achieve long-term health. That vision is at the heart of the new MDVIP-affiliated practice led by Dr. Chris Pappas and Dr. John Loudermilk, two highly respected family physicians who have served the Des-

tin community since 2012 and 2021, respectively. They're accepting new patients.

Located in the heart of Destin, we built the practice on a simple but powerful philosophy: healthcare should be personal, proactive and focused on prevention. We're limiting our practice size so we can spend more time with each patient and provide individualized attention, which is difficult to achieve in a traditional primary care setting.

For Dr. John Loudermilk, helping people pursue lifelong wellness has always been a driving force in his medical career.

His approach centers on building meaningful relationships with patients and understanding each person's unique health goals.

"My mission is to partner with you to help you build a foundation of lifelong wellness, not just help you address sickness." — Dr. John Loudermilk

Dr. Loudermilk has a special interest in adult and geriatric medicine, chronic disease management, sports medicine and chronic pain. He believes prevention should be the cornerstone of care, helping patients identify health risks early and take meaningful steps toward

healthier, longer lives.

Dr. Chris Pappas brings a wealth of experience to the community, including board certifications in family medicine and primary care sports medicine, as well as service in the U.S. Army. His philosophy is rooted in restoring what he believes is the true essence of medicine: a compassionate relationship between doctor and patient.

"I consider myself your personal medical advisor, with a responsibility to educate you and partner with you on medical decision-making. I believe one size most definitely does not fit all." — Dr. Chris Pappas

Together, Drs. Pappas and Loudermilk are creating a practice environment where everyone can focus on wellness and disease prevention. Patients benefit from the MDVIP Wellness Program, which includes advanced screenings, diagnostic testing and personalized wellness planning designed to detect potential health concerns earlier.

As added conveniences, members enjoy unhurried same- or next-day appointments with minimal waiting. You can also reach the doctors after hours for urgent needs. Our goal is to provide a healthcare experience that is both highly personal and deeply responsive.

ACUPUNCTURE

continued from previous page

Botanical medicine has deep roots across Eastern traditions, where plants may be used individually or combined into carefully constructed formulas. Plants contain biologically active compounds, which is precisely why species, preparation, sourcing, formulation and dose matter.

Herbal medicine may provide additional support alongside conventional care or offer another avenue when certain options are limited or poorly tolerated. That does not mean ignoring pathology. Good integrative care respects diagnosis, appropriate testing and conventional treatment while continuing to ask what else may reasonably support the individual.

At Tortoise Clinic, our in-

house dispensary includes raw Chinese herbs, carefully selected formulas, professional-grade supplements and targeted nutrients. It supports individualized patient protocols and is also open to the public.

Cupping: An Old Practice with Modern Appeal

Cupping has been used for centuries and has found a modern audience in sports, physical recovery and wellness settings.

Traditional fire cupping may be dramatic to watch, but the flame is removed before the glass cup is placed on the body and never touches the skin. Contemporary methods create a similar lifting effect without fire.

Unlike the downward pressure of massage, cupping lifts the tissues and may be incorporated for muscular tension, mobility, restriction, discom-

fort or recovery after physical activity. Whether it is a golfer maintaining shoulder mobility, a runner recovering from training or someone carrying years of tension through the neck and back, cupping offers another tool within a broader approach to movement and recovery.

Eastern medicine can appear mysterious from the outside. There are needles, unfamiliar herbs, glass cups and occasionally even fire. Behind them is a long history of observation, individualized care and an evolving body of research.

For me, the interesting part is not choosing between Eastern and Western medicine. It is

understanding where each has something meaningful to offer and when they can complement one another.

So, this October, save the fear for the haunted houses and scary movies. The needles are tiny. Fire is optional. And the herbs are far more sophisticated than a bubbling cauldron might suggest.

Dr. Karen DeVore is the owner of Tortoise Clinic in Santa Rosa Beach, a multidisciplinary clinic bridging Eastern and Western perspectives and providing the North Florida community with thoughtful, individualized, whole-person care.

The practice offers residents of Destin, Fort Walton Beach and surrounding communities the opportunity to develop a closer, more collaborative relationship with a physician committed to helping patients thrive at every stage of life.

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Drs. Pappas and Loudermilk are currently accepting new patients. They accept Medicare, Tricare For Life, and most major health insurance carriers. Learn more by visiting mdvip.com/PappasMD or mdvip.com/LoudermilkMD.



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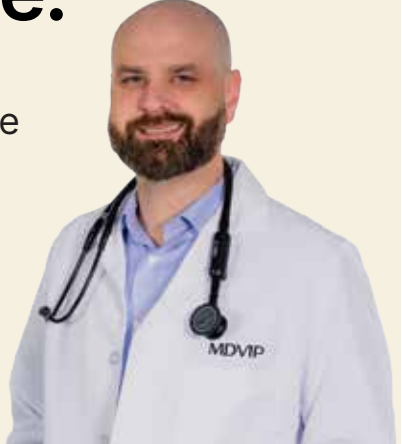
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More Than a Smile: Why Oral Health Matters



BY KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, CERTIFIED NUTRITION AND SKIN ADVISOR

The oral cavity, aka the mouth, is a crucial part of the body's health system. Most of us enjoy going to the dentist (a white lie). It is recommended to go every six months for a cleaning and checkup. The results of

these checkups reveal how well we have done our part in keeping our mouths healthy.

Let's look at some facts:

We swallow about 140 billion bacteria daily, which seeds our gastrointestinal tract.

We carry around trillions of microscopic bugs that live in and on our bodies, including the skin, gastrointestinal tract and mouth.

The mouth is the primary entrance to the digestive system.

Our oral microbiome influences health and disease in many other body systems.

The mouth is home to the second most diverse population of microbes in the body, and the health of these microbes is linked to heart disease, joint

health, diabetes and digestive disorders. Because of the world we live in and what we eat, our mouths are exposed to potentially harmful bacteria every day. If our mouths are healthy (microbes in good balance), they help us form a strong defense against infection and illness.

When our mouths aren't up to par, they can allow potentially harmful bacteria into the bloodstream and are commonly associated with cavities, bad breath, gingivitis and periodontal disease. Note: Oral pathogens can colonize for life, leak into blood vessels and circulate throughout the body. This can result in many systemic diseases elsewhere in the body. Back in the day (way back), I was a Certified Dental Assistant with expanded duties. We would see patients who had been sent to us by their doctors

to bring their oral cavities back to a healthy state. However, unless the patient takes responsibility for their part, their results will be short-lived.

Most of us know what we should be doing, but do we know what we should be avoiding? Let's take a look:

- I recommend avoiding anti-bacterial toothpaste as well as those containing fluoride, as I believe these can disrupt the balance of our microbiome system.
- Mouthwashes can destroy our beneficial microbes.
- Work on not breathing through your mouth. Many of us unconsciously breathe through our mouths when we are winded, stressed, etc.
- Begin moving to natural oral health products.

- Consume probiotic-rich foods: plain yogurt (unsweetened), sauerkraut, pickles that are naturally fermented, etc.

A healthy lifestyle also contributes to oral health. This includes avoiding processed sugars, fast food, etc. Include a diet rich in fiber and veggies, as they are high in prebiotics (food for your beneficial microbes). Yes, we need to feed the good bacteria, and our guts are not the only area that needs our attention.

Lastly, take time to floss and brush (soft bristles) properly each morning and evening. Be sure to brush your gums as well as your teeth. Don't use a lot of pressure, as this can harm your gums and wear the tooth enamel. If you see blood when you floss, this is a sign that your gums need extra attention. Did you know that your teeth are not attached to bone but are attached via ligaments? If your gums remain in an unhealthy state, these ligaments can be destroyed, causing the need for extractions. AND, if you don't own a tongue scraper, you can pick one up at Walmart. You will be amazed at what hides in the spaces of your tongue. That is why dentists check your tongue, as it gives them clues into the health of your oral cavity. Start from the back of your tongue and scrape toward the tip. Another thing you can add during the day is a G-U-M brush. This will help remove food between the teeth and aid in keeping your gums clean between brushings.

We normally think of our smiles when it comes to our mouths. It's time to work at making your gut smile, too.

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Sprinkle Genuine, Heartfelt Apologies



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

Think of a time when someone hurt you. Maybe they did not show up for you when you needed them or they took their anger out on you. Maybe they said something mean or did something careless that made more work for you. Now, think about what you needed from them to feel restored to a place of connection in the relationship. Did you need them to acknowledge what happened, the role they played, and how it negatively impacted you? Did you need to hear that they cared about your feelings and would make an effort to change? Did you need an apology?

Apologizing is directly acknowledging with words intentional or unintentional hurt caused by your behavior and committing to make genuine efforts to reduce or eradicate the hurtful behavior in future interactions without blaming the other person. Good apologies include genuine remorse, clear taking of responsibility, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, validation of feelings, and do not make qualifications or excuses for the behavior. Genuine apologies differ from unnecessary apologizing about things that don't warrant an apology like sneezing, asking for help, getting bumped into by someone, or saying no. Genuine apologies are not insincere or falling on the sword to avoid conflict. Genuine apologies are the acknowledgement of your real behavior that caused problems or hurt for another.

It's often easier to notice times you need someone else to take responsibility for their hurtful behavior than it is to notice times you need to take responsibility for your hurtful behavior. Though important, genuine apologies are difficult for many people. About 1/4 of

Americans surveyed found it difficult to offer a genuine apology. Close to 1/2 of Americans surveyed reported their apologies "rarely" or "sometimes" being genuine. Avoiding apologies reflects difficulty embracing your human fallibility. Despite your best efforts, you will hurt someone else whether you mean to or not. In light of this reality, you have an opportunity to embrace the emotionally mature skill of humble self evaluation. Try asking questions like: Is it possible I was accidentally hurtful even if my intentions were not hurtful? Can I give someone else the space to have an emotional experience that might be different from mine? Is insisting I am right more important than how the other person is experiencing me in the relationship?

Apologies can make or break a relationship. 1 in 5 people report having lost a relationship, because they refused to apologize. You can be self-righteous, "right," and have disconnection in your relationships. Or, you can master genuine apologizing and experience deeper connection and higher self-awareness. I often say to my clients, "Don't be stingy with genuine apology; instead sprinkle authentic apologies generously like sprinkles on ice cream." Sprinkling genuine apologies helps marriages, friendships, parent/child relationships, sibling relationships, work relationships—all relationships. So, how do you improve at making genuine apologies?

Seven ways to Become Skilled at Sprinkling Genuine Apologies

1. Listen humbly. When someone tells you your behavior

has been hurtful or problematic, try listening to them. Give others space to have an emotional experience that does not match your intentions.

2. Step away from defensiveness. Notice your urge to immediately interrupt, defend, or explain your intention and behavior. Instead, try reminding yourself that you will have time to clarify your intentions at a later moment if needed.

3. Validate. Genuinely try to understand how the other person experienced your behavior. Use words that indicate you can see how they might have experienced your behavior differently than you intended. Validation is not agreement. It is making space for someone to have a valid, different experience from your own.

4. Reflect. Is it possible I was hurtful either intentionally or unintentionally? Is there some responsibility I need to take? Am I prioritizing being right over connection?

5. Map your apology using the following template: I apologize for _____. I should not have done that. I can see that my behavior hurt you and your feelings matter to me. I will work on handling this differently in the future. An example might be, "I apologize for using mean words and taking my anger out on you. That wasn't okay. I can understand why you felt hurt and our relationship is important to me. I will work on using more kindness and patience in the future."

6. Refrain from saying, "I'm sorry, but..." For example, "I'm sorry I yelled at you, but if you had listened to me the first 3 times I asked you, I would

not have had to yell at you." Try remembering that you are ultimately in charge of how you behave and respond. Blaming the other person for your poor response negates the apology.

7. Change the behavior.

Put effort into actually working on what you said you would do differently in the future. Apologies lose their effectiveness when hurtful behavior is repetitive without change.

While embracing the skill of genuine apologizing can feel uncomfortable, it is also very freeing to take responsibility for



your behavior. No one needs to be perfect. However, we do all need connection. And, connection feels safer in the presence of authentic, heartfelt apology. Connect with us along your journey for counseling and coaching at Journeybravely.com.



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Don't Let Your Guard Down Yet: Is Your Community's Internet Storm-Ready?

BY DON CARTER, SECURE VISION
Along the Emerald Coast, October brings a welcome change. The summer crowds begin to thin, temperatures become more comfortable, and many of our communities settle into a quieter rhythm. But,

there is one thing we shouldn't pack away just yet: hurricane preparedness.
Hurricane season officially continues through November 30, and Northwest Florida residents know storms don't always follow the calendar we would prefer. For condominium and HOA boards, this is a good time to take another look at something that has become essential infrastructure: reliable internet connectivity.
Years ago, losing internet service might have been considered an inconvenience. Today, residents rely on it to work from home, communicate with family, receive weather updates, operate security and smart-home systems, and access important information. During severe weather, staying connected becomes even more important.
A good place for boards to begin is understanding how the community network is designed and where vulnerabilities may

exist. What happens if power is interrupted? Is critical network equipment protected by backup power? Does your provider have a plan for restoring service after a major weather event? And does management know exactly whom to contact when something goes wrong?
These questions are much easier to answer before a storm approaches.
October is also a good time to look back at the busy summer season. Did residents experience slowdowns during high occupancy? Were there areas where WiFi coverage was inconsistent? Did management receive recurring complaints? Those experiences can help identify where improvements may be needed.
For many coastal communities, fall is also budget-planning season. Internet infrastructure deserves a place in those discussions. Planning ahead gives boards time to understand costs, compare solutions and make thoughtful decisions rather than



reacting when equipment fails or residents become frustrated.
At Secure Vision, we work with condominium and HOA communities throughout Northwest Florida to help boards understand their connectivity needs and develop solutions appropriate for their properties.
October may feel like the beginning of our quieter season, but hurricane season isn't over yet. A little preparation now can help keep your community connected when staying informed matters most.
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Sean of the South: AI



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Right now, the news media is in an uproar over AI. The headlines are bleak. Experts are saying our cherished way of life is in danger. Pretty soon, if things keep going this direction, they say we will lose basic human abilities, such as empathy, sustained focus, and the ability to spel withot autocorrek.

And while I know I'm supposed to be terrified of AI, I'm not worried. Namely, because right now, I'm busy watching "The Dog House."

"The Dog House" is a TV series about people who adopt pets in Godmanchester, England. The show documents stories of animal rescues from the Wood Green Pets Charity, and it is crack for dog lovers.

After a few moments of watching, you're rooting for families, for rescues, for the rescue staff, and you've finished

two bags of Chili Cheese Fritos. This show is nearly perfect. On the "International Sean Dietrich Adorable-TV Scale," a scale ranging from 1 to 10 (with 10 being, say, "Lilo & Stitch," and one being "A Clockwork Orange"), "The Dog House" receives a score of 632,348.

This is because the show is positive. Have you ever tried practicing positivity? Have you ever actively been positive for a full 24 hours?

Yes. I know. Some see positivity as willful ignorance. Others see positivity as pure stupidity. But personally, I have always seen positivity as a five-syllable word.

Even so, positivity is not just ANY five-syllable word such as "geometrical," "vegetarian," or "Lithuania." Those are regular five-syllable words. No, positivity is real.

Everything in this world is made of energy. If you were to magnify any object to the atomic level, you'd see only waves or particles. Many particles carry an electrical charge.

That chair in the corner is really just energy. The phone you're holding: Energy. The crumpled Frito-Lay bag lying next to you on the sofa: Also energy.

So, in electrical terms, "pos-



itivity" actually means something different than you might think.

Let's go back to high-school physics class for a moment. Quit doodling in your history textbook and altering that image of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, you pervert. Let's talk about electrical circuits.

Recall that an electrical circuit won't work if each point carries the same voltage. Take your house. Light and power only happen in your home when there is a potential difference between high points (positives) and low points (negatives).

Now apply this to life in general.

Daily life is filled with high and low points. A high point in your day might be finding \$50 in your coat pocket, whereas a low point would be, for example, undergoing an IRS audit that lasts about as long as dental school—not that this has ever happened to me.

Positive thinking isn't about pretending low points don't exist. Hardship, frustration, grief, disaster—those things happen. But in electrical terms, these low points offer low electrical potential.

You CAN'T get an electrical current flowing if you're not positively charging your circuit.

So, once again, sticking with electrical jargon:

If you deal with the low points, but actively aim for the high points, you will generate a current. The current will start small. But it will build. Because that's what energy does. It grows.

The more positivity you build, the more positive the people around you will become. One electrical current can spread across the world. Across the universe. Across time and space. Touching nearly every human on the planet.

If, however, you only focus on low points, you're—electrically speaking—dead. Like a dead electrical outlet. Or a dead toaster oven.

Over time, your body and mind will become so lethargic you'll require energy from external sources to survive. Other people in your life can feed you positive energy for a little while, but not forever.

Ultimately, you'll drain your loved ones until their batteries are almost dead, too. Pretty soon, THEY'LL become negatively charged. Your negativity will alter them. Their negativity will alter THEIR loved ones. And the negativity loop will get bigger and bigger, affecting more and more people, until there's nothing left on this Earth but AI.



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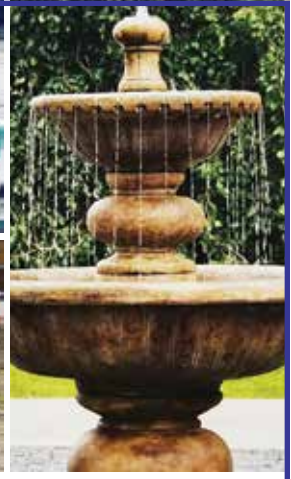
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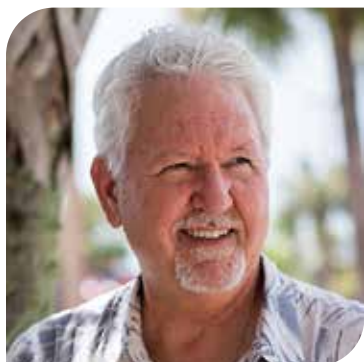


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BY PASTOR DAVE HOLLAND

“David calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” Luke 20:44 (NIV)

What does this passage tell us about Jesus? What does it say about me?

The Jewish people knew the Messiah would come from David’s family line. Throughout the Gospels, desperate people cried out to Jesus, “Son of David,” pleading for healing and mercy. But, Jesus wanted them to look higher.

The religious leaders knew their Scriptures. They understood theology and could debate doctrine. Yet, all that knowledge did not enable them to recognize the One standing directly in front of them. They saw a teacher from Nazareth. Jesus wanted them to see the Lord.

Christ pointed them to Psalm 110, where David wrote, “The

A Pastor’s Ponderings: Who Gets the Glory?

Lord said to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”

Then Jesus asked the obvious question: If David calls the Messiah “Lord,” how can the Messiah merely be David’s son? Jesus is David’s son—and David’s Lord. He is fully human and fully divine. He walked dusty roads, became hungry, grew tired, and wept. Yet He is also the eternal King who sits at the right hand of the Father.

Luke’s Gentile readers lived beneath the shadow of Rome, where Caesar claimed enormous authority. But Jesus was a different kind of King.

Caesar could command an army. Jesus commanded the wind.

Caesar could occupy a nation. Jesus could forgive sins.

Caesar demanded allegiance. Jesus transformed human hearts.

And that brings this passage painfully close to home.

I remember the rude awakening I experienced as a young believer when I discovered Jesus was not only my Savior from sin—He was also my present Lord. I liked the Savior part. The Lord part was more challenging. I wanted Jesus to forgive

me, bless me, protect me, and eventually take me to heaven. But Jesus wanted something more. He wanted me.

He wanted to lead my decisions, shape my behavior, govern my relationships, redirect my ambitions, and confront the attitudes nobody else could see. Following Jesus meant more than believing something about Him. It meant surrendering myself to Him.

Over 55 years have passed since I first trusted Christ. I’ve earned seminary degrees and spent about forty years in pastoral ministry. I’ve preached sermons, led churches, studied Scripture, and accumulated a lifetime of Christian experience. And, I have discovered something uncomfortable: I can still make it about me.

That is why Jesus’ warning about the teachers of the law troubles me. They enjoyed respectful greetings, important seats, and being recognized as spiritual men.

I don’t wear flowing robes. But I understand the temptation. I enjoy being respected. I appreciate someone remembering a sermon or telling me something I did help them. There

is nothing wrong with encouragement. The danger begins when I start needing it.

Serving Jesus can quietly become wanting people to notice me serving Jesus. The ministry becomes my ministry. The accomplishment becomes my accomplishment. The story becomes my story. Almost without noticing, the servant moves toward the center while Jesus moves toward the edge. That is spiritual pride.

Perhaps the temptation becomes even more subtle as we grow older. We have accumulated accomplishments, titles, possessions, relationships, disappointments, and memories. We worked hard, raised families, built careers, served churches, survived losses, and learned some things the hard way. We have a history. And history can become either an altar where we thank God for His faithfulness—or a trophy case where we admire ourselves.

Jesus reminds me I am not the main character of my story. He is. My life has never really been about what I accomplished for Jesus. It is about what Jesus, in His mercy, has done in and through me. That changes the

way I want to finish my life.

I don’t need a better seat at the banquet. I want to sit closer to Jesus. I don’t need people to remember my name. I want my children and grandchildren to remember His. I don’t need another title. I want to hear Him say, “Well done.”

The scribes wanted people looking at them. Jesus tells us to look higher—past the titles, accomplishments, applause and ourselves.

There, seated at the right hand of the Father, is the Son of David—the Lord of David and the Lord of us all.

The longer I walk with Him, the more I want my life to say one simple thing: Less of me. More of Jesus.

Dave Holland pastored churches for thirty-eight 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.



DHS SHARKS

continued from page 32

donation – it stands for character, leadership and putting athletes first,” Walden said. “Knowing that an organization with those values believes in our players is incredibly meaningful, and we’re grateful for their investment in our program and our student athletes.”

The Taylor Haugen Foun-

dation was created to honor the memory of 15-year-old Niceville High School student-athlete Taylor Haugen, who died after sustaining a traumatic abdominal injury during a football game in 2008. Its mission is to protect, inspire and educate young athletes through initiatives such as the YESS© Program, which promotes awareness of abdominal injuries and provides advanced protective equipment to young athletes.

The foundation also recognizes and supports outstanding scholar-athletes through scholarships and awards. “We’re honored to partner with the Sharks program to help protect their student-athletes for the football season,” said Ashley Sallee, Director of Programs & Community Development for the Taylor Haugen Foundation. To learn more about the Taylor Haugen Foundation, visit taylorhaugen.org.

While the foundation’s support has been a positive presence, the Sharks are also playing the 2026 season with a greater sense of purpose following the offseason passing of former assistant coach Eric Divens. “We have dedicated this season to coach Divens, which has given our team an even greater sense of purpose,” Green said. “Coach Eric Divens was my brother, a best friend and trusted member of my staff, inner

circle and my family. Our players loved coach Divens, and we miss him every day.”

As the season continues, the Sharks hope to maintain the positive momentum that marked their opening weeks. “Football is deeply rooted in Florida communities. So, for a program that’s only a few years old, the support we’ve received has been incredible,” Walden added. “Our students, families, alumni, local businesses and community members have embraced what we’re building from day one. To also have organizations like the Taylor Haugen Foundation recognize our program is both humbling and encouraging. It reinforces that we’re building something special—not just in terms of football, but in developing young men who represent our school and community the right way. “We know we’re still writing the history of Destin High School football; that’s part of what makes this program special. Every season brings new milestones and opportunities to build something lasting.”



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BY CAMERON HUGHES

October is the perfect time for a murder mystery, and Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is bringing plenty of intrigue to the stage with *The 39 Steps*, running October 15–25 at Grand Boulevard.

Based on Alfred Hitchcock's

A Comedically Fun Murder Mystery Hits the ECTC Stage This October

classic thriller, *The 39 Steps* combines murder, espionage and romance in an adventure filled with rapid-fire comedy. Four actors take on more than 150 characters as one ordinary man finds himself caught in an extraordinary chase filled with twists, turns and laughs, making for a fun night out this fall.

Lovers of last season's Mur-

der on the Orient Express will find plenty to enjoy in this fast-paced thriller, including the return of audience favorite Hayes Mercure. After keeping audiences guessing as American businessman Samuel Ratchett, Hayes returns to the ECTC stage in *The 39 Steps* for another suspenseful adventure, this time on a deadly pursuit

through the Northern European countryside.

Following *The 39 Steps*, ECTC heads into the holidays with its third production of *Season 14, Million Dollar Quartet Christmas*, running December 3–20. Featuring the music of Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Elvis Presley, this high-energy holiday cele-

bration combines rock 'n' roll classics with Christmas favorites for a festive night of live music, nostalgia and holiday spirit.

Performances of *The 39 Steps* run October 15–25 at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, located at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach. Tickets and more information are available at emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

Follow the Yellow Brick Road with Sinfonia Gulf Coast

Follow the Yellow Brick Road — under the stars — as Sinfonia Gulf Coast opens the Main Event concert series of its 21st season with *The Wizard of Oz: Film in Concert* Saturday, Oct. 17, at 7 p.m. at the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Dugas Pavilion in Destin.

For generations, *The Wizard of Oz* has been more than a movie. For many, it brings back childhood memories of gathering around the family television — perhaps even a black-and-white set — waiting for Dorothy, Toto, the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Cowardly Lion to make their way down the Yellow Brick Road. There was the wonder of Munchkinland, the mystery of the Emerald City, the frightening Wicked Witch and, of course, the first unforgettable notes of “Over the Rainbow.” Now, those memories can be shared with children and grandchildren in an entirely new way.

The beloved 1939 classic will unfold on the big screen as Sinfonia's full professional orchestra performs the score live. Featuring new orchestral transcriptions of Harold Arlen's music alongside Judy Garland's original studio recordings, the outdoor concert offers audiences a chance to experience *Oz* in an entirely new way.

“Film in concert is such an exciting way to experience a symphony orchestra because it brings together two art forms audiences already love and allows them to hear and see them in an entirely new way,” Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller says. “And presenting *The Wizard of Oz* outdoors makes the experience even more special. You have this extraordinary film on the big screen, our full



orchestra performing live and an audience gathered under the stars. It really embodies what we mean by ‘Your symphony ... re-defined.’”

Created by Emmy Award-winning producer John Goberman, producer of *Live From Lincoln Center* and creator of *A Symphonic Night at the Movies*, the production premiered in 2005 to sold-out audiences at Wolf Trap and the Ravinia Festival.

From “Over the Rainbow” and Dorothy's first steps along the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City and beyond, the evening revisits the music and moments that have enchanted generations. *The Wizard of Oz* received six Academy Award nominations, including best picture, while “Over the Rainbow,” composed by Arlen with lyrics by E.Y. Harburg, won the Oscar for best original song.

Lawn seating is \$25 per person, \$15 for students and \$20 for military. Table seating is \$45 per person. Tickets are available at SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or by calling (850) 460-8800.

Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its music education and community engagement initiatives throughout Northwest Florida.

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!

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 Arts & Music

10-Year-Old Launches "The Post Room," A Happy-Mail Club Inspired by a Lifelong Love of Real Mail

Since she was little, local resident Hunter Grace Bakker, known as HG, has been obsessed with checking the mail. Almost every day, she would head to the mailbox hoping there might be something interesting waiting inside. Most of the time, there wasn't. Instead, there were stacks of junk mail, advertisements and bills. For HG, that was always a little disappointing. So, at age 10, she decided to do something about it.

This month, she is launching The Post Room at House of Blueprint, a monthly happy-mail club built around one simple idea: there should be something in the mailbox people are actually excited to open. "I think getting real mail is exciting," HG says. "I want people to open their mailbox and find something that makes them happy."

The idea began taking shape this summer during art camp with Santa Rosa Beach artist Liza Snyder. Snyder's colorful, joyful approach to art made an impression on HG and got her thinking about how much fun it would be to send art, notes and little surprises through the mail.

That idea became The Post Room. Each month, subscribers

receive an envelope mailed from the Emerald Coast filled with art, paper goods and creative surprises. The inaugural October mailing includes a 5-by-7 art print from an artist, sticker, bookmark, postcard or recipe, along with a letter from HG. Every month will be different, and fittingly, the artist who helped inspire the idea will be the first featured.

Liza Snyder Art is the featured artist for the inaugural October mailing. Information about Snyder and her work will accompany her print, giving subscribers another way to discover and connect with a local artist. HG hopes future envelopes will introduce people near and far to artists, makers and creative people from the Emerald Coast while evolving around monthly themes, local inspiration, art and activities.

The October collection draws inspiration from monarch butterflies, honoring and remembering the people who came before us, zinnias and beautiful fall beach days along the Emerald Coast. November will turn toward togetherness, gratitude and family traditions, while December will focus on light, sparkle and simple ways to



spread joy. HG is also getting a little help from her four-legged business partner, Barkley, the family's white Labrador and "Head of House" at House of Blueprint, who will make regular appearances in the monthly mailings.

While the concept is playful, HG has some very real goals for her business. She wants The Post Room to remind people to slow down, make things, write to one another and think about who in their life might need a little extra happy.

A Post Room subscription does not have to be for yourself. HG hopes people will send the club to grandparents, grand-

children, college students away from home, friends going through a difficult season, children who love receiving their own mail or simply someone who deserves a reason to smile when they walk to the mailbox. For \$12.99 per month, subscribers can join or cancel at any time, making it an easy gift for a month, a season or longer.

HG also hopes her business can show other children that they do not have to wait until they are grown up to turn an idea into something real. The Post Room is supported by the team at House of Blueprint, the South Walton-based creative and media house founded by HG's mother, Erin Bakker. "She has always loved checking the mail, and also been consistently disappointed by the fact that most of what shows up is junk mail and bills," said Erin. "This summer, after spending time at art camp with local artist Liza Snyder, she became completely

taken with the idea of 'happy mail' and decided she wanted to create something that would give people that feeling every single month."

HG is involved in the actual work of the business, from developing monthly ideas and choosing creative elements to helping prepare the envelopes that go out to members. "What I love most is that this really is HG's business," Erin said. "The House of Blueprint team is helping her with the grown-up parts, but she is involved in the ideas, themes, contents, artist collaborations and the overall direction."

For HG, it is part business, part creative project and part mission to make the mailbox a little less disappointing. There is also a give-back component built into the club from the beginning. Ten percent of The Post Room proceeds will be donated to Caring & Sharing of South Walton, allowing each subscription to send a little happiness beyond the mailbox, too.

The first Post Room envelopes are scheduled to head out this month, and because membership is ongoing, subscribers can join at any time throughout the year. HG hopes eventually those envelopes travel far beyond South Walton. But, no matter where they land, each one will carry a little piece of the Emerald Coast with it. "I want people everywhere to get happy mail from the Emerald Coast," she says.

For the little girl who spent years checking the mailbox hoping to find something special, The Post Room is her way of making sure somebody else does.

To join and for more information, visit www.houseofblueprint.com/thepostroom.

To Join

Membership: \$12.99/month

Join: Anytime

Cancel: Anytime

First Mailing: October 2026

Based in: South Walton, Florida

Presented by: House of Blueprint

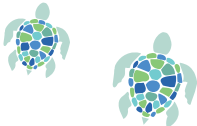
Ten percent of The Post Room proceeds benefit Caring & Sharing of South Walton.

WARRIOR ARTS

continued from page 3

annual Festival of the Arts, Oct. 24-25 at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin. Throughout the weekend, visitors can stop by the Warrior Arts Tent, meet participants and instructors, view artwork created by veterans and service members and try tangling themselves. On Saturday at 2 p.m., Moore and Burkett will take the Dugas Pavilion Stage for “Tangle Time with Melanie & Chief,” a live Zentangle demonstration.

The free festival features more than 100 artists, live entertainment, demonstrations, children’s activities, food and more. Proceeds support ArtsReach. For MKAF, that creates a fitting circle: Come for the art. Discover what art can do. Then help make it accessible to someone else. Attend the Festival, become a member, volunteer or make a gift. After all, your support keeps the Arts FUNded.



10 Reasons to Become
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From free concerts under the stars to a milestone year for Warrior Arts, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) membership makes supporting the arts rewarding—and fun. Since 1995, MKAF has championed arts access in Northwest Florida through presenting programs and ArtsReach initiatives. Membership supports that mission while connecting you to the Emerald Coast’s favorite cultural events. Here are 10 reasons to join.

1. You keep the arts FUN-ded.

Membership supports MKAF’s year-round programming, helping bring art, music and creative experiences to more people throughout Northwest Florida.

2. Warrior Arts celebrates 10 years.

In 2026, this ArtsReach initiative marks a decade of connecting active-duty military members, veterans and their families with art’s transforma-

tive power. Creative experiences, including popular Zentangle classes, encourage expression, connection and healing.

3. Festival of the Arts offers a masterpiece of a weekend.

The 31st annual festival returns Oct. 24–25 to the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village with more than 100 artists, original artwork, live entertainment, artist demonstrations, children’s activities and food. Admission is free.

4. Wine Walkabout is back.

Returning by popular demand Nov. 5, 2026, Wine Walkabout is another reason to gather friends and celebrate the arts. Members enjoy preferred rates on select MKAF events throughout the year.

5. 10,000 Maniacs kicks off the 2027 concert season.

Concerts in the Village opens April 8, 2027, with 10,000 Maniacs. The eight-week series runs through May



27 at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin.

6. All eight concerts are FREE for members.

Pack a picnic, bring a blanket or lawn chair and enjoy eight Thursday nights of live music under the stars with complimentary admission to the entire 2027 series.

7. You get a head start on the fun.

Members receive early concert admission, allowing extra time to set up their VIP table or claim a favorite lawn spot.

8. There’s a membership for everyone.

Four membership categories start at just \$75, with benefits lasting one full year from the date you join.

9. You help inspire the next generation.

ArtsReach serves K–12 students, people with special needs and the military community. Since its inception, MKAF has inspired more than 424,000 children across more than 100 schools and partner agencies.

10. You belong to a creative community.

Join members, volunteers, artists, patrons and sponsors who make live music, visual arts and community outreach possible year after year.

Ready to join? Visit MKAF.org for current membership levels, benefits and pricing, or call (850) 650-2226.



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By PATRICIA LEE, OWNER
First: Our website has received a facelift and added a new feature. Check it out at www.Destinites.com. If you own vacation rental property

or are a property manager, you will want to participate with our showcase. No booking—just promoting. Check out the benefits. In our Facebook group this month (www.Facebook.com/groups/Destinites), I asked members what new business they would like to see come to Destin or the surrounding area. I suggested an indoor golf course like the one they are about to open in the Nashville area (citygolfusa.net). It would certainly take a lot of acreage, but “if you build it, they will come.” Here are some other ideas

- from our group of locals:
1. Fully stocked Caribbean food market
 2. Costco
 3. A concert venue with monthly/bi monthly shows like the wharf in orange beach.
 4. Minor league baseball.
 5. Something like Top Golf or similar.
 6. Trader Joe’s.
 7. I would love to see the Destin Fishing Museum get bigger. I love the interactive stuff that they have out at the Pensacola aviation museum now. I would

- love to see that at the Destin Fishing Museum if it ever gets bigger. Maybe interactive reels with different types of fish on the line and what it would feel like to try to get them in. Maybe virtual stories of different hurricanes or fishing boats from captains.
8. A safe place for dogs to swim indoors year-round.
 9. Sprouts Farmers Market - the closest one is in Tampa.
 10. Indoor family funplex, children’s museum, food hall with green space for different activities.

If you live in Destin or the surrounding area, I invite you to join our targeted Facebook group for locals and property owners at Facebook.com/groups/Destinites. The group serves over 13,000 members and was established in Oct. 2018. Check out our Local Business Directory at www.Destinites.com, where more than 500 local businesses are listed and receive advertising exposure within our targeted community group. See our newly added Vacation Rentals Showcase.

DHS CTE

continued from page 34

Along the way they earn nationally recognized industry certifications through CompTIA, Cisco, Palo Alto Networks, and IT Specialist – the same credentials

that employers use – and every certification is earned at zero cost to families.” During their time in the DHS cybersecurity program, students get to “sniff” live network traffic, crack encryptions and build their own, hack sys-

tems in the lab and study the social engineering tricks attackers use on real people. They build their own AI agents, use AI to attack and defend and even build games. Students learn to code in Python and Bash in the same Linux environments professionals use. In advanced courses, students hunt intrusions, analyze real attack traffic and write detection rules that catch attacks. “It’s the stuff of movies, done for real, safely, in a controlled lab,” said Hollis. “Teaching was always my plan. I spent 20 years in retail management first, and now I get to do my dream job every day.” Hollis endeavors to stay at the forefront of trends in a rap-

idly changing field. “Technology moves too fast for a static curriculum, so we built one designed to move with it.” Cybersecurity is also a growing field. There are more than 514,000 open cybersecurity jobs in the U.S., and the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 29% job growth through 2034 – a rate nearly 10 times the average occupation – with a median salary of \$124,910. Florida is also one of the country’s top cybersecurity hiring states, with job opportunities close to Destin. “With Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, and the defense contracting community in our backyard, our students are sitting on top of the demand,” Hollis said. “A Shark who graduates with certifications and hands-on lab experience

isn’t hoping for an opportunity, they’re walking into one.” For Destin High, CTE is about preparing students to recognize and take advantage of those opportunities. “Our entire CTE faculty works very hard, and you can tell the students get so much out of the curriculum – not only that, but our students also learn in an environment that they truly enjoy. And as an administrator, that’s incredibly gratifying to see,” Williams added. For more information on Destin High School’s CTE curriculum or to learn more about the school, visit destinhighschool.org, call 850-204-4044 or stop by the campus at 4325 Commons Drive West in Destin.

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