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NOVEMBER 2026
VOL. 9, NO. 4

DESTIN Life

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Piece by Piece:
The Making of a Citywide Mosaic

By Dr. Tamara L. Young, Public Information Director for the World's Luckiest Fishing Village



A 3-year-old painted one tile. A 96-year-old painted another. Neither one knew what their small square would turn into. So, they just had to trust that it would fit.

The idea for the project took root in May 2025, more than a year before America turned 250. We wanted to mark the milestone with something lasting and get as many people involved as possible. It was also a chance to color Destin with more art. We talked with other cities that had done similar projects and borrowed some of their best concepts and resources. Then we invited everyone to pick up a paintbrush.

Each painting kit came with a blank tile, 10 paint colors and three paintbrushes. Most kits also had a palette name and instructions: "You are Indigo. Please use these colors in the majority of your painting; no text, no numbers; but other than that, paint whatever you'd like!" And they did. More than 300 locals and over 60 organizations took part, including schools, churches, businesses and nonprofits. Their subjects range from pelicans and ladybugs to an octopus, a snowman, a jellyfish and some impressive abstract designs. The kits went out in waves starting in spring 2026.

A handful of experienced artists were given more specific instructions, like a certain shape or line, so the trickier parts of the image would line up in the end. Many of their tiles show people and moments from American history, including George Washington, the Liberty Bell, Rosa Parks and an astronaut on the moon.

Nearly everyone was working on a puzzle they couldn't see. Each palette belonged to a different part of the design,

MOSAIC
continued on page 3

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Beyond the Uniform:
A Veterans Day Call to Purpose and Community

By Bruce R. Duty, Retired U.S. Army Chaplain, CrossCountry3

As Veterans Day approaches, I find myself thinking about the remarkable men and women who have served our nation in uniform—and especially those who now call Okaloosa County home. From Valparaiso, Niceville and Bluewater Bay to Destin and Fort Walton Beach, veterans are woven into the fabric of our communities. They are our neighbors, business owners, teach-

BEYOND
continued on page 2



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Community

BEYOND

continued from page 1

ers, coaches, pastors, parents and grandparents.

Their service deserves our gratitude. But, perhaps Veterans Day should also remind us that our veterans still have much to offer—and much worth hearing.

Our region has a remarkable military heritage. Nearby Eglin Air Force Base and the Army's 7th Special Forces Group are reminders of those who continue to defend our nation. Many veterans have chosen to make Okaloosa County their home, bringing with them extraordinary experience, leadership, courage, resilience and a willingness to serve.

As a local retired Army chaplain, I understand something of that journey. My military career, including combat deployments to Iraq, allowed me to walk alongside remarkable soldiers and their families. Those experiences reinforced something I have never forgotten: Military service changes you – ordinary men and women serving in extraordinary circumstances.

It teaches discipline, sacrifice, teamwork and the importance of the person standing beside you. It also provides something that can be surprisingly difficult to replace when the uniform comes off—a powerful sense of purpose and belonging.

When military service ends, the mission can suddenly seem less clear. The question quietly becomes, What is my mission now?

Recently, I traveled to Boise, Idaho, where I attended a Mission43 event featuring acclaimed author and journalist Sebastian Junger. His remarkable book, Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging, explores our fundamental need for community, meaningful responsibility, and purpose.

During his presentation, Junger contrasted environments of high consequence and low consequence. Military service often places individuals in situations where their decisions and sacrifices have immediate significance. Returning to civilian life, where that same sense of responsibility may be less obvious, can be difficult.

Junger's message reinforced something I witnessed repeatedly as an Army chaplain: Veterans don't simply need appreciation. They need connection, purpose and opportunities to continue contributing.

One particularly meaningful suggestion Junger makes in Tribe involves communities creating opportunities for veterans to speak openly about their experiences. He encourages gatherings similar to town halls, where veterans can share what they witnessed, what they learned, and what they believe their fellow citizens should understand about military service and war.

I believe that is an idea worth pursuing right here in Okaloosa County. Imagine bringing together veterans from different generations and branches of service—not simply to recognize their accomplishments, but to listen. Some might discuss combat, others the challenges of transitioning to civilian life or lessons learned about leadership, sacrifice, family and friendship. And perhaps some would simply appreciate being heard.



Through CrossCountry3, the nonprofit ministry I lead, I would like to explore hosting such a gathering. I invite Okaloosa County veterans and family members interested in participating to contact me. Perhaps we begin with a simple gathering over coffee and see where it leads. This would not be a political rally or another ceremony filled with speeches, but an opportunity for veterans to speak, neighbors to listen and our community to grow stronger.

Veterans Day is certainly a time to remember and honor those who served. Yet, our responsibility extends beyond saying, "Thank you for your service." We should also be asking, How can we continue serving together? Okaloosa County possesses an extraordinary reservoir of veteran experience, character, leadership and wisdom. Our challenge is not simply to celebrate it, but to engage it.

I firmly believe that retirement from military service does not mean retirement from significance. The uniform may hang in the closet, the rank may belong to our history and the deployments may be over. But the opportunity to lead, mentor, encourage and serve remains. Some of our greatest contributions may still lie ahead.

This Veterans Day, perhaps the greatest way we can honor our veterans is not merely to thank them for what they have done, but to invite them to help shape what our community can become. To my fellow veterans throughout Okaloosa County: Your experiences matter. Your perspective matters. And your voice deserves to be heard.

The military teaches us that every mission eventually comes to an end. But a life of purpose does not.

Perhaps the most important question we can ask this Veterans Day is not simply, What have we done with our lives? It is, What is our mission now?

An Invitation to Okaloosa County Veterans

If you're a veteran interested in participating in a community town hall or informal gathering, I would welcome hearing from you. Let's bring veterans together, share our experiences, and explore how we can continue serving our communities.

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MOSAIC

continued from page 1

and tile by tile, an American eagle and flag began to take shape.

Then, just as the last pieces were coming together, Hurricane Isaias hit in October. Floodwater got into a backyard house shed in Kell-Aire where the mosaic pieces were being laid out and ruined one box of tiles. Thankfully, the rest stayed dry and were ready in time for the Open House less than two weeks later.

Behind The Tiles

Kelly Shultz saw the call for participants on the City's Facebook page and knew right away her 9-year-old daughter would want to do it. "My daughter especially loves art, so I thought it was an awesome opportunity for us to participate as a family, and for her to see her artwork on display," Kelly said.

Kelly, her husband, her daughter and Kelly's mom all painted at home, so three generations of the Shultz family are now on the wall. Kelly's husband painted a sailboat and a whale's tail after a recent family trip to Tonga to swim with whales, and her daughter painted a cross "because she loves all things about Jesus."

Kelly had a harder time deciding. "I'm not artistic at all," she said. "I really struggled with what to do, so I tried several different things before doing a bunch of grapes." Those grapes are now in one of the flag's red stripes.

Kelly has been traveling for work this year and taking art classes in whatever town she lands in. "It's fun to do, and it allows you to interact and get to know others," she said. The mosaic did that here, too. People who had never met now share a wall, and some have been swapping close-up photos of their tiles.

Kim Guy painted a palm tree sunset over the Gulf. "I always say, 'No matter how many times you see a beach sunset, they never get old,'" she said. "I'm always in awe of its many colors. To me, they represent God's peace and beauty."

Yulia Samotaeva's kids painted sea creatures like dolphins and sea turtles. "Since we live on the Emerald Coast, that's their understanding of 'home,'" she said. One of them went a different direction. "One kid decided to paint our kitchen table," Yulia said. "Everyone sees 'home' in a different way!"

Suzy Wiggins went on a mission trip to Uganda earlier this year, and her painting has an African theme. "The scenery in Uganda was absolutely beautiful, and I wanted to continue to keep those memories alive," she said. She also loved seeing so many children involved. "It melts my heart to see the young children participating," she said. "This is what community is all about: bringing the young and old together to encourage one another."

Back To The Brush

Sharon Gardner, Records Management Specialist with the City of Destin, hadn't picked up a paintbrush in years. "This looked like so much fun to be a part of," she said. She painted flowers and balloons, which she called "very satisfying to finish," and her work ended up in the flag's stripes.

What Sharon liked most was that you didn't have to be an artist to take part. "It was an experience open to everyone, no matter their age or talent," she said. "It was a great opportunity to get so many people involved."

Michelle Boswell used to paint, too, but it had been a while. The mosaic gave her "a reason to give back and also to play around with paints again." At her farm north of Destin, where she gets away on weekends during tourist season, she painted a cartoon profile of her late dog, Harley.

"I could tell I was rusty, but it didn't matter," she said. "It was so cool to be a part of a collaborative piece, and then to see that the finished mosaic was to celebrate 250 years of America was a proud moment."

The Big Reveal

The mosaic was unveiled on Wednesday, October 21, at the City's annual Open House during Florida City Government Week. More than 500 people attended, and a lot of them were first-timers who came just to see it.

Kim was one of them. "Waiting for the unveiling of the mosaic, I felt like a child at Christmas waiting to open a present," she said. The finished piece, she added, "far exceeded what I had envisioned."

Sharon has been part of the Open House for nine years and said this one was the best by far. When she saw the mosaic, her reaction was simple: "It was larger than I expected." Understandable, since it's 7 feet tall and 12 feet wide.

Sharon and Kelly both called it "breathtaking." Suzy called it "magical." "I felt honored and proud to be a part of such a historic event," she said.

It's now on display in the Community Center lobby for anyone who wants to step back and see the whole picture or lean in close and look for their own tile.

Yulia loves the mix of work. "You can tell someone really made an effort to make it a piece of art, like they poured their soul into it," she said. "I love how you can see tiles painted by very young children next to super detailed, sophisticated ones by professional artists, and they all come together into one big piece."

That's the beauty of a mosaic. Every piece matters.



Community



You're Not Supposed to Need a Holiday From Your Own Body

By Dr. Karen DeVore

The turkey is not the only thing carrying tension this Thanksgiving.

Your shoulders have been somewhere near your ears since September. Your lower back has opinions about the drive to see family. And the headache you hoped would disappear has invited itself to dinner.

But there are groceries to buy, deadlines to meet, and people counting on you. So you reach for your usual remedy, say "I'm fine," and keep going.

Sound familiar?

Before you spend another holiday working around your body, consider giving it some attention. Acupuncture could be one way to begin.



When "Normal" Starts Costing You

You may have gotten very good at living with discomfort. You know which chair to avoid. How long you can stand before your back starts protesting. Which activities will leave your knees aching tomorrow.

Those adjustments can feel small until you realize how much of your day they control. Pain takes more than comfort. It takes concentration, patience, spontaneity, and sometimes the desire to participate at all.

That is why the conversation about acupuncture should begin with a question: What would you like to get back to doing?

Cooking without constantly leaning against the counter? Enjoying a walk after Thanksgiving dinner? Making the drive to see someone you love without dreading every mile?

Those are meaningful treatment goals.

Small Needles. Meaningful Possibilities.

Acupuncture involves placing very fine needles at selected points on the body. Rooted in traditional Eastern medicine, it is also the subject of modern research examining its effects on pain and the nervous system.

Some of the strongest evidence supports acupuncture for chronic lower back pain, neck pain, and knee pain associated with osteoarthritis. For someone living with those conditions, relief may make everyday movement and activities more manageable.

Acupuncture may also help reduce the frequency of migraines and tension headaches. Imagine what fewer headache days could mean: fewer canceled plans, fewer afternoons spent distracted by discomfort, and more time available for your life.

Results vary. Acupuncture does not help everyone, and improvement may take multiple visits. But you deserve to know that another option exists.

Your Treatment Should Start With Your Story

A sore back does not tell us everything we need to know about you. When did it start? What makes it worse? What have you already tried? Are you sleeping comfortably? What are you avoiding because you are afraid it will hurt?

A thoughtful consultation connects your symptoms with the way you actually live.

Acupuncture fits within an integrative approach that considers your health history, current care, and personal goals. It can complement appropriate medical treatment, physical therapy, and movement.

We also recognize when symptoms need further evaluation. The goal is a plan that makes sense for you, with progress measured by changes you can notice in daily life.

About the Part That Makes You Nervous

Yes, acupuncture uses needles.

They are much thinner than those used for injections. You may notice a brief pinch, pressure, or a dull ache. Your practitioner should explain the process, check your comfort, and respond to your feedback.

Some people find the experience relaxing. During a season of constant demands, having time devoted entirely to your care can feel welcome.

Continued on page 36

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Community

Pass the Turkey, Bring on the Twinkle!

The Holiday Season in Destin Means Feasting, Festivities and Giving Back

By Publisher Lori Leath Miller

Eat. Give thanks. Beach. Repeat. Then sprinkle in shopping, sparkling lights and a visit with Santa! November (and beyond) in Destin has a rhythm all its own, and I love that we can celebrate the holidays with a little sand between our toes.

Thanksgiving falls on Thursday, Nov. 26, this year, but the fun starts well before the turkey reaches the table. Here are a few ways to make the season merry—and make a difference along the way.



Shop Local, Start Early

Get a jump on your gift list at the City of Destin's 20th **Annual Holiday Craft Show,** Friday, Nov. 13, from 10 a.m.–4 p.m., and Saturday, Nov. 14, from 9 a.m.–3 p.m. The Destin Community Center will be filled with handmade jewelry, wreaths, books and other finds. Admission is free. Call 850-654-5184 for details.

A Little Bluegrass, a Lot of Heart

Head to Alaqua Animal Refuge in Freeport for the animoré Weekend **Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall Fest,** presented by Café Thirty-A, Saturday, Nov. 14, from 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Enjoy live bluegrass, including headliner Sister Sadie, along with food trucks, local vendors, crafts, games and animal encounters.

Every ticket supports Alaqua's work rescuing and caring for animals in need. Online tickets are available through Nov. 11; gate admission is $15 for adults and $5 for children, with ages 2 and younger free. VIP options are also available. Tickets: alaqua.org.

Also, on Saturday, Nov. 14, Saving with Soul Pet Rescue hosts its fifth annual PUPs at the PIER Puppy Petting Pawty at Angler's Beachside Grill on Okaloosa Island, from 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Meet adoptable dogs, enjoy a little puppy therapy and perhaps find your newest family member. Now that's something to be thankful for!

Rev Up the Giving

The 47th Annual **Toys 4 Tots Ride** rolls out Sunday,

Continued on page 10



Community

Henderson Beach Resort Unveils New Christmas Village

Bringing Holiday Magic to Florida's Emerald Coast

Six life-size holiday cottages, a dazzling 100-foot light tunnel, festive train rides and Santa visits headline the new celebration, with savings of up to 25% on holiday stays.

A new Christmas tradition is arriving on Florida's Emerald Coast as Henderson Beach Resort debuts "Holidays at the Henderson," transforming its Piazza into a coastal Christmas Village complete with six life-size holiday cottages, thousands of twinkling lights, a 100-foot illuminated walkway and complimentary train rides. Open to the public with complimentary admission Dec. 1, 2026, through Jan. 1, 2027, the experience pairs nostalgic holiday traditions with the resort's signature Gulf Coast setting. The Christmas Wonderland can be explored anytime with the Christmas Village shops and Tinseltown Train coming alive Thursdays through Sundays from 4 to 8 p.m.

Make it a holiday getaway: With the Enjoy the Holidays at



the Henderson offer, travelers can save up to 25% on stays Dec. 1, 2026, through Jan. 3, 2027, using promotional code HOLIDAYS. The offer gives visitors a chance to pair the festivities with a coastal escape along Destin's white-sand beaches.

At the heart of the festivities, on the Piazza, the Henderson Christmas Village brings six distinct holiday stops to life. Young visitors can make crafts at Santa's Workshop or enjoy a little seasonal sparkle at Sugarplum Spa. Candy Cane Sweets & Treats will tempt guests with



peppermint and ribbon candy, while Cookies, Cocoa, & Crumbs Bake Shop serves up the familiar comforts of cookies and cocoa. Jingle Bell Boutique offers Henderson keepsakes and small gifts, and grown-ups can stop by Blitzen's Bar for merry refreshments. Nearby, the complimentary Tinseltown Train carries passengers through the festivities Thursdays through Sundays, from 4 to 8 p.m., with ringing bells and plenty of Christmas cheer.



As the resort takes on a golden holiday glow, the Wonderlight Walk leads visitors beneath a 100-foot archway wrapped in thousands of shimmering lights, setting the scene for unforgettable holiday photos.

The celebrations continue inside the resort, where Horizons transforms into Kris Kringle's Cantina, complete with seasonal cocktails, holiday-inspired bites and cheerful décor. Throughout the property, beautifully decorated Christmas trees and sparkling lights bring the spirit of the season to every corner.

Santa Claus will make special appearances on Fridays and Saturdays, Nov. 27 through Christmas, inviting children to share their wish lists and capture the moment with complimentary photos. Families can enjoy even more holiday magic on Saturday, Dec. 12, when the resort hosts Breakfast with Santa on the Grand Lawn from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"We wanted to create a Christmas experience that feels both timeless and distinctly Destin," said John Carns, Area General Manager of Henderson Beach Resort. "From the village cottages and holiday lights to a train ride under the coastal sky, Holidays at the Henderson gives our guests and neighbors a new way to celebrate together. We hope it becomes a tradition they look forward to every year."

For details and the latest event information, visit www.HendersonBeachResort.com/Holidays-at-the-Henderson



Community

Cali's To Do In Destin! NOVEMBER 2026

6

38th Annual Thunderbird Intertribal Powwow | Times vary | Niceville
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Fire Pit Friday | 3pm | 30A Distilling Co
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Emerald Coast Rodeo | 5:30pm | Niceville
Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company
Tribute Weekend: Pandora's Box | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Moutainfilm on Tour | 7pm | Watercolor / Santa Rosa Beach
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in Miramar Beach
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

7

38th Annual Thunderbird Intertribal Powwow | Times vary | Niceville
Farmers Market | 8am | The Landing FWB
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Farmers Market | 9am | Seaside, FL
Walk to End Alzheimers | 9:30am | Grand Boulevard
Charity Car Show | 10am | Freeport
Eggs On The Beach | 10am-1pm | Seascape Towne Center
Baytowne on Ice | 11am | Baytowne Wharf
Pirate Brew Festival | 11am-2pm | Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill
Emerald Coast Rodeo | 5:30pm | Niceville
Harlem Nights: A Casino Affair | 6pm | Home2Suites FWB
Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin
Tribute Weekend: The 77 Experience | 7pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

8

38th Annual Thunderbird Intertribal Powwow | Times vary | Niceville
DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk
Flutterby Arts Festival | 10am | Pavilion at Watersound
Veterans Day Celebration on the Harbor | 10am | Harborwalk Village
Baytowne on Ice | 12pm | Baytowne Wharf
Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

9

Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

10

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf



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 FWB

11

Celebrating All Veterans at Women Veterans Park | 8:30am | Destin FWB Convention Center
Active Military & Veterans Appreciation Event | 4pm-6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing Niceville
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island
Business Entrepreneur Night | 5pm | Soundside
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

12

Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
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

13

City of Destin's 20th Annual Holiday Craft Show | 10am-4pm | Destin Community Center
Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Fire Pit Friday | 3pm | 30A Distilling Co
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in Miramar Beach
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

14

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
City of Destin's 20th Annual Holiday Craft Show | 9am-3pm | Destin Community Center
Nautical Flea Market (Reschedule Date) | 10am | Bluewater Bay Marina Niceville
PUPs at the PIER | 11am-4pm | Angler's | Okaloosa Island
Baytowne on Ice | 11am | Baytowne Wharf
Alaqua's Bluegrass Barn Jam & Fall Fest | 11am-6pm | Alaqua Animal Refuge Freeport
Emerald Coast Boys & Girls Club Market | 11am-5pm | 80 Boys & Girls Way, Santa Rosa Beach
Tacos & Tequila Under the Trees | 12pm | EO Wilson Biophilia Center Freeport
Blues Brews & BBQ | 1pm | Harborwalk Village
Reduce, Reuse, Refashion Show | 4:30pm | Emerald Coast Science Center
Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin
Sinfonia Gulf Coast Classical Connections | 7:30pm | Destin High School
Karaoke | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

15

47th Annual Toys 4 Tots Ride | 8:30am | Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson | FWB
DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk
Baytowne on Ice | 12pm | Baytowne Wharf
Emerald Coast Boys & Girls Club Market | 12pm-5pm | 80 Boys & Girls Way, Santa Rosa Beach
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

16

Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

17

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
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 FWB
Line Dancing Night | 7pm | Soundside FWB

18

Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island
Business Entrepreneur Night | 5pm | Soundside
Run Club | 5:30pm | Destin Brewery
The Traveling Painter | 5:30pm | L J Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Bar
Trivia Night | 6pm | Destin Brewery
Trivia Night | 6pm | Craft Bar @ The Harbor
Karaoke | 7pm | Kenny D's
Karaoke | 7pm | AJ's Oyster Shanty

19

Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Bourbon on the Bay | 5:30pm | Henderson Beach Resort
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

20

Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Fire Pit Friday | 3pm | 30A Distilling Co
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Santa's Arrival & Holiday Tree Lighting | 5pm | Destin Commons
Hometown Holiday Parade | 5–7pm | Grand Blvd at Sandestin
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in Miramar Beach
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

21

Farmers Market | 8am | The Landing FWB
Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Santa Claus Arrival | 10am | Silver Sands Outlet Mall
Baytowne on Ice | 11am | Baytowne Wharf
Holiday Market | 2pm-6pm | Destin Commons
Nutcracker Performance | 2pm & 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center Niceville
Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights | 4pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf
Chili Cook-Off Benefiting CALM | 4pm | L J Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Bar
Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin
Karaoke | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

22

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk
Baytowne on Ice | 12pm | Baytowne Wharf
Nutcracker Performance | 2pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center Niceville
Trivia Night | 6pm | The Wharf 850
Trivia Night | 6pm | Fatboys Niceville
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

23

Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery

24

Wellness By The Water Yoga | 9am | The Alice
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
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 FWB
Line Dancing Night | 7pm | Soundside FWB

25

Collab & Co-Working w/ Women in Business | 1pm | Coastal Protein & Energy
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Bonfire on the Beach | 5pm | The Bay
Trivia Night | 5pm | Down Island
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

26

AJ's Thanksgiving Feast | AJ's on the Bayou and AJ's Grayton Beach
Thanksgiving at Henderson Beach Resort | 9am-1pm | Destin
Thanksgiving Feast | 11am–5pm | Harbor Docks
Thanksgiving at Grande Vista Bar & Grill | 12pm | Emerald Grande
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Ladies Night | 10pm | McGuire's Destin

27

Friday Martini Lunch | 11am-4pm | Skybar Destin
Fire Pit Friday | 3pm | 30A Distilling Co
Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Tree Lighting Ceremony | 5pm | Harborwalk Village
Black Friday Holiday Sip & Shop | 5pm | Harborwalk Village
Free Beach Bonfire | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Movie on the Lawn: The Polar Express | 6pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 7pm | Island Wing Company
Salsa & Bachata Dance Lessons | 8pm | Bric a Brac
Latin Night | 8pm-2am | Bosforo in Miramar Beach
Karaoke | 8pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

28

Farmers Market | 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard
Breakfast with Billy Claus | 8–10am | Lulu's
Baytowne on Ice | 11am | Baytowne Wharf
Santas Arrival & Visits with Santa | 12:30pm | Harbor Walk Village
Here Comes Santa Claus! | 6-9pm | Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 6pm | Fatboys Destin
Karaoke | 8pm | 5 o'Clock Somewhere Baytowne Wharf
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Harry T's Lighthouse

29

DJ Brunch | 10am | Azul @ Harborwalk
Baytowne on Ice | 12pm | Baytowne Wharf
Visits with Santa | 1pm | Harbor Walk Village
Karaoke | 9pm | Fubar
Karaoke | 9pm | Outcast Bar & Grill

30

Baytowne on Ice | 4pm | Baytowne Wharf
Free Beach Bonfire/SIN Night | 5pm | Royal Palm Grille
Trivia Night | 6:30pm | Destin Brewery



Community

All Is Merry and Bright at Baytowne Wharf!

November Brings Live Music, Holiday Traditions and a Sparkling Start to the Season

From concerts under the stars to sparkling wine, ice skating and Santa's arrival, the holiday spirit is coming to life at The Village of Baytowne Wharf. Gather family and friends for a November filled with entertainment and seasonal celebrations, then look ahead to the lights and festivities awaiting you in December!

Baytowne on Ice Is Back!

October 30–February 7, 2027 | Hours vary daily

Lace up your skates and welcome the winter season at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's seasonal ice rink. For visitors who miss the chill of winter, Baytowne on Ice offers a chance to enjoy a favorite cold-weather tradition right here on the coast. Admission is $15 for a 90-minute skate session, with skate rentals available for $3. Skaters must be at least 3 years old and fit into appropriately sized skates. Children younger than 6 must be accompanied by a parent or adult family member. Check the daily schedule at baytownewharf.com.

The rink is also available for private parties and functions, with rentals starting at $300. For information, call 850-428-2736 or visit baytownewharf.com.

Tribute Weekend

Friday and Saturday, November 6–7 | 7–9 p.m. nightly | FREE

Get ready for two evenings of familiar favorites as Tribute Weekend returns to The Village of Baytowne Wharf! Bring blankets and lawn chairs to the Events Plaza Lawn for a weekend celebrating unforgettable music and talented tribute bands.

Friday, November 6: Dream on with Pandora's Box as the band brings Aerosmith's iconic hits, electrifying energy and rock 'n' roll spirit to Baytowne Wharf. Gather your friends and get ready to sing along!

Saturday, November 7: Travel back to 1977 with The 77 Experience! This high-energy tribute celebrates the year's memorable music, iconic moments and pop culture, bringing the soundtrack of a generation to life.

Alissa Steffens Vocal Studios Presents a Fall Concert

Tuesday, November 10 | 7 p.m. | Events Plaza Stage | FREE

Enjoy an evening of local talent as vocal coach Alissa Steffens and her students present a fall showcase featuring a variety of musical styles. Performers range from children to adults, with something for fans of every genre. Everyone is welcome at this free public concert. Bring a chair or blanket, support these talented singers and feel free to sing along!

Sparkling Wine and Holiday Lights

Saturday, November 21 | 4–6 p.m.

Raise a glass to the holidays at the 14th Annual Sparkling Wine and Holiday Lights, benefiting a local charity. Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort and Sandestin Wine Festival welcome guests to the beautifully decorated streets of Baytowne Wharf for a festive evening featuring more than 30 champagnes and sparkling wines, delicious appetizers from participating Village restaurants, singing carolers and plenty of holiday cheer.

The celebration concludes with the first tree lighting of the season and Baytowne Wharf's choreographed Nights of Lights show. Tickets are $75 in advance and $85 on the day of the event. Visit sandestinwinefestival.com/sparkling-wine for details and tickets.





The Polar Express

Friday, November 27 | 6 p.m. | Events Plaza Lawn | FREE

Make a little movie magic part of your holiday weekend with a special outdoor showing of The Polar Express. Bring blankets and lawn chairs, settle in under the stars and enjoy this Christmas favorite with the whole family.

Here Comes Santa Claus

Saturday, November 28 | 6–9 p.m. | FREE

Here comes Santa Claus, right down Baytowne Lane! Celebrate Santa's arrival at Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin as he makes his way to the Events Plaza Lawn to light the Village Christmas tree. The evening includes face painting, balloon making, a brass band and a festive fireworks display.

Santa is expected to arrive in seasonal style aboard his sleigh, with a fireworks show! Guests can visit him at his sleigh during the arrival celebration.

Santa will return for visits from 6–8 p.m. on Wednesdays, December 2, 9 and 16, during the Wednesday Night Concert Series—Holiday Edition. Visit baytownewharf.com for details.

Plan Ahead!

Nights of Lights

December 1–31 | 6, 7 and 8 p.m. nightly | Events Plaza Lawn | FREE

Let the holiday lights brighten your December! Every night throughout the month, Baytowne Wharf's choreographed Nights of Lights show brings the Village's new Christmas tree and Events Plaza Lawn to life. Watch the lights dance and blink to music during three festive shows each evening.

Lantern Parade

Saturday, December 5 | 5 p.m. | The Village of Baytowne Wharf | FREE

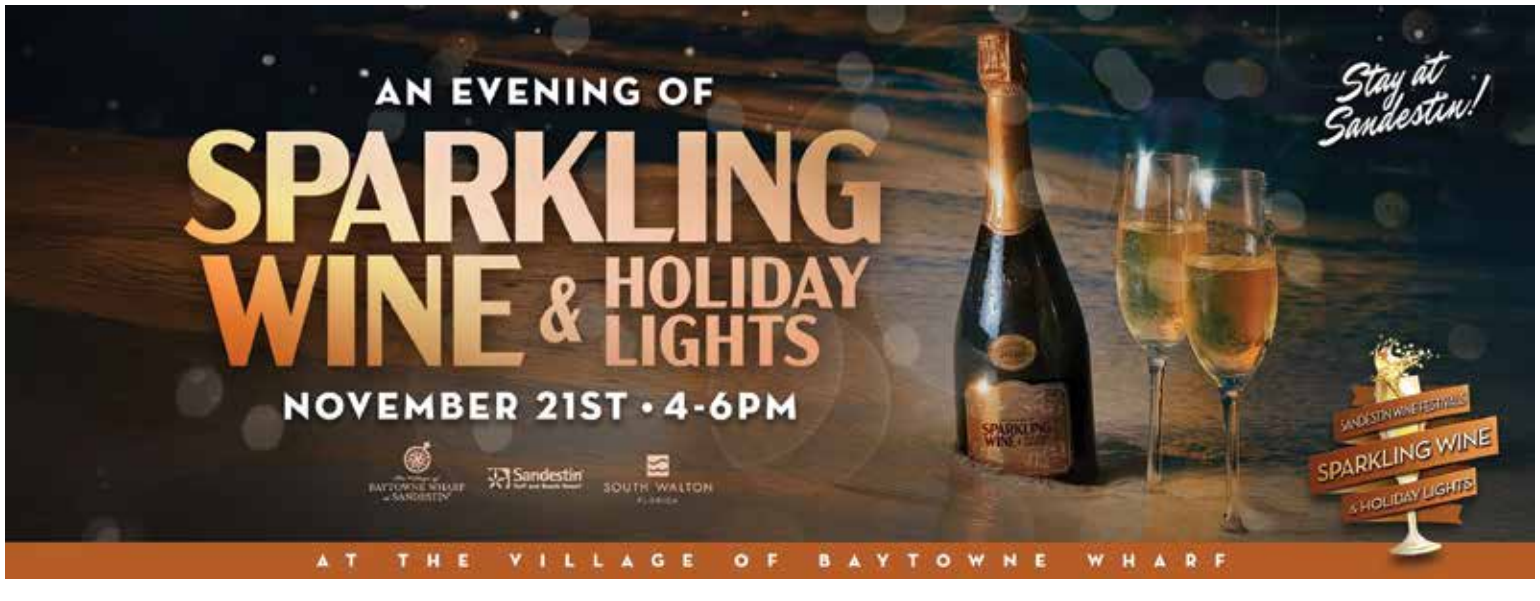
Light up the night at The Village of Baytowne Wharf's annual Lantern Parade, created by artist Chantelle Rytter and the Krewe of the Grateful Gluttons. This free community celebration welcomes locals and visitors alike, and the only requirement to participate is to bring a lantern! Spectators can enjoy the colorful procession throughout the Village.

Create your own lantern and join the parade alongside a dozen larger-than-life lantern puppets designed by Rytter and her Krewe. Your creativity is a gift to the community! Find inspiration on Rytter's Lantern Ideas & Inspiration page at https://www.weirdgonepro.com/lantern-parade-resources.

Prefer to roll instead of stroll? Decorate your golf cart and join the parade lineup! Afterward, meet the puppets by the Christmas tree for photos and fun. To register your golf cart or learn more, email baytowne@raebirdevents.com.

Catch the Village on Beach TV LIVE!

Every day, throughout the holidays and year-round!



Community

PASS THE TURKEY

continued from page 6

Nov. 15, presented by Emerald Coast H.O.G. Chapter #3605. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at Emerald Coast Harley-Davidson in Fort Walton Beach, with kickstands up at 11 a.m. Bring $10 per person and a new toy or gift card to help brighten the holidays for children served by the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center and Children in Crisis. Visit emeraldcoasthd.com.

Santa, Sleigh Bells and Sparkle

Santa has a busy Friday, Nov. 20! Grand Boulevard's **Hometown Holiday Parade** runs from 5–7 p.m., bringing community groups, festive performances and holiday cheer to the Boulevard.

At Destin Commons, **Santa's Arrival & Holiday Tree Lighting** fills Main Street with festivities from 5–9 p.m. Enjoy holiday music, complimentary face painting, free photos with Rudolph and Frosty, and a holiday photo booth. Santa arrives in the parade at 7 p.m. before lighting the spectacular 50-foot Christmas tree. Fireworks wrap up the evening!

For a little grown-up sparkle, the **14th Annual Sparkling Wine & Holiday Lights** returns to the Village of Baytowne Wharf Saturday, Nov. 21, from 4–6 p.m. Stroll the decorated streets while sampling more than 30 champagnes and sparkling wines, paired with appetizers from participating Village restaurants. Carolers and the choreographed Nights of Lights show add to the holiday mood. Tickets are $75 presale or $85 day of, subject to availability. Visit baytownewharf.com.

While you're there, trade your flip-flops for skates! **Baytowne on Ice** runs now–Feb. 7, 2027. Admission is $15 for a 90-minute skate, plus $3 for skate rental. Hours vary daily; check the calendar at baytownewharf.com.

A Thanksgiving Table with Room for Everyone

Some of our most meaningful holiday traditions begin with a simple invitation: Come eat with us. AJ's on the Bayou (11 a.m. - 4 p.m.) and AJ's Grayton Beach (Noon - 5 p.m.) welcomes the community for its **Thanksgiving Day meals.** Gather for a traditional holiday feast, fellowship and the spirit of giving. Meals are offered at no charge, with donations appreciated to benefit the Kids on the Coast Foundation. Find details at ajsonthebayou.com and ajsgrayton.com.

Harbor Docks hosts its 32nd Annual **Thanksgiving Feast** Thursday, Nov. 26, from 11



a.m.–5 p.m. Everyone is invited to enjoy a traditional holiday meal at no charge, with donations supporting Food For Thought Outreach and Emerald Coast Food Rescue. Whether you come to eat, give or lend a hand, this gathering captures so much of what makes Destin special. Visit harbordocks.com.

Blue Pancakes, Harbor Views and Ho-Ho-Ho

After Black Friday, I'm ready for blue pancakes! **Breakfast with Billy Claus** comes to LuLu's Destin Saturday, Nov. 28, from 8–10 a.m. Santa's tropical brother and the LuLuBelles bring Christmas Island cheer with a breakfast buffet, holiday photos, story time, children's crafts, letters to Santa and hot chocolate. Visit lulusfunfoodmusic.com.

Then head to HarborWalk Village for **Santa's Arrival on the Harbor.** Santa makes his entrance Saturday, Nov. 28, at 12:30 p.m., followed by photos and holiday performances from 1–4 p.m.

Still feeling festive? Baytowne Wharf's **Here Comes Santa Claus** celebration runs that evening from 6–9 p.m. Cheer Santa's arrival and the Village tree lighting, with face painting, balloon making, a brass band and fireworks.

Let the December Twinkle Begin

Grand Boulevard's **Festival of Trees** returns Friday, Dec. 4, from 4–7:30 p.m., showcasing 16 Christmas trees decorated by local nonprofits. Browse and cast your People's Choice vote from 4–6:30 p.m.; winners will be announced at 7:30 p.m. Purchase a $5 voting bell to support a favorite cause.

On Saturday, Dec. 5, slow down for **Christmas Luminaries** at Eden Gardens State Park, from 5–8 p.m. Follow luminary-lined pathways to the park after sunset. Tour the decorated Wesley House and enjoy live music, cookies and warm beverages—a beautiful way to welcome December.

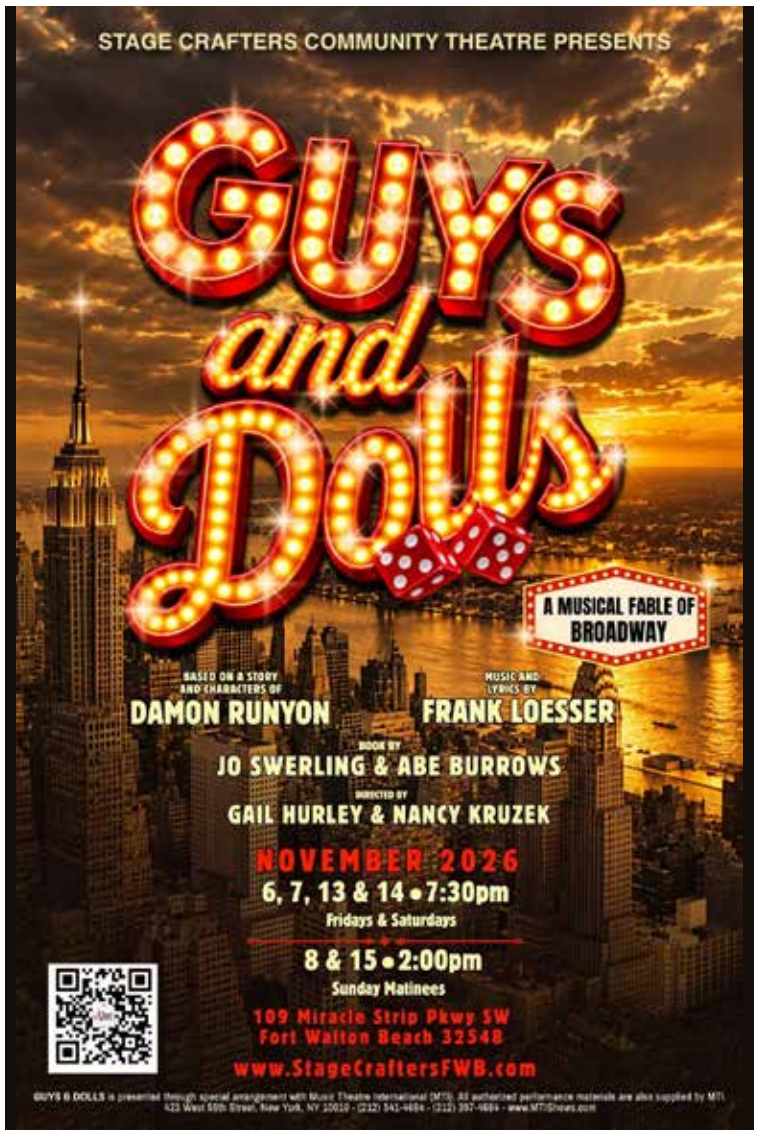
Give a Little Christmas Joy

A familiar local tradition has a new name: **Operation Jingle Bells!** The Okaloosa County School District and Sheriff's Office are partnering again through the program formerly known as Angel Tree.

School counselors and school resource officers identify students in need and connect their holiday wish lists with community members willing to help. What a wonderful way to remind a child that this community cares. To participate, contact Catherine Card at catherine.card@okaloosaschools.com or Katie Tingle at ktingle@sheriff-okaloosa.org.

However you celebrate, I hope you'll make time for the people and traditions that fill your heart. I'm wishing you a blessed Thanksgiving season with good food, grateful hearts and plenty of reasons to gather!





Community

The Market Has Changed. The Opportunity Hasn't Disappeared.

Understanding Today's Real Estate Market and Finding The Opportunities Within It.



By Paul Domenech, The Domenech Group, Keller Williams Emerald Coast

There's no question that today's real estate market feels different.

Higher interest rates, increased inventory, and homes spending more time on the market have created uncertainty for buyers and sellers alike.

For sellers, it can be frustrating watching a home sit longer than expected. For buyers, higher monthly payments can make purchasing feel more challenging.

I understand both sides.

But something I've learned through years of real estate, coaching, and conversations with agents across the country is that the market is never necessarily good or bad. It's simply the market we're in.

And every market creates different opportunities.

For Buyers: Less Competition Can Mean More Opportunity

When we hear the term buyer's market, we often assume it means getting a property at a significant discount.

But that's not necessarily the greatest advantage today.

The real opportunity may be having less competition for the home you actually want.

There's a difference between purchasing something simply because it's inexpensive and purchasing something because it's truly desirable.

With fewer buyers actively competing, you may have a better opportunity to find the right home without the pressure of multiple offers.

However, desirable homes are still desirable.

There are buyers waiting for the right property, even in this market. When that home becomes available at the right price, it can still attract serious interest.

The opportunity isn't always about paying less. Sometimes it's about getting more of what matters to you.

For Sellers: Desirability Creates Opportunity

I also understand the frustration sellers are experiencing.

More inventory means more choices for buyers. But not all inventory is equally desirable.

And that's an important distinction.

Having more homes available doesn't necessarily mean buyers have more homes they genuinely want.

Today's buyers are often more deliberate with their decisions. When financing costs are higher, the condition, presentation, and value of a property become even more important.

This is why I believe creating a desirable product is one of the greatest opportunities sellers have right now.

Preparing the home properly, understanding the competition, and developing a pricing strategy supported by current data can make a meaningful difference.

It's not about chasing a price or giving your home away.

It's about positioning your property to achieve the strongest result today's market will support.

Understanding the Bigger Picture

There's another perspective worth considering, especially when you're selling one home to purchase another.

It's easy to focus on what your home might have sold for a year or two ago.

But the more important question may be what your current equity allows you to purchase today.

When values shift, they can create opportunities on both sides of a transaction.

Depending on where you're selling and buying, a lower sale price may be accompanied by a more favorable purchase price on your next home.

What matters is understanding both markets together rather than evaluating either transaction in isolation.



Serving the Market We're In

One of the advantages I've experienced through national speaking, coaching, and working with real estate professionals across the country is seeing how different markets are responding to similar challenges.

Those conversations help us recognize trends, share effective strategies, and continually adjust how we serve our customers.

And that has contributed to one of our strongest years, even in a market many consider difficult.

Not because the market has been easy, but because we've continued learning how to serve it.

The value of having the right real estate professional isn't predicting when the market will change. It's understanding the market we have today and helping you recognize the opportunities within it.

For buyers, that means finding the home you truly want and making a confident, informed decision.

For sellers, it means creating a desirable product, developing the right strategy, and working toward the strongest possible net result.

Because ultimately, the market will always change.

But the opportunity to make a good real estate decision doesn't disappear. It simply requires a different understanding.

A House Sold Name



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Paul A. Domenech
Paul@TheDomenechGroup.com
(850) 543-1418
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Community

Trends & Treasures!










A Little Sparkle, a Very Big Yes

Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry

Some holiday surprises deserve a very small box. Whether you're planning a proposal, celebrating a milestone or dropping a few well-placed hints, Beyond Measure Fine Jewelry has plenty of ways to make the moment shine.

Explore the newest engagement ring styles or have something custom designed—because a love story like yours deserves its own look. Diamonds, emeralds and other precious gemstones bring beautiful possibilities to the showroom, alongside bracelets, necklaces, earrings and rings you may find difficult to give away.

Owner Ashleigh Woolly pairs an eye for design with a passion for craftsmanship, helping customers discover pieces that feel personal, polished and made to treasure.

Perhaps your wish list includes stacked gold bands. Perhaps it's a one-of-a-kind engagement ring. Or perhaps you're simply celebrating yourself this season. There's a little-box occasion for that, too.

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

beyondmeasurejewelry.com

Your Holiday Glow-Up Is Calling

Pure & Couture Salon | Pure Collective Salon

The invitations are arriving, the camera rolls are waiting, and your hair would like a little holiday magic. At Pure & Couture Salon, getting celebration-ready can be half the fun.

Hand-tied extensions bring the length and volume, while fresh seasonal color gives your look a festive update. Think rich red hues, a beautiful balayage or simply a polished version of your signature style. Add a blowout or makeup appointment, and suddenly that packed social calendar looks even more inviting.

For someone who deserves a little pampering, pair a gift card with the promise of time for themselves. Styling, rejuvenating facials, lash extensions, airbrush makeup and spray tanning offer plenty of possibilities.

From weddings and photo sessions to holiday parties, there's a service for the occasion—and every reason to book ahead. Curbside pickup and online ordering make checking off your beauty gift list easy, too.

City Market Beachside| 2nd Location–Pure Collective Salon, 600 Grand Blvd., Suite 102.

(850) 424-3935

pureandcouture.com | purecollectivesalon.com

Put Their Name on Something Fabulous

Frill Seekers Gifts and Personalized Fabulous Finds

Anyone can grab a gift. Making it unmistakably theirs? That's where the fun begins at Frill Seekers Gifts.

Picture a stack of beautiful monogrammed notes, a necklace with a personal flourish or gift tags that make even your wrapping look wonderfully put together. From fold-over stationery to classic flat correspondence cards, these are gifts that bring a little occasion to everyday life. Thermography, letterpress and engraving add the finishing touches.

For those who prefer their initials with sparkle, explore monogrammed necklaces, bracelets and earrings, including pavé, turquoise and pearl designs. Hosting the holiday crowd? Personalized cups, napkins and favors let your party join in.

The secret to looking this thoughtful is starting early: custom creations take time. And for the delightfully hard-to-shop-for, a gift card lets them play designer. Consider it a personal touch—with the pleasure of choosing included.

City Market Bayside off Hwy. 98, Destin.

(850) 460-2700 | FrillSeekersGifts.com

Meet Your New Favorite Coffee Date

Lucky Goat Coffee Destin

Some of the best plans begin with, "Want to grab coffee?" Newly opened Lucky Goat Coffee Destin gives that invitation a delicious new destination.

Husband-and-wife team Tom and Koley Houle bring Lucky Goat's simple philosophy—make great coffee—to a welcoming community gathering spot on the Emerald Coast. Settle in with a classic espresso drink, drip coffee, single-origin roast or cold brew. Feeling adventurous? Give the fan-favorite Luckyccino a turn in your cup.

There's chai and matcha, too, plus pastries and rotating seasonal favorites for those mornings—or afternoons—that call for a little something extra.

Meet a friend, bring your work or claim a quiet moment between holiday errands. With expertly roasted coffee and warm hospitality, this café offers a tempting reason to slow down. Your to-do list can wait until after the last sip.

36150 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Ste. 107, Destin

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

Give Your Next Chapter a Place on the Wish List

Brian K. Locicero, REALTOR® | BeOnTheCoast.com

Maybe Thanksgiving dinner has you dreaming of a bigger dining room. Perhaps decorating for Christmas reminds you that a little less house—and a little more beach—sounds lovely. Whatever your next chapter looks like, the holiday season can spark conversations about home.

Before putting those plans into motion, turn a few pages with REALTOR® Brian K. Locicero. His book shares practical selling strategies to help homeowners prepare for a successful transaction, drawing on the expertise and negotiating skills he brings to his clients.

One Destin seller shared, "Because of Brian's efforts, we quickly sold our home and purchased a 30A beachfront property below asking price."

Between family gatherings and gift wrapping, give yourself time to consider what comes next. Whether a move is on your Christmas wish list or your new-year calendar, a little preparation is a thoughtful gift to your future self.

(850) 739-3800 | BeOnTheCoast.com

Give the Pie a Little Competition

Smallcakes Destin: A Cupcakery and Creamery

Thanksgiving pie, we love you—but there's room on the dessert table for a little cupcake personality. Smallcakes Destin is bringing November plenty of sweet possibilities, from pumpkin spice to festive designs worth gathering around.

Pick up a 12-pack of assorted minis for the "just one taste" crowd, or look for limited-edition Thanksgiving-themed cupcakes and custom cakes. Tailgates, reunions, birthdays, weddings and Veterans Day gatherings all offer excellent reasons to share something delicious.

The everyday lineup is celebration-worthy, too: 13 signature cupcake flavors, four specialty flavors and 12 ice cream flavors, plus jumbo cookies, gourmet popcorn and more. Explore cookie cakes, brownies or cupcakes-in-a-jar when you feel like changing up the dessert routine.

Even your four-legged family member can join the fun with a "Pup" cake. Call ahead for pre-orders, then let someone else handle the baking. That's one holiday shortcut everyone can happily support.

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

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

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Ready to buy or sell Residential Property?
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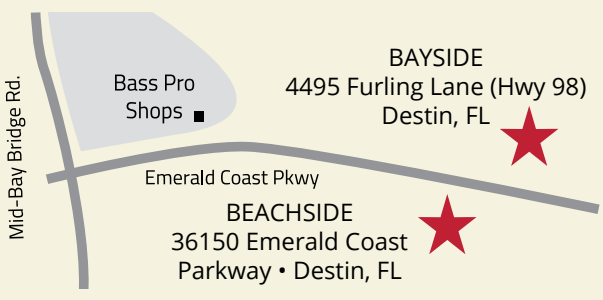


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Mayor Bobby Wagner and PIO Tamara Young, PhD

The Morning After Isaias

By Dr. Tamara L. Young, Public Information for the World's Luckiest Fishing Village

Isaias was the first hurricane to make landfall in the United States in two years, and it arrived two years to the day after Milton. It came at the end of a season so quiet that it set a record for the latest first hurricane in the modern era. A conversation with Mayor Bobby Wagner about the storm, the spotlight and the neighbors who showed up.

TY: By October, a lot of people had mentally closed the book on hurricane season, and that is what made Isaias so dangerous. A quiet season builds confidence, and confidence is the enemy of preparation. In about three days, a disturbance in the southern Gulf became a major hurricane pointed straight at Destin.

BW: And it left very little time to change anyone's mindset. Isaias was a Category 3 that morning and weakened to a Category 2 before landfall. We were grateful for that, but nobody here was willing to bet on it. You prepare for the storm in front of you, not the one you hope arrives. What I'm proudest of is how quickly our residents shifted gears. One day it was an ordinary October week, and a few days later they were boarding windows and checking on neighbors. They took it seriously, and that made a difference.

TY: That two-year gap is also why our phones never stopped ringing. When the country hasn't seen a hurricane landfall in that long, the one that finally comes becomes the only weather-related story in America. We had the local stations we work with all year, and then the national outlets lined up right behind them. From a communications standpoint, every one of those requests was an opportunity. Thanks for saying "yes" each and every time when I was booking you spots literally 24/7! A national broadcast reaches the locals who were in town, the property owners who weren't here to see it, and the families who have vacationed in Destin for generations and were worried about us.

BW: That's exactly right, and it's why we said yes every time we could. The one that stays with me is the Fox Nightly News shot where we went down to the Harbor the late afternoon just before the Hurricane. The wind was building wildly, the streets were empty and landfall was hours away, and we were telling a national audience about our hometown. It's a strange feeling. It also reminded me how many people across this country care about this place.

TY: And then, about 48 hours later, it was over. We went from fully booked to no longer needed or popular, and we laughed about it knowing how blessed we were. There's real truth in that, though. National coverage follows the storm. Recovery follows the community, and the locals are the ones who stay.

BW: Very true, the 15 minutes of fame is alive and well in our American media! The cameras leave when the wind stops, and that is exactly when the hardest work and the sense of community begins.

TY: When we headed out at 5:30 the morning after, it was still dark, and we saw downed power lines everywhere. Our Public Works crews and others were getting out and assessing things. And then by midmorning there were people everywhere asking where they could help, many of them with damage of their own.

BW: That's the image I'll keep from Isaias. Nobody waited to be asked. Neighbors showed up with chainsaws and rakes; others brought water and coffee. People who had lost part of a roof helped those who had lost more. I spent that first week running a volunteer chainsaw crew, clearing private property our City crews can't legally touch. We reached more than 40 homes, most belonging to seniors who had no way to do it themselves. You hear "neighbor helping neighbor" after every storm. Here, you could see it on every block. Many remember Opal in 1995, and many more watched what Michael did to our neighbors to the east in 2018. They know what it means and how it feels when help shows up.

TY: Now we're in the final stretch of debris removal, and this is the stage where patience runs thinnest. The first days after a storm feel urgent, and everyone is moving fast. The last few weeks are slow, and the piles at the curb are a daily reminder of what happened.

BW: I see the piles too, and I completely understand the frustration. Crews work through the city in passes, and the volume after a storm like this is enormous. As of Oct 28, we've already removed over 20,000 cubic yards of debris from the city. That is 1,000 dump trucks full of branches and boards! This is the part of recovery no camera covers, and it's where patience matters most. Please bear with us a little longer. Removing these piles for safety is our top priority; kids walking to school, elders walking the sidewalk, Halloween neighborhoods. That is why we are running 6 storm removal trucks/cranes each day until our community is completely restored to pre-storm conditions. We are getting there, and every pile that disappears is one more sign of Destin getting back to itself.

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Spouses and adult children often carry the day-to-day load of caring for a veteran. Respite care gives them time to rest and recharge, knowing their loved one is in good hands.

Thank You for Your Service

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Community

Meet Our Hometown Hero: Bernard Johnson

A Lifetime of Showing Up

By Doug Stauffer

Plenty of laughter filled Bernard Johnson's October 1 "retirement" reception. Ted Corcoran, president and CEO of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, served as emcee and opened with a gentle roast, complete with a meme casting Bernard as FPL's virtual assistant. Familiar sayings and affectionate stories kept everyone smiling. As the evening unfolded, the tributes grew more personal. Those who had worked alongside Bernard wanted him to know how much he is loved.

Bernard is one of the kindest, gentlest souls I know. He is quick-witted, has a wonderful sense of humor, and brings warmth to every occasion. If there is an important event in Okaloosa County, you can expect to find him involved. At this gathering, the man who so often helps recognize others was the honored guest.

When Bernard finally took the microphone, his first thought was of his wife, Lisa. He recognized her and presented her with flowers before mentioning his own career. After an evening devoted to honoring him, Bernard began by honoring her.

Bernard then quoted two Scriptures that helped explain the kind of man we had gathered to honor. The first was about a good name: Proverbs 22:1 "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."

Those words carried weight in that room. We had heard from people representing businesses, military organizations, education, and community service. A good name develops through the way a person conducts himself, keeps his commitments, and treats others. The evening gave us an opportunity to hear what Bernard's name meant to the people who knew him best.

The second Scripture concerned friendship: Proverbs 18:24a "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly…"

Bernard has certainly shown himself friendly. His approachable manner and ready humor make people glad to see him. Nathan Sparks of One Okaloosa Economic Development Council spoke about his positive attitude and constant smile. That friendliness has helped him build relationships across our county.



Tony Mallini, who was Gulf Power's general manager when Bernard was hired, offered a memorable compliment. He joked that when his wife wished he were more like someone else, he answered, "I wish I was more like Bernard." Coming from someone who had known Bernard's work for so many years, that was a remarkable expression of respect.

Mallini described Bernard's priorities as his Lord and Saviour first, then his family, and then his customers. He also shared a saying that suited Bernard's approach to work: "Think like a customer and act like an owner." The Scriptures Bernard quoted and the flowers he presented to Lisa reflected those priorities. Bernard also reminded us that God has a plan for all things.

Of course, an evening honoring Bernard would have been incomplete without his familiar phrases. Patt Maney brought up one that many people have heard when Bernard offers to help: "I know a guy." Those few words capture his knack for knowing whom to call and connecting people with someone who can help.

Maney's advice was affectionate and practical: "Stay around, stay involved, or at least give us the list." The joke worked because so many people understood it. Bernard's relationships have helped organizations accomplish their work, and his willingness to make a connection has been a service in itself.

Gordon King, CEO of Okaloosa Gas, added another chapter to the story. He recalled persuading Bernard to convert his home to gas appliances, an amusing accomplishment given Bernard's employer for almost four decades. Even the story of a fireplace that stopped working brought us back to the familiar "I know a guy." King ended by joking that Bernard would move in with Okaloosa Gas now that he was retired from the power company.

Neko Stubblefield of Eglin Federal Credit Union found humor in another part of Bernard's communication style. She said she used Claude, an artificial (super) intelligence assistant, to interpret his text-message lingo. If even Neko—who is every bit as well connected in Okaloosa County as Bernard—needed help deciphering his texts, the rest of us never stood a chance.

The gifts were memorable too. A flag presentation took a comic turn when the flag measured just two by three inches rather than one that flew over the Capitol in Washington. The Chamber presented socks bearing Bernard's face. Sam and Gus from Harley-Davidson gave him a jacket and welcomed him into the Harley-Davidson family. The all-too-familiar Vince Mayfield of Bit Wizards presented this. Those presentations had plenty of personality.

Behind the laughter was a career that began much more modestly. Bernard recalled moving here in 1984 and working in Kmart's garden ("flower") shop. It took two years to get hired at Gulf Power. He started on a line crew and worked his way through other responsibilities, including engineering. His career with Gulf Power and Florida Power & Light spanned nearly forty years, with experience in customer service, marketing, and operations.

His last day with FPL was September 30, 2026. For about two decades, he was a principal contact for Gulf Power and later FPL, building relationships with elected officials and military leaders. As regional manager of external affairs, he worked with many of the people and organizations who gathered to thank him.

Bernard also recalled beginning his board service in 1992, with the Boys and Girls Club among his earliest commitments. That involvement grew to include dozens of boards. He is reported to be among the few people who have served on the board of every chamber of commerce in Okaloosa County. If a board is doing important work, Bernard is often involved, frequently as chairman or president.

Northwest Florida State College President Mel Ponder and Foundation Executive Director Chris Stowers helped recognize his service to the college and foundation. Chamber Chair Bonnie Barlow of Bridgeway Center also joined an evening that reflected the breadth of his relationships. Representatives from Warren Averett also joined in the appreciation. His involvement with the All Sports Association and the Taylor Haugen Foundation further illustrates his interest in serving young people.

Major General Leslie Hadley of Air Force Special Operations Command offered some remarkable details. Colonel Chris Keithley, Base Commander, 96th Test Wing, called Bernard a "mover and shaker." Their remarks reflected the relationships Bernard has built with the military community throughout his career.

The Destin Chamber had

Continued on page 20

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Celebrating All Veterans at Women Veterans Park

By Carolyn Newcomer Ketchel

New pathways, statues, commemorative benches and a Charters of Freedom display are enhancing Women Veterans Park. The latest additions will be unveiled on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2026. Please arrive at the Convention Center by 8 a.m. for an inspirational program celebrating all veterans, beginning promptly at 8:30 a.m. The ceremony will continue immediately afterward at the Service Plaza.

Charters of Freedom

The Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights and Civil Rights Amendments express our nation's identity and ideals. Their originals can be viewed at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., but not everyone can make that trip.

After a moving visit in 2011, Vance and Mary Jo Patterson established Foundation Forward Inc., a nonprofit promoting civics education and the preservation of American history. Its mission includes providing stainless steel replicas of these documents to every U.S. county. Okaloosa County received its set on April 27, 2026. Residents can view the documents at the Courthouse in Crestview and the plaza at Women Veterans Park.

Pathway Expansion

Work to add a quarter-mile of walking paths began in March 2024. Thanks to dedicated county staff and contractors, the expanded, fully wheelchair-accessible pathway is nearing completion and will welcome visitors by the end of the month.

Four New Statues

The new pathways will feature Linda Bray and Florence Finch, whose statues were unveiled on Women Veterans Day 2025, and Nicole Gee and an Iroquois Warrior, unveiled on Veterans Day 2025.



Capt. Linda Bray



Florence Finch



Sgt. Nicole L. Gee



The Iroquois Warrior

Capt. Linda Bray, U.S. Army (Ret.), commanded the 988th Military Police Company at Fort Benning when her unit deployed to Panama during Operation Just Cause. A mission to secure an area escalated into a three-hour firefight involving grenades, machine guns and rifles. Although military police primarily served a combat-support role, Bray and her soldiers had to return hostile fire. Her leadership was especially significant because women were then restricted from certain combat assignments. Her Army Commendation Medal for the engagement was upgraded to the Bronze Star Medal with the "V" device on Dec. 8, 2023.

Florence Finch, born Loring May Ebersole in 1915 to a Filipino mother and American father, worked after high school as a stenographer at U.S. Army Intelligence Headquarters in Manila. There she met and married Charles Smith; six months later, she was widowed.

Her Filipino heritage helped her conceal her American sympathies while working for the Japanese-controlled Philippine Liquid Fuel Distributing Union. She diverted fuel and other essentials to the Philippine resistance and helped smuggle food, medical supplies and clean clothing to prisoners of war.

Arrested in October 1944, she endured imprisonment and torture without betraying the resistance. Following her release in February 1945, she moved to New York and joined the Coast Guard that July. When her superiors learned of her wartime service, she received the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Ribbon and later the Medal of Freedom.

Sgt. Nicole L. Gee, a maintenance technician with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, helped Afghan women and children during the Kabul evacuation. On Aug. 26, 2021, she was among 13 U.S. service members killed by a suicide bomber while assisting evacuees.

Her teammate, Sgt. Landon Workman, recalled that Gee worked multiple shifts to spend time with evacuated children and families. He described her as the most loving and caring person he had met—the "mom" of any group, with a gift for brightening someone's day.

The Iroquois Warrior statue represents a female warrior circa 1812. The NMAI Magazine article "They Also Served: American Indian Women in the War of 1812" documented Six Nations women in American military service. At least five—Polly Cooper, Susan Jacob, Dinah John, Julia John and Dolly Schenandoah—received military pensions for service officially recorded as "cooks." They enlisted in Indian volunteer regiments and served honorably; many also fought beside their husbands out of necessity.

Granite Benches

Local lineage, philanthropic, veterans and civic organizations have contributed 13 commemorative granite benches. Choctawhatchee Bay Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) donated the first, followed by West Florida DAR, Emerald Coast Sons of the American Revolution, Snowden Horne Society Children of the American Revolution, Eucheeanna Chapter Daughters of the Colonists, Old Spanish Trail Daughters of 1812, Air Force Enlisted Village Women Veterans Group, VFW Post 7674, Fort Walton Beach Woman's Club, Center for Lifelong Learning, Gregg Chapel AME, Okaloosa Island Garden Club and Republican Women of Okaloosa Federated. The benches share a uniform design, each engraved with the donating group's name and logo, emblem or graphic.

It is an honor to serve as your Commissioner.

Carolyn Ketchel is Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2. Contact her at CKetchel@myokaloosa.com or 850-651-7105.

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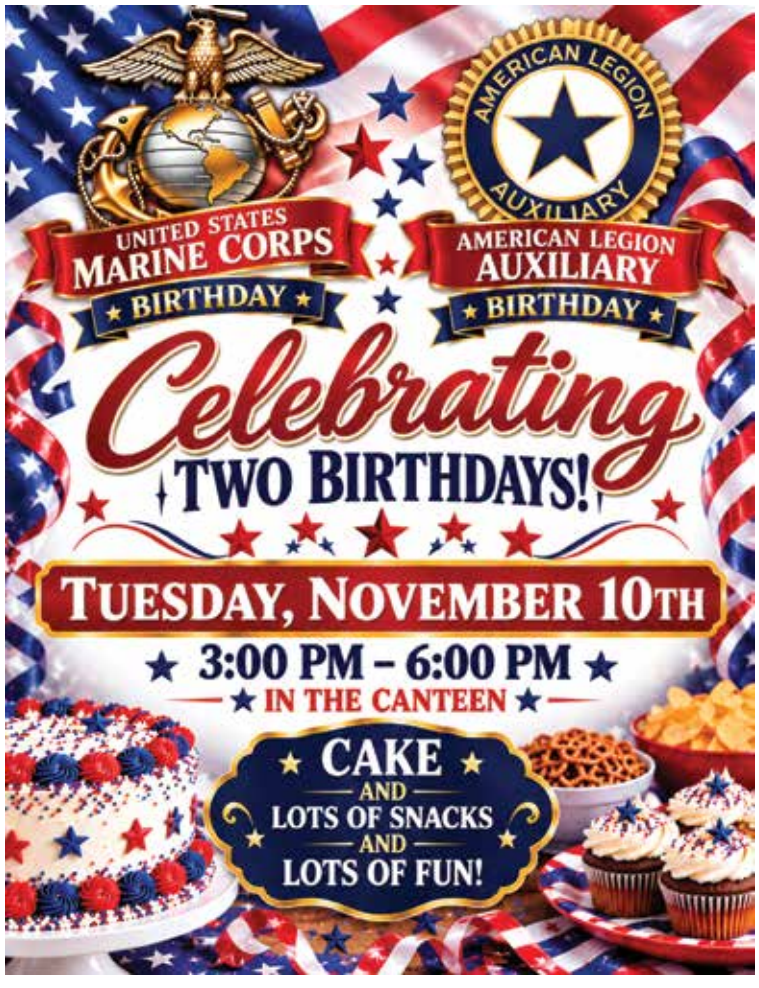


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Lifestyle

Give Your Home a Fresh Look Before the Holidays



By Kyle Sparks, Ovation Painting

There's something about the holidays that makes us suddenly notice our homes. Maybe it's knowing family is coming to stay, planning a dinner with friends or simply spending more time indoors. That wall you've walked past every day without a second thought suddenly looks a little scuffed, and the color you loved years ago may be ready for an update.



November can be an ideal time for a larger interior painting project, especially if you've been thinking about refreshing several rooms or creating a more cohesive look throughout your home.

One of the biggest changes we see comes from updating older color schemes. You don't have to choose stark white or make every room the same color. Today's warmer neutrals, softer whites and subtle natural tones can brighten a home while still giving it warmth and personality. A thoughtful palette can also help adjoining rooms flow together, which is especially noticeable in the open floor plans common in many Emerald Coast homes.

Don't overlook the details, either. Trim, baseboards, doors and crown molding take plenty of bumps and wear over the years. Fresh walls paired with tired trim can make a project feel unfinished. Painting them together gives the entire space a cleaner, more polished appearance.

Kyle's Tip: Before selecting an interior color, look at your home's permanent features—flooring, countertops, cabinetry and large furnishings. Paint should complement those undertones rather than fight them. And always view your sample in the actual room. Our abundant Florida sunlight can make the same color look very different from one space to another.

At Ovation Painting, we handle substantial interior and exterior projects where careful preparation and attention to detail matter. For larger jobs, planning ahead also helps minimize disruption, particularly during the busy holiday season.

Your home doesn't need to be perfect for the holidays. It should feel comfortable, welcoming and like you. Sometimes a fresh coat of paint is all it takes to make you appreciate your home all over again.

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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Lifestyle

Gasworks: Bringing Comfort, Style & Craftsmanship to the Florida Panhandle





For more than 11 years, Gasworks has been proudly locally owned and operated, serving homeowners, builders, designers and businesses throughout the Florida Panhandle. What began with a commitment to quality gas services has grown into a full-service company specializing in gas lines, fireplaces, outdoor kitchens and gas lighting.

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.

Your Local Gas & Outdoor Living Experts

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 | 850-353-1316



Weddings

Christmas Charm, Any Time of Year



By Kristin Lockhart, Owner & Lead Designer, Couture Florals & Eventss

Do you love everything about the holidays—the beautiful decorations, twinkling lights, rich colors, and cozy feeling of Christmas? If you've always dreamed of a holiday-inspired wedding, there's no reason to let the calendar stand in your way. A November or December date isn't required to bring a little Christmas magic to your big day.

One of my favorite things about wedding floral design is the freedom to create something that reflects a couple's personality and style. If Christmas holds a special place in your heart, why not weave some of those beloved touches into your celebration, even in spring or summer? After all, who doesn't love a little Christmas in July?

Imagine burgundy blooms and deep red roses, lush greenery, touches of gold and romantic candlelight. Evergreen accents, velvet ribbons and softly twinkling lights can bring warmth and a festive spirit to your reception while keeping the overall design elegant and wedding-worthy.

If red isn't your color, you have plenty of beautiful options. White roses, hydrangeas and other soft white blooms paired with greenery and gold accents can evoke the magic of a winter wonderland. Add gold candleholders and the warm glow of candlelight, and the result is timeless, romantic and full of holiday charm.

The key is to draw inspiration from the details you love. Your wedding doesn't have to look like a traditional Christmas party. A thoughtful mix of color, texture, flowers and lighting can capture the feeling of the season in a way that's distinctly yours.



Here along our beautiful Emerald Coast, a holiday-inspired wedding can be an especially delightful surprise during the warmer months. Rich reds and burgundies—or elegant whites, greens, and golds—can look stunning against our white sandy beaches. It's an unexpected pairing that makes the celebration feel personal and memorable.

At Couture Florals and Events, we love when couples bring us imaginative ideas. Your wedding should celebrate the two of you and the things you love, whatever month appears on the invitation.

So, if you've always dreamed of a Christmas wedding but your date is in July, embrace it. There's no need to wait until December to bring a little holiday magic to your big day.

If you love it, then we love it for you!

Call us at 850-830-5865.
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HOMETOWN HERO

continued from page 16

already honored him on September 11 with its Lifetime Membership Award. At the retirement reception, it was easy to understand why organizations wanted to recognize him. His work and his community involvement had become closely connected. When people needed an answer or help getting something done, they called Bernard.

Bernard also kept the evening in perspective. "The graveyard is full of indispensable people," he said. It was a reminder about humility from a man whose accomplishments had been celebrated all night. Then he offered a practical rule that helps explain how he gets so much done: "If something takes two minutes or less, do it now."

We finally heard Bernard's beehive story, which had given his friends plenty of material for the evening's gentle roast. He explained that civic programs such as honorary commander bring people "inside the hive," where they can see how relationships are built and decisions get made. From outside, people may wonder how it all happens. His explanation had the room laughing, but the point came through: Bernard has spent years opening doors, making connections, and helping people get into the hive.

His next chapter is already taking shape. Bernard announced that he will join the Jay Odom Group in mid-October, another respected organization deeply involved in our community. The sun has set on his FPL career, but a new opportunity is already rising. Apparently, Bernard's retirement will last about two weeks, so we can expect him to keep showing up.

Ted returned to the stage for the final moment. "Jay Odom owns the mic," he said, encouraging Bernard to drop it and walk off. After some good-natured prodding, Bernard finally dropped the microphone and left the stage. It was a fitting ending to a wonderful evening honoring a man whose kindness has made so many people glad to see him walk into a room. Here's to you, Bernard. We'll always save you a seat at the table—unless you get there first and save one for us.

Weddings

Love Wins at The Alice Just 24 Hours Before Storm Hits

Not Even a Hurricane Could Stop Ansley and Jack Kurlander's Celebration of Love



By Kristin Sullivan, General Manager, The Alice

They spent an entire year planning the wedding of their dreams. Every detail, every moment, every carefully chosen element was designed to celebrate a love story worth remembering. But, as Ansley and Jack Kurlander's long-awaited wedding approached, Mother Nature had plans of her own.

With a hurricane threatening Florida's Emerald Coast and Destin in its potential path, the couple faced an unexpected challenge that no wedding planning checklist could have anticipated. We went from a Saturday wedding to a Thursday wedding, from four days to two days and from Plan A to Plan E!

But one thing was certain: Their love story wasn't going to be put on hold!

Against a backdrop of uncertainty, changing forecasts and the possibility of severe weather, Ansley and Jack remained determined to celebrate their commitment to one another at The Alice, Destin's luxury waterfront wedding destination.

And in the end, love won.

A Year of Dreams, A Test of Determination

Destination weddings are about so much more than a single day. They represent months of anticipation, the gathering of family and friends, and the promise of unforgettable memories.

For Ansley and Jack, a year of planning had led to this moment. And while a hurricane threatened to interrupt their celebration, it could not diminish the significance of the occasion.

At The Alice, where the philosophy of bringing people together is at the heart of every celebration, the Kurlanders' wedding became a beautiful reminder that the most meaningful moments in life aren't always the ones that go exactly according to plan.

Sometimes, they're the ones that remind us why we celebrate in the first place.

100 Guests Braved the Storm to Celebrate with them here in Destin. After more than 33 years in the wedding and special events industry, I've learned that you can plan for almost anything, but Mother Nature will always have the final say.

What you cannot predict is the extraordinary determination of two people who simply want to begin their married life together. Ansley and Jack reminded us that while the weather might change, the reason we gather never does. Love, family, commitment and the memories created together are what truly matter.

For our team at The Alice, the occasion represented the very essence of hospitality: embracing life's unexpected moments while keeping the celebration of human connection at the center of it all.

A Love Story Stronger than the Storm with a Sunset Forever Etched in their Hearts!

Located along the picturesque waters of Choctawhatchee Bay, The Alice has become a gathering place for couples seeking an extraordinary destination wedding experience on Florida's Emerald Coast.

But beyond the beautiful waterfront setting, elegant celebrations and thoughtfully curated experiences lies something even more important: the stories of the people who celebrate there. Ansley and Jack Kurlander have now added a particularly memorable chapter to that collection with a truly breathtaking sunset!

Their wedding serves as a reminder that marriage is not about perfect weather, flawless timelines or even the perfect wedding day. It's about choosing one another, especially when life takes an unexpected turn. A hurricane may have threatened their wedding plans, but it never stood a chance against their commitment to each other.

At The Alice, their story will be remembered for one simple, beautiful truth: The forecast called for a hurricane. Their hearts called for forever. And love won.





Located at 109 Calhoun Avenue in Destin, Florida, The Alice is a luxury waterfront wedding and special events destination overlooking Choctawhatchee Bay. Featuring distinctive event spaces, eight charming waterfront cottages, and thoughtfully curated guest experiences, The Alice welcomes destination weddings, corporate retreats, private celebrations and special gatherings. Known as A Gathering Place, The Alice celebrates the extraordinary moments that bring people together.



Education

Destin High Biomed Program Offers Exciting Opportunities

Students Learn Medical, Biological, Pharmacological Pathways, Prep For Careers

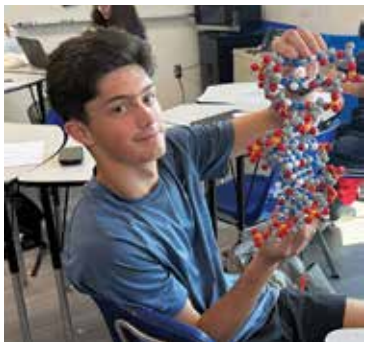
By Katie Dubnik

At Destin High School (DHS), there is a group of students for whom the "three Rs" might stand for, Reading, wRiting and Resuscitation – or maybe micRobiology or even cRime scene investigations.

Thanks to the new biomedical science course study at the school, Destin High students can flex all their science and medicine brain cells, while also gaining clarity regarding potential careers in more than 30 medical fields.

After 30 years of teaching, Dr. Juanese Jones initiated the biomedical science program at DHS for the 2026-27 school year, launching the first class of what will eventually be a four-year curriculum at the school. The first section, principles of biomedical science, is part of Destin High's unique commitment to Career and Technical Education offerings and Destin administrators and Dr. Jones are excited about the opportunities ahead. In fact, school leadership has already received some exciting feedback from those Sharks students enrolled in the program. "The kids love it. I started with 16 students, and now I'm up to 19, and I expect the program to continue to grow. It really could blow up over the next few years," said Dr. Jones, "It's a great foundation for studies in medical, dental, or graduate school and really gives the students an idea if they're interested in pursuing a career in fields related to a whole range of health care, medicine, lab work, and beyond. And even for those students who may not end up pursuing a career in biomedical this coursework also looks great on a transcript."

In the coming years, Dr. Jones will add the classes of human body systems, medical interventions, and biomedical interventions (a capstone for a four-year course study) to round out the coursework. These classes will also allow DHS students to gain various full and partial certifications that they may take with





them into higher education or the job force. "The students get to do a lot of hands-on lab work at all levels of this course study, and they love working with their hands and doing the things that they would be doing in real time if they pursued this course work as a career," Dr. Jones said. "For instance, they get to work some situations as if they were crime scene investigators. It's a fascinating way to learn about aspects like blood analysis skills in both clinical and lab-style environments."

Crime-scene-style labs are just a small part of the curriculum, which also sees students learn safety, documentation, and analysis skills tied to credentials in both clinical and lab-style environments.

In general, Destin High's biomedical science coursework focuses on anatomy and physiology, biochemistry, microbiology and immunology, genetics and molecular biology, and pharmacology. Education in these settings bridges general science and medicine, teaching students how cells, organs, and systems function in health and how they break down during illnesses (such as cancer and infections).

Not only that, but students also get the chance to earn real-world credentials and certifications. In fact, DHS biomed students will eventually be able to graduate with full certifications from the Bioscience Core Skills Institute, the National Consortium for Health Science Education, and the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute. Partial certifications may also be earned from the American College of Surgeons in "Stop the Bleed," as well as partial certifications from the American Heart Association (including CPR, First AID, AED, and bloodborne pathogens), the American Red Cross (CPR, First AID, AED, bloodborne pathogens, and First Aid for Severe Trauma), Biotility, and the National Outdoor Leadership School in wilderness medicine.

Considering the potential advantages available, it's understandable why many DHS students are jumping at the opportunity for practical advancement and learning. "Kids don't want to waste time nowadays; they want to do things and learn things that will help them define a goal and reach it," Dr. Jones said. "The kids at DHS are all striving to do well, and they want to be as qualified as possible when they leave here."

The Destin High administration understood that from the start. From the moment the charter school opened its doors in 2021, leadership focused on delivering CTE courses that not only offered unique educational options but also provided students with a base for success after graduation. "We take our CTE experiences and teaching roles as serious as we do the core structures and pursuits of high school education," said Dr. Willy Williams, executive director of DHS. "We know that kids get a charge out of doing some-

Continued on page 46






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 • Food Trucks
CORE GIVES
PIRATE ATTIRE ENCOURAGED
GIFTS FOR THE FIRST 100 PIRATES!
Spearman
BCCA
BREWERY COLLECTIBLES CLUB of AMERICA

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.

The snowbirds have landed—and we've got clean energy to get-up-and-go!

From morning tee times to afternoon pickleball and exploring Destin, put a little pep in your coastal step with Coastal Protein & Energy's Loaded & Energy Teas!

With 160 mg of caffeine plus vitamins, they're a flavorful pick-me-up for your beach-town routine. Make yours your own with optional add-ins like protein, collagen or electrolytes.

Grab your winter crew and find your favorite flavor. Come and find out what our locals already know and love!

You brought the vacation plans. We'll bring the clean energy!

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.

Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

(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 legendary 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.

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

Surf Bread Company

Few things are more inviting than the aroma of freshly baked bread, and Surf Bread Company brings that experience to

Continued on next page







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 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 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 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 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 regular 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 experience 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!

DESTIN DINING

continued from previous page

Destin one delicious small batch at a time. This local cottage bakery specializes in naturally leavened artisan sourdough, crusty baguettes, chewy bagels, English muffins, sweet breads and tempting seasonal creations.

Using traditional slow-fermentation methods, each loaf is given the time it needs to develop its distinctive flavor, texture and perfectly golden crust. Whether you're picking up a baguette for dinner, bagels for breakfast or a specialty loaf to share, every offering reflects the bakery's commitment to patience, quality and craftsmanship.

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

Preorders are available Tuesday through Saturday by calling (850) 650-2334.

Follow Surf Bread Company for weekly menus, specialty loaves, seasonal offerings and bakery updates.

SurfBreadCo.com



November
7 SEC Football Watch Party
8 Still Standing: A Tribute to Elton John
14 SEC Football Watch Party
21 SEC Football Watch Party
26 Thanksgiving Grand Buffet

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

Weekly Events
Live Music Nightly, Featuring:
· Dueling Pianos Thursday through Saturday · Alex Napier Monday - Wednesday
· Brunch by the Lake with Live Music Saturday and Sunday
· Sunday Funday with the Will Thompson Band Sundays Now - Nov. 28

Visit OldFloridaFishHouse.com
for schedules, tickets and more information

OLD FLORIDA FISH HOUSE
33 Heron's Watch Way | Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459
info@oldfloridafishhouse.com | 850.534.3045

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

Local Fan Favorites



By Scott Miller

Rolling into week 11 of the 2026 College Football season we have some intrigue and some business as usual that has caught my attention. November is the home stretch. It's the time of the season that determines who will be in line for, not only a top tier Bowl Game invitation, but also a run to the College Football Championship Game and the opportunity to be crowned National Champion! As of November 1st, here's where things stand; Currently sitting at the top and ranked #1 is Miami (FL) with #2 Georgia close behind. No surprises so far. Sitting at # 3, and here comes that intrigue I mentioned, is Utah (8-0). Yes, Utah. Sitting at 4 and 5 are Notre Dame and UCLA which feels a bit interesting. Reigning Champion Indiana nestles in at 6, with BYU following at #7, Kentucky #8, Alabama #9 and Texas #10. Who will rise to the top?

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, mouthwatering 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
ajsdestin.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 Monday - Friday. Saturday and Sunday Football Specials. All Day Everyday Drink Specials: 16 oz. Outlaw Draft $3, 16oz Budweiser Draft $3, House Margarita on the Rocks $5, Drink of the Week $5, 5 c.t Domestic Bucket Specials $16, 5 ct. Imports or Seltzer Bucket Specials $24.

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

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

Continued on next page



FAN FAVORITES

continued from previous page

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.

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 on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. 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.,
on the Destin Harbor
tailfinsislandadventure.com

RAW BAR!
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NFL Sunday Ticket & All College Games
TRIVIA
5:30-7 pm
HAPPY HOUR!
Monday-Friday
Home of the 102 ft. bar including 32 beers on draft!
Specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail!





(850) 842-3200 | 125 Poinciana Blvd | Miramar Beach | austonson98.com



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
$7 Margaritas, Johnnys Red Ale, Michelob Draft Pints, Well Drinks, Long Island Teas, House Wines

Tailfins WATERFRONT Grill Destin Harbor

Live Music on the Docks
7 Days a Week

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



2026 Pro Football Schedule

WEEK 9

Thursday, Nov. 5
Jacksonville Jaguars at Baltimore Ravens, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 8
Cincinnati Bengals at Atlanta Falcons (Madrid), 8:30 a.m., NFL Network
Denver Broncos at Carolina Panthers, Noon, CBS
Dallas Cowboys at Indianapolis Colts, Noon, Fox
New York Jets at Kansas City Chiefs, Noon, CBS
Detroit Lions at Miami Dolphins, Noon, Fox
Cleveland Browns at New Orleans Saints, Noon, CBS
New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles, Noon, Fox
Los Angeles Rams at Washington Commanders, Noon, Fox
Houston Texans at Los Angeles Chargers, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Green Bay Packers at New England Patriots, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Arizona Cardinals at Seattle Seahawks, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Chicago Bears, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 9
Buffalo Bills at Minnesota Vikings, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: Pittsburgh Steelers, Tennessee Titans

WEEK 10

Thursday, Nov. 12
Washington Commanders at New York Giants, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 15
New England Patriots at Detroit Lions (Munich), 8:30 a.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, CBS
Houston Texans at Cleveland Browns, Noon, Fox
Minnesota Vikings at Green Bay Packers, Noon, Fox
Miami Dolphins at Indianapolis Colts, Noon, CBS
Carolina Panthers at New Orleans Saints, Noon, Fox
Buffalo Bills at New York Jets, Noon, CBS
Jacksonville Jaguars at Tennessee Titans, Noon, Fox
Los Angeles Rams at Arizona Cardinals, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Seattle Seahawks at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., CBS
San Francisco 49ers at Dallas Cowboys, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Pittsburgh Steelers at Cincinnati Bengals, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 16
Los Angeles Chargers at Baltimore Ravens, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: Chicago Bears, Denver Broncos, Philadelphia Eagles, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

WEEK 11

Thursday, Nov. 19
Indianapolis Colts at Houston Texans, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 22
Miami Dolphins at Buffalo Bills, Noon, CBS
Baltimore Ravens at Carolina Panthers, Noon, Fox
New Orleans Saints at Chicago Bears, Noon, Fox
Tennessee Titans at Dallas Cowboys, Noon, Fox
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Detroit Lions, Noon, Fox
Arizona Cardinals at Kansas City Chiefs, Noon, CBS
Jacksonville Jaguars at New York Giants, Noon, CBS
New York Jets at Los Angeles Chargers, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Las Vegas Raiders at Denver Broncos, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Pittsburgh Steelers at Philadelphia Eagles, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Minnesota Vikings at San Francisco 49ers (Mexico City), 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Nov. 23
Cincinnati Bengals at Washington Commanders, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: Atlanta Falcons, Cleveland Browns, Green Bay Packers, Los Angeles Rams, New England Patriots, Seattle Seahawks

WEEK 12

Wednesday, Nov. 25
Green Bay Packers at Los Angeles Rams, 7 p.m., Netflix
Thursday, Nov. 26
Chicago Bears at Detroit Lions, Noon, CBS
Philadelphia Eagles at Dallas Cowboys, 3:30 p.m., Fox
Kansas City Chiefs at Buffalo Bills, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Friday, Nov. 27
Denver Broncos at Pittsburgh Steelers, 2 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Nov. 29
New Orleans Saints at Cincinnati Bengals, Noon, CBS
Las Vegas Raiders at Cleveland Browns, Noon, Fox
Baltimore Ravens at Houston Texans, Noon, CBS
New York Giants at Indianapolis Colts, Noon, Fox
New York Jets at Miami Dolphins, Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at Minnesota Vikings, Noon, Fox
Tennessee Titans at Jacksonville Jaguars, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Washington Commanders at Arizona Cardinals, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Seattle Seahawks at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox
New England Patriots at Los Angeles Chargers, 7:20 p.m., NBC

Continued on next page

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147 Professional Place

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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 November Game-Day Picks

WEEK 10, NOV. 7
Arkansas @ Auburn 11:45AM, SECN
Alabama @ LSU 2:30PM, ABC
Texas @ Missouri 11AM, ESPN
Penn State @ Washington 2:30PM FS1
Kentucky @ Tennessee 5:15PM, ESPN
Georgia @ Ole Miss 6:30PM, ABC
Oklahoma @ Florida 6:45PM, SECN
Oregon @ Ohio State 7:30PM, CBS
Michigan State @ Michigan 6:30PM, PEAC
Miami (FL) @ Notre Dame 6:30PM, NBC

WEEK 11, NOVEMBER 14
Auburn @ Miss. State, TBD
Missouri @ Georgia, TBD
Florida @ Kentucky, TBD
Texas @ LSU, TBD
Ole Miss @ Oklahoma, TBD
Tennessee @ Texas A&M, TBD
Minnesota @ Penn State, TBD
USC @ Indiana, TBD
Northwestern @ Ohio State, TBD
Duke @ Miami (FL), TBD

WEEK 12, NOVEMBER 21
Samford @ Auburn, 2:30PM, SEC
Georgia @ S.Carolina
Kentucky @ Missouri, TBD
LSU @ Tennessee, TBD
Vanderbilt @ Florida, TBD
Rutgers @ Penn State, TBD
UCLA @ Michigan, TBD
Virginia Tech @ Miami (FL), TBD

WEEK 13, NOVEMBER 28
Auburn @ Alabama, TBD
Florida @ Florida St. 2:30PM, ABC
Texas @ Texas A&M 6:30PM, ABC
Miss. State @ Ole Miss, 11AM, ABC
Penn State @ Maryland, TBD
Michigan @ Ohio State 11AM, FOX
USC @ UCLA, TBD

PRO SCHEDULE

continued from previous page

Monday, Nov. 30
Carolina Panthers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: None

WEEK 13
Thursday, Dec. 3
Kansas City Chiefs at Los Angeles Rams, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Dec. 6
Detroit Lions at Atlanta Falcons, Noon, CBS
Jacksonville Jaguars at Chicago Bears, Noon, Fox

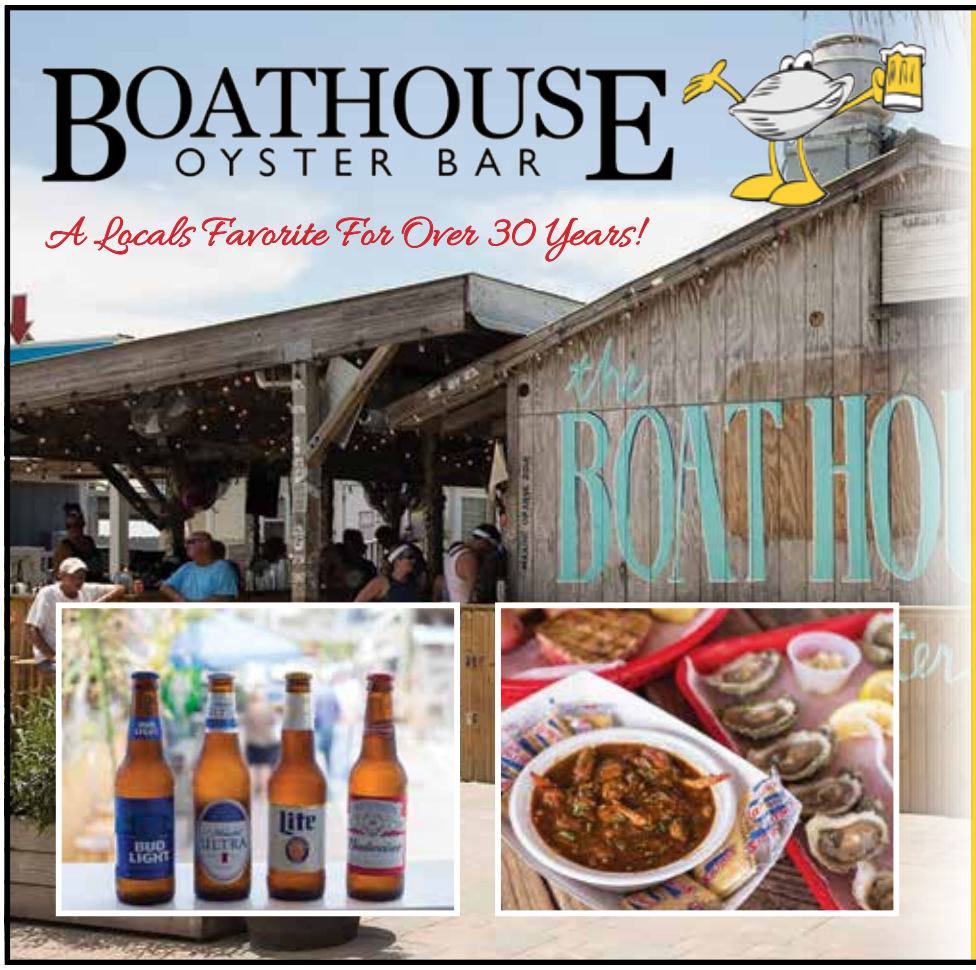
Cincinnati Bengals at Cleveland Browns, Noon, CBS
Green Bay Packers at New Orleans Saints, Noon, Fox
San Francisco 49ers at New York Giants, Noon, Fox
Los Angeles Chargers at Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Noon, CBS
Washington Commanders at Tennessee Titans, Noon, CBS
Philadelphia Eagles at Arizona Cardinals, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Miami Dolphins at Denver Broncos, 3:05 p.m., Fox
Carolina Panthers at Minnesota Vikings, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Buffalo Bills at New England Patriots, 3:25 p.m., CBS
Houston Texans at Pittsburgh Steelers, 7:20 p.m., NBC

Monday, Dec. 7
Dallas Cowboys at Seattle Seahawks, 7:15 p.m., ESPN



Bye week: Baltimore Ravens, Indianapolis Colts, Las Vegas Raiders, New York Jets

WEEK 14
Thursday, Dec. 10
Minnesota Vikings at New England Patriots, 7:15 p.m., Prime Video
Sunday, Dec. 13
Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Baltimore Ravens, Noon, Fox
New Orleans Saints at Carolina Panthers, Noon, CBS
Atlanta Falcons at Cleveland Browns, Noon, CBS
Tennessee Titans at Detroit Lions, Noon, Fox
Chicago Bears at Miami Dolphins, Noon, CBS
Denver Broncos at New York Jets, Noon, CBS
Indianapolis Colts at Philadelphia Eagles, Noon, Fox
Houston Texans at Washington Commanders, Noon, CBS
Los Angeles Chargers at Las Vegas Raiders, 3:05 p.m., CBS
Kansas City Chiefs at Cincinnati Bengals, 3:25 p.m., Fox
New York Giants at Seattle Seahawks, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Los Angeles Rams at San Francisco 49ers, 3:25 p.m., Fox
Buffalo Bills at Green Bay Packers, 7:20 p.m., NBC
Monday, Dec. 14
Pittsburgh Steelers at Jacksonville Jaguars, 7:15 p.m., ESPN
Bye week: Arizona Cardinals, Dallas Cowboys



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

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Off the Hook

Same Mission, Broader Role: **CBA Is Now the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance Estuary Program**

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) has a new name and a larger job. The organization is now the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance Estuary Program (CBAEP), a transition that adds regional coordination to the restoration, monitoring, research, and education work it has carried out since 1996.

For residents, the most important news is what stays the same. CBAEP will keep restoring oyster reefs and seagrass beds, monitoring water quality, and teaching local students through programs like Grasses in Classes. That hands-on work continues without interruption, led by the same team. "We're not replacing CBA; we're building on it," said Executive Director Alison McDowell. "The work we've been doing isn't going away. We're still the same organization, with the same people and the same commitment to the watershed. What's changing is that we have a bigger opportunity to bring people together, connect the work that's already happening, and take on some of the bigger challenges facing the Choctawhatchee watershed."



What's New

Local governments, scientists, nonprofits, businesses, and volunteer groups all work to protect the Choctawhatchee's bays, rivers, and coastal waters. As an estuary program, CBAEP now serves as the hub that connects them. The organization will:

- Coordinate projects among partners to reduce duplicated effort and stretch resources
- Pursue more funding, including estuary-wide grants, to speed up restoration
- Serve as a central point of contact for residents, partners, and funders
- The transition also supports long-term goals for the region, including raising the watershed's national profile and opening the door to additional federal and state resources for restoration.

Building on Shared Groundwork

CBAEP builds on a strong foundation. Okaloosa County and other Choctawhatchee County Estuary Coalition members laid important groundwork, developing the region's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and bringing partners together around a shared vision for the watershed. As the program moves forward under CBA and Northwest Florida State College, it carries that foundation into its next phase, with a stable home to build on and room to grow across the entire watershed.

How to Get Involved

CBAEP still needs volunteers for restoration projects, oyster gardening, and community science, and donations still support work in local waterways and classrooms. Find volunteer opportunities at basinalliance.org.

Okaloosa County to Deploy SS United States as World's Largest Artificial Reef

Okaloosa County will deploy the 990-foot SS United States ocean liner as the world's largest artificial reef on Thursday, November 12, 2026, weather permitting, in the Gulf about 22 nautical miles southwest of Destin-Fort Walton Beach. Deployment operations are scheduled to begin at 10 a.m.

The ship, which holds the ocean liner speed record set in 1952, will continue its record-setting legacy as the world's largest artificial reef, providing habitat for numerous marine species, a premier diving destination, and support for local and regional fisheries. "This will be a historic day for Destin-Fort Walton Beach and for a ship with such a historic story," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. "Her story will continue to be told by thousands of people who visit her in tandem with the SS United States Conservancy's land-based museum."



The vessel will be towed from Mobile, Ala., to the deployment site days in advance.

Sendoff Ceremony — Nov. 11

Okaloosa County will host a public sendoff ceremony celebrating the ship's history on Wednesday, November 11, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center. Light refreshments will be provided.

Deployment Day Viewing Party and Livestream — Nov. 12

A viewing party at AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar in Destin will begin at 9 a.m., featuring a live feed from the deployment site on the large outdoor screen. A livestream link will be shared at thessus.com before deployment.

In-Person Viewing

The deployment could draw hundreds of vessels. Okaloosa County is working with safety and security partners to ensure a safe, efficient deployment. Bystanders are expected to follow directions from safety boats at the site.

Proposed deployment location: 30° 07.148′N, 86° 46.755′ W

More Information

- Ship history — SS United States Conservancy: https://www.ssusc.org/
- 3D model of the ship: https://www.destinfwb.com/explore/eco-tourism/artificial-reefs/3d-models/
- Summary of the ship's completed remediation: https://www.destinfwb.com/explore/eco-tourism/ssus/ssus-remediation-updates/

The SS United States artificial reef project was fully funded by tourism revenue and contributions from multiple partners.



Sports

Crunch Fitness: The Workout You'll Want to Come Back To

The more you enjoy moving, the more likely you are to keep coming back.

What makes you want to do a workout again?

The music? The instructor who gets one more rep out of you? The energy of a room full of people moving together? Or simply finding a workout you look forward to instead of one that feels like another item on your to-do list?

That is the idea behind Crunch Fitness and its longtime philosophy: Make Serious Fitness Fun.

When Crunch Fort Walton Beach opens this winter in Longhorn Plaza, members will have plenty of ways to find their kind of fun.

Want strength? Try Crunch formats like Chisel It or Belly, Butt & Thighs. Prefer mind-body movement? Yoga Body Sculpt combines yoga with weights, cardio and strength work. Want to move to the music? Zumba® brings high-energy dance and cardio together.

Then there is HIIT. Crunch's HIIT classes combine fast-paced intervals, strength, cardio and functional training, with some formats adding team-style drills and friendly competition.

The Hot Studio adds even more variety with Hot Yoga and Hot Pilates.

Fort Walton Beach will also be a flagship location for two of Crunch's newest boutique-style concepts: the Crunch Reform Pilates™ Studio and Crunch Pump™ Strength Studio. Reform Pilates will blend instructor-led coaching with integrated digital guidance, while Crunch Pump will focus on progressive, coach-led strength training.

Peak and Peak Results memberships include group fitness classes, so members can mix things up, try something new and find workouts they enjoy. Access to the new boutique studios is included with Peak Results.

Research into exercise motivation has found that enjoyment can play an important role in helping people stay active. If you like the experience, there is more reason to come back.

Crunch adds music, energetic instructors, variety and connection. A class can become more than a workout. It can be the instructor you love, familiar faces or the class you never want to miss.

Crunch's No Judgments® philosophy ties it all together. You do not have to move at the same pace, have the same goals or like the same kind of workout. The idea is to give everyone more ways to find movement they enjoy.

Because when you find a workout you love, coming back gets a whole lot easier.

Recovery is part of the experience, too. Crunch's Relax & Recover® area will feature HydroMassage® beds, red light therapy and cryotherapy, plus tanning, a sauna, locker rooms with showers and Kid's Crunch babysitting. The club will be open and staffed 24 hours a day.

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 here. Prospective members can also enter to win one of 10 free one-year memberships here.



Local businesses can get involved, too. Crunch's Corporate Membership and Perks Partner programs offer employee discounts and ways for local businesses to connect with Crunch members through the 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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Safety

It Was Right There on the Porch

Protecting Your Deliveries During the Busiest Shipping Season of the Year



By Ted Toedte, CPD, Crime Prevention Specialist, WCSO

The notification pops up on your phone at 1:14 in the afternoon. Delivered. Front porch. You're at work, and you figure it'll be fine until you get home.

At 1:40, a car rolls slowly down your street and stops in front of your house. Someone walks up the driveway, picks up the box, and drives off. The whole thing takes less time than it took you to read this paragraph.

By the time you pull in, there's nothing on the porch but the doormat.

Package theft is one of the easiest crimes there is to commit, and November and December are its busiest months. SafeWise's 2025 package theft report estimates that more than 104 million packages were stolen nationwide during the period studied, a loss of roughly $15 billion. The same report found that more than 30 percent of people had a package stolen in that year, with the typical stolen package worth about $143.

Here's the number that bothers me most. According to Security.org, fewer than one in four package theft victims report it to local law enforcement. That means most of these thefts never land on anyone's radar. I'll come back to that.

The good news is that porch piracy is a crime of opportunity, and opportunity is something you control.

Start with the simplest fix. Don't let packages sit. Track your deliveries and get them inside as soon as you can. If you won't be home, ask a neighbor to grab them, and return the favor. Many retailers let you pick a delivery day, require a signature for higher-dollar items, or ship to a store or locker for pickup. If your employer allows it, have packages sent to work. And if you shop online a lot, a lockable package box by the front door is money well spent.

Now look at your front door the way a thief would. That's the idea behind CPTED, (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), and it's how we look at every home during our free security assessments. Can your porch be seen from the street and from your neighbors' windows? Or is it tucked behind overgrown shrubs where nobody would notice a stranger standing there? Trim the landscaping so the entrance is visible. Make sure the porch is well lit, because in November it's dark by suppertime, and a package dropped off at 4:30 can sit in the dark for hours. If you have a side entrance out of view from the street, tell the carriers to leave packages there instead.

A doorbell camera or porch camera is a strong deterrent, especially when it's easy to see. It won't stop every theft, but it gives deputies something to work with. If your camera views the street, consider registering it with the Sheriff's Office at waltonso.org/camera. That lets investigators know a camera is there, so they can reach out and ask for footage if something happens nearby.

Apartment and condo residents deal with this on a bigger scale, with dozens of deliveries a day landing in breezeways and at mailroom doors. If you manage a community, a secure package room or locker system pays for itself quickly. Our team can look at where packages end up on your property and how to make that area more visible and better controlled, at no cost.

Now, back to reporting. If a package is stolen, report it, even if it was only worth twenty dollars. File with the seller or carrier to get your refund, then file with us at waltonso.org/online-reporting-system or by calling (850) 892-8111. In Okaloosa County, call 850-651-7400 or visit sheriff-okaloosa.org. If you have video, save it. People who steal packages rarely stop at one house, and a single report with a good camera clip can tie together a whole string of thefts across a neighborhood. If we don't hear about it, we can't connect it.

And if you see someone walking up to porches who doesn't belong there, or a car following a delivery truck through your neighborhood, call us. That isn't being nosy. That's being a good neighbor.

Those gifts are supposed to end up under your tree, not in somebody's trunk. Bring them in, light up the porch, and keep an eye on the house next door.

Ted Toedte is a crime prevention specialist with WCSO and has more than 30 years of law enforcement experience in Florida and California. He can be reached at toetheodore@waltonso.org. The Crime Prevention Division can be reached at crimeprevention@waltonso.org or (850) 892-8111. Learn more at waltonso.org.



Wellness



The Effectiveness of GLP-1 Medications:
A Healthier Approach to the Holiday Season

By Dr. Richard Chern

As Thanksgiving approaches, many people look forward to gathering with family, enjoying traditional holiday meals, and celebrating the season. However, for individuals working toward weight-loss goals, the holidays can also bring challenges. With larger portions, tempting desserts, and busy schedules, maintaining healthy habits may seem difficult. Fortunately, GLP-1 medications have emerged as an effective tool for weight management and improved metabolic health, helping many people make meaningful progress toward their health goals.

What Are GLP-1 Medications?

GLP-1 stands for glucagon-like peptide-1, a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar, appetite, and digestion. GLP-1 receptor agonist medications, including semaglutide, mimic the effects of this naturally occurring hormone. Tirzepatide, another widely used medication, acts on both GIP and GLP-1 receptors.

These medications help people feel full sooner, stay satisfied longer, and experience fewer food cravings. They also help regulate blood sugar levels, making certain medications useful for managing type 2 diabetes. By reducing hunger and supporting better portion control, GLP-1-based treatments can make it easier for eligible individuals to achieve and maintain weight loss.

How Effective Are GLP-1 Medications?

Clinical research has demonstrated that GLP-1-based medications can produce significant weight loss when combined with healthy lifestyle changes. In major clinical trials, adults without diabetes taking semaglutide 2.4 mg lost approximately 15% of their initial body weight on average over 68 weeks. In a separate trial, tirzepatide produced average weight reductions of approximately 15% to 21%, depending on the dose, over 72 weeks.

People with diabetes may experience different average weight-loss outcomes. Medication choice, dosage, nutrition, physical activity, and ongoing medical supervision all influence success.

Beyond weight loss, some patients experience improvements in blood sugar control, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and other measures of metabolic health. For eligible patients, certain medications may also provide additional cardiovascular benefits.

Enjoying Thanksgiving While Protecting Your Progress

Thanksgiving does not have to mean abandoning your health goals. Whether you take a GLP-1 medication or are pursuing weight management through lifestyle changes, a balanced approach can help you enjoy the holiday without unnecessary pressure.

Consider these simple strategies:

• Prioritize protein and vegetables. Include turkey, other lean proteins, and vegetables to help support fullness and balanced nutrition.

• Practice mindful portions. Enjoy your favorite holiday foods in reasonable portions rather than feeling obligated to try everything.

• Eat slowly. GLP-1 medications can increase feelings of fullness, so pay attention to your body's signals and stop when comfortably satisfied.

• Stay hydrated. Drinking enough water supports overall health and may help reduce constipation, a common side effect of these medications.

• Keep moving. A family walk after Thanksgiving dinner can be an enjoyable way to stay active.

• Skip the guilt. One holiday meal does not define your long-term progress. Consistency over time matters most.



A Sustainable Path Toward Better Health

GLP-1 medications can be powerful tools for appropriate patients, but they are not a quick fix. These medications require medical guidance, and they are not suitable for everyone. At The Hormone Restoration Center we can help determine which treatment is appropriate and establish a safe, individualized plan. Call (850)837-1721 to schedule a consultation.

As Thanksgiving approaches, remember that health is about more than the number on the scale. It is about building sustainable habits, improving well-being, and enjoying meaningful moments with loved ones. With the right medical support and realistic expectations, GLP-1 treatment may help eligible individuals move toward a healthier future—during the holidays and throughout the year.





Wellness

Krisy's Self-Care Corner: Holiday Glow - Smart Skincare for Every Age



By Krisy Anderson, Beverly Hills Day Spa

November brings a season of gratitude, gatherings and holiday photos. As we prepare to celebrate, I always remind my clients: Beautiful skin starts with consistent care and products that fit your needs.

Social media offers endless routines and must-have products, but more isn't always better. This holiday season, keep your skincare simple, personalized and consistent.

Tweens and Teens: Build Good Habits

Start with a gentle cleanser, a toner suited to your skin, a light moisturizer and daily broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher sunscreen. For acne-prone skin, I offer free consultations to recommend products and treatments from our Custom Skin Care line at Beverly Hills Day Spa.

Depending on your skin's needs, options include our Clarifying Cleanser, Purifying Astringent, Vital Essence moisturizer or O2 Rejuvenating Cream. The goal is to build healthy habits with a routine that keeps young skin comfortable and cared for. (*Parents: A consultation with tailored skincare makes a great Christmas gift!)

Adults: Keep It Consistent

A dependable home routine and regular professional care make a great team. Monthly facial appointments provide time for thorough cleansing, gentle exfoliation and treatments selected to address concerns such as dullness, dryness and the appearance of fine lines.

Between visits, keep cleansing, moisturizing and daily sunscreen at the center of your routine. Introduce new products gradually and give your skin time to adjust.

Mature Skin: Make Hydration a Priority

As skin becomes drier, richer moisture can help it feel softer and more comfortable. Ask about our Aloe Cream, Vital Essence and Hydration Serum for a routine tailored to dry or very dry skin. Your skin's needs matter more than the number on your birthday cake. A personalized combination of home care and facial treatments can help you look refreshed and feel pampered throughout the season.

A Little Holiday Polish

At Beverly Hills Day Spa, I enjoy helping clients choose monthly facial treatments and home care products from our Custom Skin Care line to address their individual concerns.

I also specialize in matching Jane Iredale mineral cosmetics to each client's skin type, tone and preferred finish. The collection includes makeup options with SPF—an addition to your daily sunscreen routine.

Before a big gathering, stick with products your skin already knows. Schedule a free consultation, and let's create a skincare plan and holiday look that help you feel comfortable, confident and ready to celebrate.

This Thanksgiving season, make room for a little self-care alongside caring for everyone else!

Beverly Hills Day Spa is located at 114 Palmetto Street, Suite 6, Destin. Call 850-654-8544 or visit BeverlyHillsDaySpa.com to schedule your appointment.



Care Beyond the Emergency: Okaloosa's Andrew Kindle Earns National Honor

For Okaloosa County EMS Community Paramedic Andrew Kindle, caring for people means making sure help reaches them beyond an emergency. His work includes delivering care, educating residents and connecting with people who need to know someone cares.



That commitment has earned Kindle the 2026 National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians Community Paramedic of the Year Award.

Kindle has helped build and lead Okaloosa County's Community Paramedicine Team over the past 18 months, serving residents whose needs can extend well beyond a single ambulance ride or emergency room visit. "I am truly humbled by this recognition and am proud to serve Okaloosa County in the role of a Community Paramedic," said

Continued on page 40



Wellness

More Cheer, Less All-or-Nothing



By Lisa Leath Turpin, CPT, Health & Wellness Coach

The holiday calendar fills up fast—and so do our plates. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I encourage you to focus on a few steady habits that leave room for your favorite traditions.



Here's where to start:

• **Don't arrive running on empty.** Skipping meals to "save up" for a holiday dinner can leave you overly hungry and make portions harder to manage. Eat your regular meals beforehand. If dinner will be late, try a small snack, such as yogurt and fruit or an apple with peanut butter. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also advises against skipping meals before a holiday feast.

• **Choose your favorites and savor them.** Take a look at the food before filling your plate. Choose the dishes you truly look forward to, starting with modest portions of richer foods. Include vegetables and a protein source, such as turkey, fish or beans. Sit down, eat slowly and pause before going back for seconds. Give yourself a chance to notice whether you're still hungry or comfortably satisfied.

• **Make movement part of the celebration.** Invite the family for a 10-minute walk after dinner, stroll through the neighborhood to see holiday decorations or dance while cleaning up. Short activity breaks count! According to the CDC, even a few minutes of moderate-intensity activity can provide health benefits and count toward your weekly activity goal.

• **Keep your muscles working.** Walking is valuable, but muscles also need activities that challenge them. The CDC recommends muscle-strengthening activity at least two days a week for adults. When time is tight, shorten your usual workout or use familiar exercises such as chair squats, wall push-ups and resistance-band rows. Choose movements suited to your ability and build gradually. Maintaining strength helps with everyday tasks, from carrying groceries to lifting a grandchild.

• **Have a plan for your busiest days.** A packed calendar doesn't have to mean abandoning your routine. Decide what is manageable: perhaps a short walk, regular meals and a consistent bedtime. Put movement on your calendar just as you would an appointment. I encourage you to give yourself a realistic routine you can maintain, even when the day gets busy.

• **Start fresh at the next meal.** If you eat more than you intended, return to your regular routine at the next meal. There's no need to skip meals or schedule a punishing workout. Healthy habits develop through the choices you make consistently over time.

My holiday advice? Enjoy the foods you love, make time for the people who matter and keep taking care of yourself along the way. You don't have to wait until January to do something good for your health.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthy Eating and the Holidays, How to Have Healthier Holidays, and Adult Activity: An Overview.

Lisa Leath Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach and consultant who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the body and mind of others. With over 20 years' experience, Lisa has a B.S. degree in Sports & Fitness Management from the University of Alabama, developed and managed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Health & Wellness Facility and programs in Huntsville, Ala., is board certified by the National Board of Fitness Examiners and possesses certifications from AFAA, Polestar/Balanced Body, Reebok U, SCW Fitness and American Heart Association. She is currently a group exercise leader at Destin Health & Fitness and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, diversely and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation.

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Wellness

Feelings on Bioenergetics

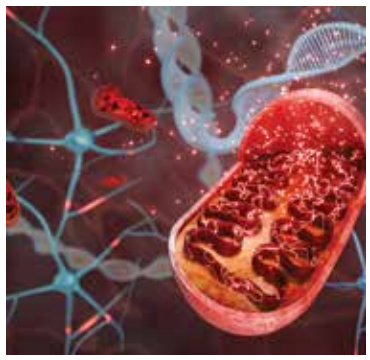


By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, Certified Nutrition & Skin Advisor

Who hasn't ever wanted more energy? We need energy to accomplish everything we do each day, from getting out of bed to spending time with family and friends and managing all the busyness of the day. We use it every day, as it makes our lives easier and brings enrichment in different ways. We can't see it, but we know when it's not there. Let's take a mini-dive into what it is and how exploring physics helps us find new ways to harness it for better health.

In some wellness and spiritual traditions, energy, described using terms such as qi, prana, spirit and ether, etc., and exploring these concepts is becoming more popular in thinking about enhancing the Body's healing processes.

Physics shows that everything is composed of energy. This energy can be observed or felt even though we are unable to see it. It is constant, occupies space and can be influenced by other energy. Matter (energy) can't be created or destroyed; it only changes form. It also has a frequency or a vibration and frequency.



Matter is made up of atoms and all atoms emit waves of energy that interact with other atoms. We recognize energy as energy waves. We use these waves daily in the form of radios, ultraviolet waves, far infrared light, microwaves, etc. These waves are identified by their frequencies. Frequency is determined by the number of waves that pass a point every second.

Human cells operate in the range of 1 to 32,000 hertz. In other words, the highest frequency to which the body was designed to respond is approximately 32,000 waves per second. In contrast, cell phones operate in the range of 3 to 4 gigahertz (3 or 4 billion waves per second). Personally, I'm concerned about possible health effects, such as DNA damage, from holding a phone against the ear regularly or carrying it in a front pocket.

Everything is energy. Energy is frequency. Frequency is vibration. We are energy.

These frequencies can be separated into different categories including Light, Sound, Smell, Emotions. Balancing the Energy Equation includes chemical energy, electrical energy, heat energy, mechanical energy and so many more. They are constantly changing from one to another.

Let's move on to the title of this article: Bioenergetics is a field in biochemistry and cell biology that concerns energy flow through living systems. This is an active area of biological research that includes the study of the transformation of energy in living organisms and the study of thousands of different cellular processes such as cellular respiration and the many other metabolic and enzymatic processes that lead to production and utilization of energy in forms such as adenosine triphosphate (Wikipedia). And, Bioenergetics bridges physics, chemistry, and biology, providing an integrated framework for understanding how life captures, stores, and channels energy to sustain itself.

Insights into energy transformation and regulation in cells continue to influence advances in science and technology.

Have you ever listened to talks on maintaining a positive attitude, both in mind and speech? What have you noticed about how you feel when you think or speak positively versus negatively? One has a higher vibration and the other a lower one. Higher vibrations heal and lower vibrations injure. If you want to see how what we speak affects us, I encourage you to watch these: https://m.youtube.com/shorts/E61HD-fG70c8?rq=m and https://m.youtube.com/shorts/QRks5iiP-2PU?ra=m.

The human body is comprised of 70% water. Water has memory as does nature and our body. So, what are we telling it?

The bioenergetic field offers various tools and therapies that can aid in restoring balance and flow to energetic systems of the body. Many of these devices can be purchased for in home use. My husband and I own a BEMER (Bio-ElectroMagnetic Regulation) mat. Certain BEMER devices can aid in improving circulation.

Today is a good day to start speaking life into yourself and others. To me, "health is frequency" is a reminder to pay attention to the thoughts, words and habits we repeat. Have a fabulous and positive Thanksgiving.

Here's to Health! HealthyDay HealthyLife

succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

HOLIDAY

continued from page 4

Choose a licensed practitioner who uses sterile, single-use needles. Discuss your medications, medical conditions, and any pregnancy or bleeding concerns before treatment. You can arrive curious, skeptical, or nervous. Bring your questions.

Stop Saving Yourself for January

There is always a reason to postpone care. After the guests leave. After the shopping is finished. After the year ends.

Meanwhile, your life keeps happening. The family walk happens. The grandchildren get on the floor to play. Someone starts telling a story that makes everyone laugh until they cry.

You deserve to experience those moments with as much comfort as possible.

This November, give yourself something more useful than another promise to take care of yourself later. Start a conversation about what hurts, what you miss, and whether acupuncture could help.

Everyone else is already on your list. Put yourself on it, too.



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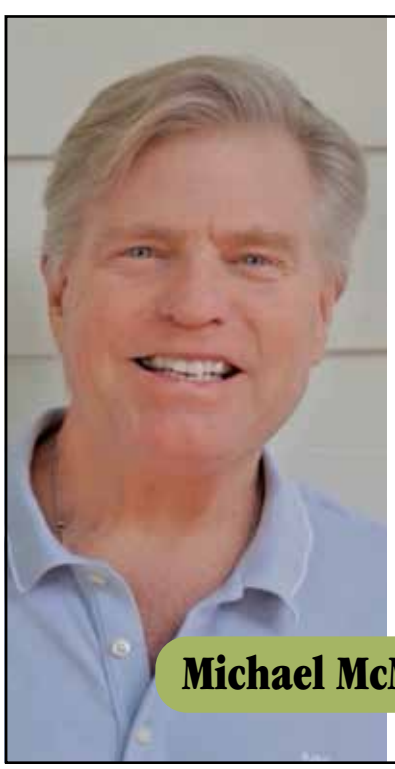


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Wellness

My Resource Shelf



By Stephenie Craig, Journey Bravely

As we celebrate Thanksgiving and focus on gratitude, this can be a time of reflection about how you've lived during 2026 and how you might want to focus on growth in the coming year. I find myself grateful for the many helpful resources along my journey. This month I'm sharing some of my favorite resources that have positively impacted me, my friends, and many of my clients.

If you've struggled with feeling guilty when you say "no," overcommitting, an overfocus on the problems of those close to you, and not being able to separate your emotional experience from others, I recommend the following books:

• **Boundaries** by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend (Christian) Codependent No More by Melody Beattie

• **The New Codependency** by Melody Beattie

If you struggle with feelings of shame (consistently feeling like something is wrong with or about you) or difficulty expressing vulnerability or making space for the vulnerable expression of others, I recommend the following books:

• **I Thought It Was Just Me, But It Isn't** by Brene Brown Daring Greatly by Brene Brown

If you often feel like the world or other people are making your life hard and victimizing you in some way or you feel powerless to change difficult situations in your life, I recommend the following books:

• **The Power of TED** by David Emerald The Let Them Theory by Mel Robbins

If you struggle to work through mistakes and failure without spiraling into shame, I recommend the following book:

• **Rising Strong** by Brene Brown

If you you find it difficult to choose healthy people and relationships in your life, I recommend the following book:

• **Safe People** by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr John Townsend (Christian)

If you have a feeling you need to end some kind of relationship or circumstance in your life and want help sorting through confusing feelings, I recommend the following book:

• **Necessary Endings** by Dr. Henry Cloud (Christian)

If you struggle with overperforming, perfectionism, feeling you have to get everything right all of the time, and judging yourself/others harshly for mistakes, I recommend the following book:

• **The Gifts of Imperfection** by Brene Brown

If you want to parent your children with respect for recent brain development research, connection, and healthy boundaries, I recommend the following books:

• **Good Inside** by Dr. Becky Kennedy Good Inside with Dr. Becky podcast

• **The Whole Brain Child** by Dr. Daniel J. Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson No Drama Discipline by Dr. Daniel J. Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson

• **The Connected Child** by Dr. Karyn Purvis, Dr. David Cross, Wendy Lyons Sunshine (This book is specifically written regarding children who have experienced hard things in early childhood such as trauma, foster care, etc. but great reading for any parent with a child that might be struggling.)

If you want to understand your behavior, personality, motivations and those of others better to improve your insight and relationships, I recommend the following resources:

The Road Back to You by Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile (Enneagram Book) (Christian) Your Enneagram Coach, the Podcast (Christian)

If you want to work on connection and increased understanding in your marriage or couple relationship, I recommend the following resources:

• **The Secure Relationship Instagram** with Julie Mennano @thesecurerelationship Secure Love by Julie Mennano

• **Hold Me Tight** by Sue Johnson

• **Safe Haven Marriage** by Dr Archibald D. Hart and Dr. Sharon May (Christian)

If you want to explore historical roots of behaviors that are causing you trouble in the present such as anger issues, avoidance, putting up walls, people pleasing, and approval seeking, I recommend the following books:

• **The Internal Family Systems Therapy Workbook** by Richard Schwartz Boundaries for Your Soul by Dr. Alison Cook and Kimberly June Miller (Christian) The Search For Significance by Robert S. McGee (Christian)

If you are working through spiritual wounds or are working to balance spiritual and emotional health, I recommend the following book:

• **Emotionally Healthy Spirituality** by Peter Scazzero (Christian)



If you are a Christian person who also struggles with Anxiety or Depression, or works with others who might struggle with Anxiety or Depression, I recommend the following book:

• **Hope for the Anxious and Depressed** by Hope A. Blanton and Christine B. Gordon

I recommend all of these books highly and consider them to be important reading for all humans. Try picking one that seems to apply to your current space in life and read or listen to the audiobook. Give yourself some time to integrate and apply your learnings into daily life.

Then, pick another and keep going. I hope you find something helpful in this list as you seek to grow and love others well. Find us at Journeybravely.com for counseling and coaching support along your journey.

JOURNEY BRAVELY



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Business

Is Your Community Budget Connected?
Planning Today for Tomorrow's Technology Needs



By Don Carter, Secure Vision

For many condominium and HOA boards along the Emerald Coast, November means budgets, meetings and planning for the year ahead. Landscaping, insurance, maintenance, reserves and property projects are all competing for attention—and often for the same dollars.

Internet infrastructure may not always be at the top of that list, but it deserves a seat at the table.

Residents increasingly view dependable internet as an expected community service rather than an added amenity. They use it for work, entertainment, communication, security systems and everyday tasks. Owners who rent their units also know that connectivity can influence a guest's experience just as much as other property amenities.

Budget season provides a perfect opportunity to ask a few important questions: What does our community have today? How well is it performing? And what will we need in the future?

Start by reviewing the past year. Were there repeated complaints about speed or coverage? Did the network struggle during spring break or summer when occupancy increased? Is older equipment approaching replacement? Have new common areas, security systems or smart devices been added since the network was originally designed?

Sometimes a community doesn't need an entirely new system. Strategic upgrades may address specific weaknesses and extend the useful life of existing infrastructure. The important thing is understanding what you have before deciding what you need.

Boards should also review contracts and recurring technology costs. It is easy to continue paying for services simply because "that's what we've always had." Understanding exactly what your community is receiving can uncover opportunities for better service or smarter spending.

Planning ahead gives boards choices. When connectivity becomes an emergency, decisions are often made quickly. When it is part of the annual planning process, there is time to evaluate options, ask questions and determine what makes sense for that particular property.



At Secure Vision, we work with condominium and HOA communities throughout Northwest Florida to help boards evaluate current infrastructure and plan for future connectivity needs.

As you prepare next year's budget, remember: your community's digital infrastructure is infrastructure too. A little planning today can help prevent expensive surprises tomorrow.



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Musing

Sean of the South: **The Chalkboard**



By Sean Dietrich

We have this place in our kitchen. It's a wall. It used to be a door, some 102 years ago, when the house was built.

There used to be stairs outside this kitchen door, leading to the backyard. But the doorway has been sealed off. Now it's just a big blank space in our kitchen.

The wall is painted with black chalkboard paint. So it's basically a big blackboard, just like the kind you once used for working out algebra problems in front of your whole class.

We write things on this board. My wife and I. The writings always change.

Usually you walk into the kitchen, and you'll just happen to notice that someone has erased the old writing, and added something new.

My wife writes messages like, "Welcome home, you've been on the road for two weeks, we missed you!"

"The dogs say 'We 'ruff' you, Daddy.'"

"Happy birthday, Sean. I cannot imagine my life without you."

Little messages. Little words. Small words. But words carry power. Words are not lightweight.

In the mornings, as I make the coffee, standing in the kitchen with a bad case of bedhead, I stare at this chalkboard. And sometimes, in my half-waking state, I get lost in the chalkboard text. Gazing into the black-and-whiteness of it all.

During the Thanksgiving season, my wife writes messages to—well—to God, I guess. She writes things she is thankful for.

And as the coffee percolates, I shuffle over to the chalkboard for deeper inspection. Then, I and add my contribution to the lot.

The dogs see me squatting, writing with a small piece of chalk. Squatting, of course, puts me closer to their eye level. So, because I am hunching low, my dogs naturally assume I must have ham.

And they attack me.

Soon, I have lost my balance. I am now on the floor. Flat on my butt. With three dogs swarming, trying to muzzle their way past the other, as if to say, "He's mine!" "No, no! He's mine!" "Get out of the way, everyone knows he's mine!"

Tails wagging. Butts wagging. Lots of panting. Lots of licking.

All three of them are pressing their surgically cold noses on my bare skin. Each dog, wholly unashamed, devoid of ego. Fully vulnerable. Unconditionally honest with themselves, and with each other, in all regards. They are expressive, effusive, and rhapsodic with their demonstration of love. They love others like they've never been hurt.

And when I am thoroughly covered in dog saliva, which contains 98 percent water, a variation of proteins, enzymes, and other compounds, such as lysozyme and immunoglobulins, which aid digestion and have potent antimicrobial properties, I start to laugh privately.



I'm still looking at the chalkboard. I'm still holding the piece of chalk in my hands. And I'm thinking about my life. About my people. About my little family.

I'm looking at the white hairs on the snouts of my dogs, and remembering when they were mere puppies, cradled in my arms.

I'm thinking of how many generations this 102-year-old house has seen—how many Thanksgivings, Christmases, birthdays, and how many funerals.

I'm thinking about how friends become our truest family. About how nothing in this world lasts forever except memories. About how thankful I am. About how my life has been guided by an unseen hand, steering me from self-destruction, guiding me toward real love.

But mostly, I'm thinking about how it all went by so fast.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and novelist, known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in Southern Living, The Tallahassee Democrat, Good Grit, South Magazine, Alabama Living, the Birmingham News, Thom Magazine, The Mobile Press Register and Life Media publications, and he has authored seven books.

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Musing



A Pastor's Ponderings: **When the Church Says No, but Jesus Says Yes**

By Pastor Dave Holland

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles." — Luke 6:12–13, NIV

The majesty of Rome's Sistine Chapel overwhelmed me. Magnificent paintings, sculptures, and centuries of Christian history filled every corner. St. Peter's Basilica, rising 448 feet above the city, made me feel small. Yet the biblical scenes painted by Michelangelo drew me into the Gospel stories.

My wife, Jonie, and I explored Rome's historic churches, admiring masterpieces by Raphael and Michelangelo. During one visit, we encountered a celebration of the Mass. We sat quietly, enjoying the worship.

When the priest invited worshipers forward for Communion, Jonie, raised Catholic, whispered, "Let's go forward."

I hesitated but agreed. Standing among hundreds of worshipers, I knew my Protestant beliefs differed from Catholic teachings. Yet my heart longed for more of Jesus. Silently, I prayed, Lord, I want more of You.

Approaching the altar, the priest noticed my uncertainty. "Are you Catholic?" he asked in halting English.

"No," I answered.

He refused to offer me Communion.

I understood. Catholic teaching reserves the Eucharist for Catholics properly prepared to receive it. Many Protestants might question why I approached the altar.

Nevertheless, Scripture teaches that salvation rests upon faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:2–4: "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Because Catholics share this foundational belief, I consider them brothers and sisters in Christ. I anticipate the glorious Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when all believers gather to celebrate Christ's victory.

God chooses believers for salvation through "the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Ephesians 1:4 assures us that God chose us in Christ.

Though religious traditions may separate us at Communion, Jesus welcomes everyone who comes to Him in faith.

Sadly, Christianity remains divided. I treasure my Protestant heritage while loving and respecting Catholic believers. Must tragedy or persecution unite us before we recognize our common Lord?

Jesus offers a better way.

Before choosing His disciples, Christ spent the night praying. Later, approaching His crucifixion, He prayed for their unity:

"I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one." — John 17:11

Christ's prayer remains powerful today. The Holy Spirit continues drawing believers together.

Several years ago, during Easter, I felt compelled to walk every street in my hometown, praying for families, homes, and churches. At each church, I placed my hands upon the building and prayed for spiritual renewal.

Occasionally, I met pastors and prayed for them. Only one reciprocated by praying for me: Father Jim Golka of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in North Platte, Nebraska.

That simple exchange reminded me that Christian unity begins with individual hearts.

Lord, bind us together with cords that cannot be broken. Heal Your wounded people. Forgive our divisions and our determination to protect religious territory. Unite us in love for Your glory. Amen.





CARE BEYOND

continued from page 34

Kindle. "We are out in the public every day delivering care to patients, passing out Narcan, educating people and making sure that the people who need help know that someone cares."

The county's Community Paramedicine program brings non-emergency services to residents through scheduled home visits, education and connections to other health care providers. Its goal is to help patients maintain their health while reducing ambulance use and costly emergency room visits.

Community paramedics also participate in the Post Overdose Support Team, known as POST. The partnership brings together Okaloosa County EMS, law enforcement and Bridgeway Center Inc. to provide prompt and ongoing support to people who have survived an overdose within the previous 72 hours. "We are very proud of Paramedic Andrew Kindle," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. "Our Community Paramedicine program has led the state of Florida in excellence to reduce fatal overdoses, patient care and unnecessary ER visits. Andrew is a shining example of how to lead by example, showing passion for his work and empathy for his patients that truly changes lives."

A husband, father, Marine and firefighter, Kindle brings more than 17 years of first responder experience to his work. His career began in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he deployed with the Hurricane Katrina Task Force.

He later entered the fire service, became a certified haz-

Continued on next page

Musing

Christian Capitalist Lori Leath Miller: Led by Purpose

By Richard Sanders

As a publisher and executive editor at Life Media Group, Lori Leath Miller is in a unique position to spread the Good News to over 80,000 people every month throughout the Emerald Coast. The company's slogan, "Locals that features Easter and Christmas as front-page news!

After beginning her career at Southern Living magazine and Time Inc., Lori brought an innovative spirit to her next chapter. As a young mother, she wanted to continue working while spending time with her young children. So, she started her own at-home marketing business. Talk about a self-starter: she made it work before email, cell phones and the internet!



Like so many other locals, Lori moved here 20 years ago from Alabama, because she sought the beautiful weather and beaches and a fresh start. With marketing positions for two different large organizations here on the Emerald Coast, she quickly became an integral part of the business community.

Today, Lori is a devout woman of faith and is led by purpose in her work at Life Media. While Lori thought about ordained ministry at one point in her life, she ultimately determined that God called her to work in marketing, communications and public relations, and later, coming full circle, in publishing media, to serve His purpose. She realized that a layperson can have a ministry in business. "Personally and professionally, I feel like I'm a marketplace minister. In that respect, working hard in what you do, being excellent at what you do professionally, and then allowing God to infiltrate that, put the spiritual aspect to it, is helping people."

A key part of her role as publisher is supporting the hundreds of nonprofit organizations on the Emerald Coast. Through prayer, she seeks God's guidance on which organizations and events to highlight each month, helping readers in Life Media's eight communities discover where they can make a difference. "We feel like we're one of the best avenues for [nonprofits] to get the word out about that because we're going to do it more in depth." She is thankful for the advertisers who support each publication, praying regularly that their businesses thrive and their advertising generates a strong response, as well as seeking direction on the topics and articles to include in each issue.

Lori embraces her role as a Christian Capitalist and encourages others to look at their spiritual and business lives as integrated. "You can bring [your faith] into your business relationships, your dealings, your workplace, whether it's your employees or clients.… God can use you right where you are!"

Lori recently appeared on the Christian Capitalist podcast, and you can listen to the entire episode on Sowal Life's website. We are excited to share inspirational stories of people like Lori Miller, whose hard work and generous giving help the poor and needy in the name of Jesus Christ!

Get It," has a double meaning: it is delivered free of charge to homes and businesses from Panama City Beach to Fort Walton Beach and north of the Bay from Eglin Air Force Base to Freeport, and it includes news and notes about our communities that help bring its residents closer together.

It is also a terrific instrument, as founder Dave White likes to say, for "spreading salt." As Lori and I joked on her appearance on the Christian Capitalist podcast last month, it is one of the few newspapers in the nation

CARE BEYOND

continued from previous page

ardous materials specialist and worked in North Dakota, Tennessee and Antarctica's McMurdo Station. Today, he serves Okaloosa County EMS as a critical care, tactical and community paramedic.

His dedication has also earned him the Emerald Coast United Way's 40 Under 40 Award and Okaloosa County's Humanitarian Efforts Award. Within his department, he shares his commitment to caring for often-overlooked residents through frequent training presentations.

The national honor is part of the National EMS Awards of Excellence presented by NAEMT and EMS World. Recipients were recognized during NAEMT's General Membership Meeting on Sept. 30, and at the opening ceremony of EMS World Expo in Orlando.

For residents and families, the work being recognized is available close to home. To learn about receiving community paramedicine services or to make a referral, call 850-651-7566 or email OCEMSMIH@myokaloosa.com. More information is available myokaloosa.com/ps/community-paramedicine.

MUSIC AT CHRIST THE KING

Celtic Concert Presentation
Jennifer Licko, Woman of Mystery
Sunday, January 24th, 3:00PM
Features songs, acoustic instruments and stories about ancient Scottish legends and traditions.



Valentine's Day Concert
Spotlight on Community Musicians
Sunday, February 24th, 3:00PM
Area musicians share the gift of music with instrumental and vocal music of love.



Bach Birthday Bash
Musical Conversation, Kristin Wendland
Saturday, March 20th, 1:00PM
Learn about the life of J. S. Bach and his musical legacy.



A Journey of Fire and Romance
Gershwin to Liszt, Thomas Pandolfi, Piano
Sunday, April 18th, 3:00PM
A passionate conclusion of our series featuring music from Liszt to Gerswhin.



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History

Museum Series:
Our Indiana Jones Donates A Treasure for The Ages!

By Barbara Palmgren

No snakes or gruesome evil-doers chasing our Indiana Jones, but this discovery was none the less as exciting.

Our Indiana Jones quietly works hard to support family and a career. Visiting his office at the Okaloosa County School Board building, American history is framed and displayed on every wall. Yes, you know him well. Pleasant and unassuming, Parker Destin loves history and finding historical artifacts. At a meeting last year with Parker and Chair of the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, Dr. Marie Hallion, I listened as the two of them bantered back and forth about historic dates of



American History. Parker is an Okaloosa County School Board member and also Florida Historical Commission Vice Chairman. History is his passion, his hobby, his life's work.

Parker's love of Florida history and American history in inherited from his father, Dewey Destin and further encouraged by Patt Maney, our Florida State Representative. Parker is always searching for artifacts that celebrate our history. No fedora or whip used of course! Only hours at a computer looking for any treasure online at auction houses or through auction house catalogs. Then, bidding with perfect timing, helped with finances from Dewey and Patt if necessary, Parker buys the artifact with the intent of the trio to donate this to local museums or universities.

On October 20, 2026, the three donors formally presented Northwest Florida State College's (NWFSC) President Mel Ponder an artifact purchased from an auction house in Virginia. There was no doubt in Parker's mind that this artifact belonged to the ages and should be displayed in the Doolittle Exhibit in the Raider Arena on the campus of NWFSC, preserving an important piece of American military history for future generations. "These artifacts are more than pieces of military history. They are tangible reminders of the courage, sacrifice and determination of the men who answered their nation's call during one of the most challenging periods in American history," said NWFSC President Mel Ponder. "We are honored to preserve these remarkable pieces of history and share their story with our students, our community and future generations."

The artifacts are a signal mirror and navigation equipment flown on the 1942 Doolittle Raid at the beginning of America entering World War II. The mirror and navigation equipment belonged to Lt. Col. Carl R. Wildner and were put up for auction from an heir of a friend of Carl Wildner. That friend inherited Carl's personal belongings over 30 years ago and they came up for auction about 18 months ago. And there was Parker, searching for a historical treasure, suddenly finding a treasure that was a perfect fit for NWFSC.

The ceremony was also attended by members of the community and U.S. Representative Jimmy Patronis as well as State Rep. Patt Maney and Dewey Destin. "As a former student and adjunct instructor, I was excited by the opportunity to tie together the local history of the Doolittle Raiders represented by these instruments to the future of the Okaloosa County as represented by Northwest Flori-

Continued on next page



Arts & Music

A Holiday Tradition Comes to Life: **Northwest Florida Ballet's The Nutcracker**

The magic of the holidays takes center stage this November as Northwest Florida Ballet celebrates its 47th annual production of The Nutcracker, bringing one of the season's most beloved traditions to life at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center in Niceville, Nov. 20-22.

For nearly five decades, this enchanting production has delighted Emerald Coast audiences with the timeless story of Clara, her magical Nutcracker Prince and a journey into a world of dancing snowflakes, dazzling costumes and the unforgettable Sugar Plum Fairy. From the excitement of the Christmas party to the wonder of the Land of Sweets, it's a holiday experience that continues to capture the imaginations of children and adults alike.

As the area's only full-length presentation of The Nutcracker, this year's production features more than 140 performers, including internationally acclaimed guest artists and more than 100 local children. For many young dancers, the opportunity to share the stage with professional artists is a dream come true, while audiences enjoy seeing familiar faces from their own communities become part of the holiday magic.

Adding to the enchantment, the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Northwest Florida Ballet Music Director and Conductor David Ott, will perform Tchaikovsky's celebrated score live at every public performance. The combination of graceful choreography, beautiful costumes and the stirring sounds of a full orchestra makes this production an especially memorable way to welcome the holiday season.



Performances are Friday and Saturday, Nov. 20-21, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 22, at 2:30 p.m. Tickets start at $28 for adults and $14 for children ages 12 and younger, with three seating tiers available.

Whether it's a cherished family tradition or a first introduction to the ballet, The Nutcracker offers a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the beauty, imagination and joy of the season.

For tickets and information, visit nfballet.org/the-nutcracker.

MUSEUM SERIES

continued from previous page

da State College, as we celebrate America's 250 years of freedom sacrifice and heroism. Go Raiders!" said State Representative Patt Maney.

I spoke with William "Rusty" Wells who drove from Pensacola for the ceremony. His mother worked with the Doolittle Raiders as a secretary when they trained at Eglin AFB for the mission. He was delighted to view the exhibit inside the foyer of the Raider Arena as well as participate in the ceremony.

President Ponder, speaking at the ceremony, talked about how the Raiders name and the college symbol reflects courage, perseverance and teamwork, much like the men who demonstrated these same commitments, not knowing if they would survive a one-way ticket on a secret mission in an air raid over Japan at the beginning of the United States entering World War II. "The Raiders' legacy is not simply something we preserve. It is something we carry forward," Ponder said. "Our name represents far more than our athletic teams or our school spirit. It reflects values we strive to instill in our students and demonstrate through our service to this community every day."

Following the speeches and ceremony, participants got a closer view and information about the artifact from Jennifer Wren Daugette, Director and Curator of Mattie Kelly Arts Center Galleries & Collection at NWFSC.

A model of excellence for future generations, the gift that Parker, Patt and Dewey gave to the college will now be enshrined with other artifacts in the permanent exhibit located inside Raider Arena. Thank you, dynamic trio, for this gift to the college and everyone who comes to view the historic moment that continues to inspire us all.

Publisher Note: *On April 18, 1942, just months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 80 American airmen under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James "Jimmy" Doolittle launched 16 B-25 bombers from the deck of the USS Hornet to conduct a daring air raid on the Japanese homeland. The mission became a defining moment of World War II, boosting American morale and demonstrating the nation's resolve. The donation adds to the College's permanent Doolittle Raid exhibit, located inside Raider Arena, which provides students, residents and visitors an opportunity to explore the history of the mission and its connection to Northwest Florida.*



Arts & Music

"Something Blue"

A Personal Story Came Full Circle at Destin Songwriter Festival

By Lori Leath Miller

The first music video filmed at The Alice grew from one local's private reflections into a song, a Nashville recording and a shared experience of healing.

For more than three decades, Kristin Sullivan has helped families celebrate the moments she knew she would never share with her own father: the first look, the walk down the aisle, the father-daughter dance.

Kristin is a very good friend and colleague of mine, and I watched this story unfold with more than a writer's interest. Behind the song, the recording and the music video was someone I cared about, finding a way to share something she had carried for years.



Kristin never met her father. But that story found its voice in "Something Blue," a song she co-wrote with artist and songwriter Jessie G and Nashville songwriter Matt Wynn.

The song's official music video premiered Oct. 25 at The Alice during the VIP night of the 2026 Destin Songwriter Festival. It was the first music video filmed at the local, waterfront wedding and special event venue on Choctawhatchee Bay overlooking Crab Island—and the first produced by locally based production company The Heal Reel. A documentary chronicling the song's creation and the story behind it is also planned.

For Kristin, The Alice's general manager, the premiere brought a deeply personal journey back to the place where it began.

An experienced wedding professional and published author, Kristin has co-authored three books and written two wedding planning journals and wedding wellness guides. Yet "Something Blue" began without an assignment, an audience or a plan to publish.

Its roots reached back to October 2025, when Kristin met Destin Songwriter Festival organizer Matthew Pennings and his family. Through that connection, she also met Megan Caulfield, founder of The Heal Reel.

At the festival, Kristin heard songwriters share the personal experiences behind their music. She was particularly moved by stories connected to Operation Song, a nonprofit that paired professional songwriters with veterans, active-duty service

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SOMETHING BLUE

continued from previous page

members and military families to help turn their experiences into songs.

Those stories showed her how music could express what ordinary conversation sometimes could not. Watching Pennings with his two young daughters brought that realization closer to home. "I spent over three decades as a wedding planner, constantly surrounded by that father-daughter bond," Kristin said. "I never met my father, so those moments have always affected me differently. Hearing the stories behind the music and experiencing Operation Song showed me how powerful it can be when something deeply personal is finally given a voice. Then watching Matt with his little girls brought something to the surface in me that needed to be released."

Shortly before Thanksgiving, the group gathered at The Alice, and Kristin began writing in the Notes app on her iPhone. She did not edit the words. She simply needed to put them somewhere.

Later, she sent the piece to Jessie G, Pennings' wife, as a thank-you for sharing her songwriting, her storytelling and her family.

Jessie heard a song.

A Song Took Shape

With Kristin's permission, Jessie G brought Wynn into the project to develop the piece for "For the Love of Songwriting," an additional Destin Songwriter Festival event at The Alice.

On Feb. 12, 2026, the three gathered after hours in the venue's bridal suite and wrote "Something Blue."

Two nights later, Jessie G and Wynn performed it publicly for the first time at The Alice. Kristin sat front and center before a sold-out audience. "She's so brave to let me tell her story in front of a sold-out crowd," Jessie G said. "People came up afterward telling me how much it touched them. I knew we had to record it."

As Kristin's friend, I found that willingness to share especially moving. These were deeply personal words, and she had allowed others to help carry them into the world.

The song went on to be recorded at Sound Stage Recording Studio in Nashville, with



Pennings and Jessie G's daughters present for the studio production. The girls also appeared in the music video.

The Meaning of Something Blue

At the center of Kristin's story was the memory of a blue teddy bear her uncle told her that her father had left for her when she was born before disappearing from her life—the only thing she knew about her father. She once had a photograph of herself as a baby with a blue bear, but the photograph was lost in Hurricane Ian.

The blue bear featured in the video represents the only connection to her father. It also inspired the title, "Something Blue," tying her personal story to her career in the wedding world and the tradition of



"something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue."

Then there was an unexpected coincidence: One of the Cottages by the Bay at The Alice had been named Something Blue years before Kristin joined the venue. She had not named it, and the cottage had played no part in the song's creation. Still, its presence added a fitting detail to the property where the song was written, first performed and eventually filmed.

Bringing the Story to the Screen

After the Nashville recording, the project returned to Destin, where Caulfield and The Heal Reel produced the music video. The company's mission—promoting healing through cinematography and storytelling—closely reflected Kristin's experience. "The entire process has been so therapeutic and healing," Kristin said. "From writing those first words, to creating the song, choosing wardrobe, designing the sets and actually playing a role in the video itself, every part of this journey has uncovered another layer of the story. Something that began very privately has connected me to people in ways I never anticipated."

The video featured an entirely Emerald Coast cast. Kiana Caraballo portrayed the bride, her father, Miguel Caraballo, played the bride's father, and Anthony Litscher portrayed the groom.

Kiana and Anthony brought their own connection to the setting: They were among the first couples officially married at The Alice, exchanging vows in the same month "Something Blue" was written and first performed. Kiana's relationship with her father added another personal connection to a story shaped by the father-daughter moments Kristin had witnessed throughout her career.

Back Where It Began

Nearly a year after the festival first inspired Kristin to write, "Something Blue" returned to The Alice for its 7 p.m. premiere on Sunday, Oct. 25. Caulfield and all three songwriters attended.

The premiere connected the people and places that had carried Kristin's words from an iPhone note to a song, a Nashville studio and the screen. It also returned her story to the festival where she first recognized what sharing it might make possible.

The 2026 Destin Songwriter Festival took place Oct. 24–25, bringing Nashville songwriters, artists and rising talent to Destin for performances and the stories behind their songs. A portion of proceeds supported Operation Song—the organization whose stories had helped inspire Kristin to tell her own.

For me, watching this unfold added another dimension to a friendship I already valued. I was proud of Kristin for sharing her story, and grateful to see it met with such care by the people who helped her tell it. "Something Blue" will always be deeply personal to Kristin. For me and many of her friends, watching her story unfold has made it personal to us, too.

Publisher Note: *To learn more, visit the following:*

The Alice, a private, resort-style waterfront venue with tropical landscaping and Cottages by the Bay accommodations: the-alice.com

Destin Songwriter Festival: destinsongwriterfestival.com

Operation Song: operationsong.org

The Heal Reel: thehealreel.com



Destinites

Ask Destinites: Your Old Blankets For Pet Rescue Centers

By Patricia Lee,
Owner Destinites

This month in our Facebook Destinites group (Facebook.com/groups/Destinites), one of our members shared a thoughtful, kind reminder: Please consider donating your old blankets to pet rescue centers rather than throwing them away.

With cold weather approaching, most centers would appreciate the gesture. However, please call first, as some rescues operate through foster homes and may have limited intake or offer services by appointment only.

Below is a list of organizations and phone numbers for Okaloosa and Walton counties. You can also search Google for other organizations that are not listed here.

Happy Thanksgiving, everybody!

Okaloosa County

Panhandle Animal Welfare Society (PAWS): Fort Walton Beach, 850-243-1525, Contact

SOCKS — Save Our Cats and Kittens: Fort Walton Beach, 850-863-5756, Cat Clinic of Destin

Saving With Soul Pet Rescue Baker: 850-343-9987, Cat Clinic of Destin

Pet Welfare: Eglin Air Force Base/Niceville area, 850-678-5066, dog.rescueshelter.com

Crestview Animal Services: Crestview, 850-682-2055, Okaloosa County

My Safe Place Pet Rescue: Laurel Hill area, 850-902-5326, Cat Clinic of Destin

Furbulous Animal Adoption and Rescue: Serves Okaloosa and Walton counties, 910-489-6751, Cat Clinic of Destin

The Rescued Rescuers: Emerald Coast/Panhandle area, 850-533-1266, google.com.tr

Walton County

Alaqua Animal Refuge: Freeport, 850-880-6399, Alaqua

Walton County Animal Shelter: DeFuniak Springs, 850-892-8758, Walton County Sheriff's Office

Compassionate Animal Rescue Team: DeFuniak Springs, 850-837-3856, dog.rescueshelter.com

Dog-Harmony: Santa Rosa Beach, 850-376-4190, dog.rescueshelter.com

Rise Animal Refuge: Freeport, 424-558-5686, dog.rescueshelter.com

Furbulous Animal Adoption and Rescue: Serves Walton and Okaloosa counties, 910-489-6751, Cat Clinic of Destin

If you live in Destin or the surrounding area, I invite you to join our Facebook group for locals and property owners at Facebook.com/groups/Destinites. Established in October 2018, the group serves more than 13,000 members.

Check out our Local Business Directory at Destinites.com, where more than 500 local businesses are listed and receive advertising exposure within our targeted community group. Be sure to see our newly added Vacation Rental Showcase.

DESTIN HIGH

continued from page 22

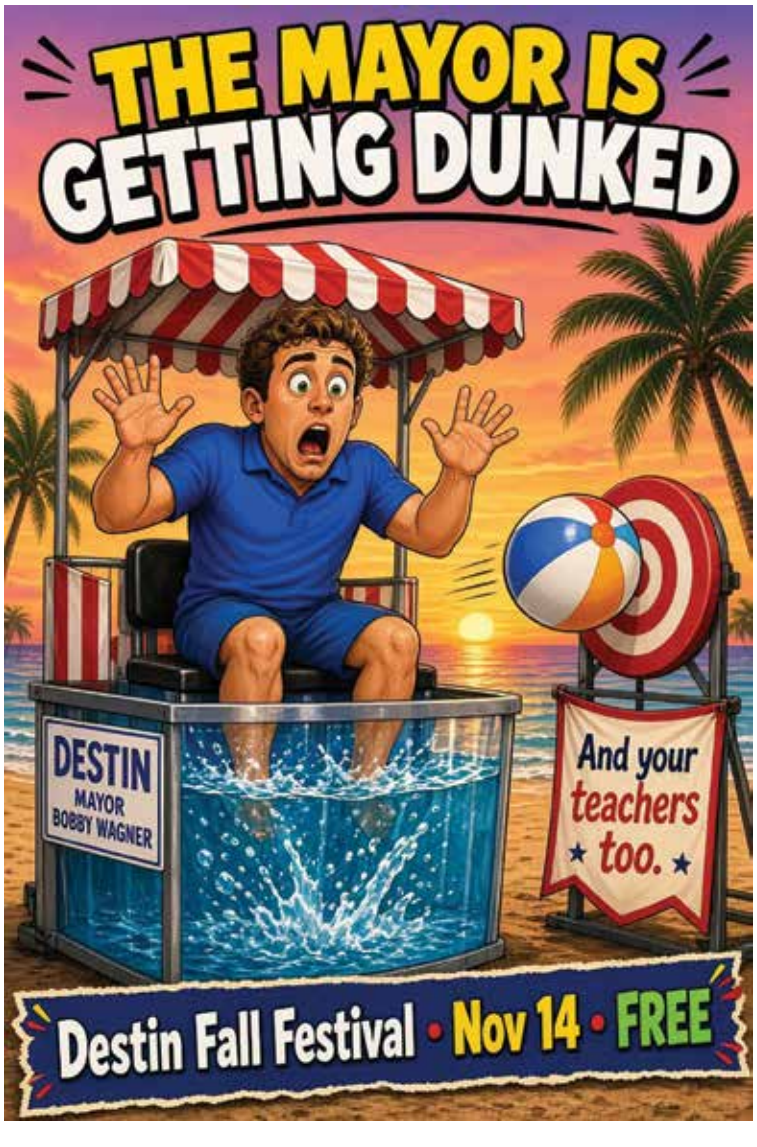
thing different, learning things that require something unique while also giving them a footing for success later in life. That's why we were thrilled to have Dr. Jones initiate the biomed course for our school."

Juanese Jones, PhD, joined Destin as part of her distinguished career as a Florida educator, which included a 12-year stint at Crestview High School in the Okaloosa County School District. During that time, she focused mostly on science education, which made her an ideal choice to launch the biomed program at DHS. "Dr. Jones has brought so much to our school, and the kids love the way she teaches and what they're learning in her classes," Dr. Williams said. "She also leads our chapter of the HOSA Club [for Future Health Care Professionals] at the school and is really bringing a rounded and stimulating approach to biomedical education here."

Destin High students like Rhyanna Wooten are thrilled with the development of the biomed program and the work Dr. Jones performs. In fact, it prompted her to become the student founder of HOSA at Destin High, which dovetails perfectly with her CTE coursework." To me, HOSA is about more than preparing for a career in medicine. It's about learning what it means to care for people before we ever have a title or degree. I wanted to help create a place where students who share that passion could grow, learn, and realize that their future in healthcare starts now.," Wooten said. "One of my biggest goals with HOSA was to create opportunities I wish every student interested in medicine could experience. Healthcare is so much more than what we learn in a classroom, and I want our members to graduate knowing they've already taken their first steps toward making a difference."

For her part, Dr. Jones has been more than impressed with the dedication of the student body in her short time at Destin High. Not only that, but she also says they are served well by the school's leadership, which she says is uniquely intentional about the classes they choose to offer in CTE. "The administration here takes the whole community into consideration; they look at the jobs that are needed in the community, and they ask students what they are attracted to and they supply the opportunities that meet those needs," Dr. Jones said. "I've never quite seen anything like it. It really is amazing and unique."

Amazing and unique are also the descriptions that students are using to describe the biomed program at Destin High. And when she considers that the program is just scratching the surface of what's to come, it's no wonder Dr. Jones is filled with anticipation for what's to come. "This program is important because you learn more about what you like as a student, and you get to have an idea of what you might want to focus on before you move on with life – whether that be college or with a career track," Dr. Jones said. "It's been so much fun to see this first group come through and see how much they're enjoying it. I can't wait to see how much more we're going to bring to biomedical sciences in the years to come."



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