BLUEWATER BAY - HAMMOCK BAY - CHOCTAW BEACH - CHOCTAWHATCHEE BAY





Postal Customer Local

Local Divers Making a Difference

By Rita L. Sherwood

According to National Geographic, up to 8 million tons of plastic and waste enter our ocean and Bay waters every single year. More than 250 million tons of plastic are estimated to make its way into our oceans by 2025, according to projectaware.org.

Everyday trash is entering the sea at an alarming rate, growing rapidly due to our consumer lifestyle.

Marine debris is, simply, the waste that ends up on the bottom of our beautiful Gulf of Mexico and Bay. Nearly 80% of it comes from landbased sources and as much as 70% sinks to the ocean and Bay floor, according to the Plastic Pollution Coalition.

Marine debris is not only unsightly, it's very dangerous to sea life and could be costly for our economy. Marine animals become entangled in debris, and even mistake it for food, many times with fatal results. According to the plastic pollution coalition, plastic bags can look remarkably like jellyfish to turtles, which are a viable food source. Sadly,



turtles consume the plastic, which can cause blockages within their digestive tracts, causing a slow and very painful end. Divers, swimmers and beach goers can also be directly impacted by encounters with marine debris.

But we have a local community of divers fighting back! The Diver's Down Pollution Project (DDPP) is a fast-growing group of locals concerned with the increasing amounts of pollution on our area beaches and waterways. In July of 2020, DDPP started with only three members, Marine Scientist Brennan Wehrhahn, President Thomas Larrison and Communications Director Bobby Wagner. Now, DDPP boasts more than 250 active, local volunteer members. To date, DDPP has picked up over 5,000 pounds of trash from our local beaches and waterways here in Northwest Florida. They not only organize monthly beach cleanups, but also are comprised of volunteer expert pro-divers who sweep 50-100 feet of the Harbor and Bay floor, resulting in picking up 300-500 pounds of trash each time, most recently in the area between AJ's and Tailfins.

The majority of this trash on the Harbor and Bay floors is comprised of plastic, not only bottles, but cups and straws as well. "To see the entire floor of the Destin Harbor completely covered with plastic as far as the eye can see is completely disheartening, says Bobby. "The sandy bottom with no reefs is just a complete plastic wasteland of a decade of debris."

Bobby says it's just not sustainable to continue to only pick up trash. There has to be an agreement made among the locals, visitors and restau-

DIVERS continued on page 2

BBB: Way More Than You Think!

BY HEATHER BENNETT

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is one of the nation's oldest non-profit organizations. It provides consumers with business profiles, consumer reviews, consumer information, scam alerts and reviews on charities. It's here to make sure, as consumers, we make wiser decisions about where we spend our money.

I spoke with Tammy Ward, the Communications Director of our local BBB serving Northwest Florida. It covers local businesses and consumer information across 14 counties in the Panhandle. I want to relay how the BBB can help us make wiser consumer decisions here at home.

If you are looking for a service or product and not sure what company to turn to, you can find a list of BBB accredited businesses on their website. You can look through the list of categories for services, or you can use the search bar to look up a specific business you have in mind, and narrow it down by location.

BBB accredited businesses have gone through a vetting process, which includes making sure their

BBB

continued on page 2





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The community

DIVERS

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rants alike, to come up with a solution to be more eco-friendly. Whether that involves switching from plastic to paper straws, or to even lobby against all things plastic, something needs to be done.

He goes on to say that our area has become well known for the beauty of its beaches and the amazing emerald green color of its water, and gains a lot of attention as well as tourism from it. But, we're not taking the right steps to protect it. He says our area is home to some of the most unique and dynamic ecosystems in the world. People come here for the beaches, dune lakes, fishing, and breath-taking scenery—all of which are based on natural resources. It is our responsibility to protect those natural resources by keeping these areas clean while inspiring others to do the same.

While the DDPP is recruiting expert divers to join their organization, as well as organizing various beach and Bay cleanups the first Sunday of every month, an hour before sunset, the change really begins with all of us.

Here's some things you can do to help reduce waste and pollution:

• Refuse single-use plastics whenever possible. Bring your

own water bottle and shopping bag with you, and for a day on the water or the beach, use your own reusable containers.

• Become a Gulf and Bay advocate. Tell your friends and family about the epidemic that is underwater pollution. Once people are informed, they'll start to make changes to their lifestyles.

• Recycle everything you cannot refuse, reduce or reuse.

• Divers are ocean heroes. If you love to dive, DDPP invites you to get involved.

• Visit the DDPP Facebook page and ask to join this private organization, and upon approval, they will ask you to pledge to pick up a bag of trash on your





own or with your friends and post a picture on their Facebook page. Their message is clear: Go on your own to pick up trash to make a difference in our community, as every little bit helps. Be mindful when you're at the beach, and leave only your footprints behind.

Recently, there was a beach cleanup held at Gulf National Seashore Drive in Fort Walton Beach. There will be others scheduled. So, come on and join this great group of volunteers and protect the natural beauty of our stunning beaches and waterways! Find Divers Down Pollution Project on Facebook and Join the Group.

And, if you find yourself walking down the beach and see plastic, make sure to pick it up and bin it appropriately.

BBB continued fr

continued from page 1

licenses are up to date. They provide information on the business, a list of customer reviews and customer complaints, so you can make an educated guess on which business is best to use. If you are a business owner and you are looking to get your BBB accreditation, you can apply after your business has been open and operating for six months.

"I try to make myself available to those outlying counties, because our office is in Pensacola," Tammy said. "For our accredited businesses, or businesses that wish to be accredited, they want to know that somebody is local to help them. We try to be as flexible as possible."

The BBB also accredits charities. Along the Emerald Coast we are people who like to give back, and there are a lot of great charities looking for help throughout the year. To make sure you are making a wise investment with your donation dollars, you can check out the list of BBB accredited charities.

They look closely at a charity's board activity and effectiveness, whether or not the charity has avoided accumulating funds,



their annual reports, and their donor privacy. A charity has to spend at least 65% of funds on program activities and no more than 35% on fundraising. Charities that are BBB accredited have seen an average of 13.5% growth in public support.

"Some BBBs have a local review process. So, if you have a local nonprofit charity in the area, we can do that locally if it is not on a national level," said Tammy. They can also review local chapters of national organizations to provide local information on the charity.

The BBB is also a useful resource to find out what scams are active in our area. Since 2015, their Scam Tracker (www.bbb.org/Scam-Tracker) has been a place for consumers to research scams and report them. The website allows you to search by scam type, money lost, and geographically. If you've been a victim of a scam, visit the site and report everything you can remember. Although they are not able to retrieve any money lost to you, they use the information to warn others and have helped law enforcement with investigations.

Some of the more active scams going on right now are employment scams, fake check scams, IRS scams, mover scams, social media and trial offers, grandparent scams, online purchases, and Covid-19 related scams.

One of the Covid-19 scams we need to be aware of is a fake vaccine appointment. Vaccines are free. If someone is asking you to pay or providing you with a "free gift with postage and handling" type of offer, it is fake. "A lot of times they are looking for personal information," stated Tammy. "If you get

a call that you can set up an appointment, they'll ask for your Medicare number or ask you to verify everything with your social security number."

Scammers are also using your information when you post a picture of your vaccine card on social media. "We're cautioning people not to do that," said Tammy. "If you post the card, you're posting personal information." She also said that scammers are using the pictures of the cards to recreate and sell them.

Tammy shares local and urgent scam alerts on the Facebook Page for the Better Business Bureau serving Northwest Florida. Follow them for the latest information on scams and updated information on accredited businesses.

In a time when most of us are trying to save money, we also need to be aware of where we are putting it. The Better Business Bureau serving Northwest Florida can help us be educated consumers who make wiser decisions on who gets it. For more information, please check out their website at www.bbb. org/local-bbb/bbb-of-northwest-florida.



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The community

What's in Store for Spring Break 2021? From the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office



By Sheriff Eric Aden

Spring break 2020 was anything but normal, as the covid-19 pandemic sparked a ban on short-term rentals and limits on bars and restaurants.

This year's spring break runs from March 6th through April 25th, and although Okaloosa County doesn't market itself as a college spring break destination, it's typically a hot spot for students from southern colleges and universities. So, what does spring break

2021 have in store? Covid could again make things interesting.

"We're hearing that some colleges are cancelling spring break, but then what we're hearing from the students, because they're doing on-line classes, they're going to come anyway during that time," said Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) Lt. Jason Fulghum.

The OCSO is staffing spring break at the same levels as it traditionally does, with extra beach patrols on tap as well as a boost in the number of deputies on the roads. In addition, many area hotels and condos hire off-duty deputies for added spring break security at their properties.

Of course, Okaloosa County's marketing focuses on families with kids, but the OCSO is ready for whatever comes its way.

"The vast majority of our



visitors come and have a wonderful time, then leave with great memories, and that's what we want for everyone, " said Sheriff Eric Aden. "However, there will be consequences for that small percentage who don't act responsibly, endangering themselves or others."

Locals typically also know what to expect. Patience is always recommended.

"Most of our locals have

been here long enough they know what spring break is like. And we'll be out there doing our best to keep the peace and doing our best to keep everybody safe because ultimately that's our biggest concern, is making sure people enjoy their spring break but they do it lawfully and safely. "

Lt. Fulghum says college students need to be smart in how they conduct themselves so they can have a good time without crossing the line.

For those who don't, the OCSO has a zero-tolerance policy, especially when it comes to underage possession of alcohol.

As far as covid-19 precautions, deputies will continue to wear masks and follow all CDC (Centers for Disease Control) protocols when interacting with the public.



Community

Happenings Around the Bay

MARCH

- 23 **Business After Hours** 5pm | Bluewater Bay Boats and Yachts | Niceville
- 27 2nd Annual EOD Warrior Foundation Poker Run 8am | American Legion Post 221 | Niceville

Drive-Thru Egg Dash 9am | Softball Complex on Campbell Drive | Niceville

Spring Illuminotes - Calligraphy - with Elia Saxer Artful Things | Niceville

APRIL

02

Sip N' Stroll 5pm | J. Leon Gallery + Studio | Destin

Spearman Brewers 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Dance Facets 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

Women's Climbing Circle 03 9am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin

> **Open Air Art Day - Family Fun** 12pm | Artful Things | Niceville

Dance Facets 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

- Storytime in the Park 07 10:30am | Niceville Children's Park | Niceville
- Hunger Run 5k 10k and Kids Fun Run in Bluewater Bay 10 7:30am | Bluewater Fitness | Niceville

Emerald Coast Autism Center ONE Run 5K 1pm | Northwest Florida State College | Niceville

Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra: Just Another Variation 7:30pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

- Spring Fundraiser Art Bus Event 11 11am | Horse Power Pavilion | Freeport
- **FPRA Image Award Ceremony** 13 5pm | Beachworx | Destin

STRATEGY

14 Second Wednesday Breakfast 7:30am | Niceville Community Center | Niceville



FARMER'S MARKETS

Niceville Community - Saturdays March 20, 27 & April 3, 10, 17, 24 9am | Palm Plaza | Niceville

Hammock Bay - 1st & 3rd Sundays April 4 & 18 8am | Victory Blvd | Freeport

- Storytime in the Park 14 10:30am | Niceville Children's Park | Niceville
- **Encaustic Wax Cards** 15 Artful Things | Niceville
- Storytime in the Park 21 10:30am | Niceville Children's Park | Niceville
- 22 Concerts in the Village: The Music of Queen 7pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin



Date Night Pour with Debi Profeta 23 Artful Things | Niceville Swipe and Shoe String Pour with Debi Profeta 24 Artful Things | Niceville

Tutu Trot 5K Run/Walk 9am | Peabody Baby - 16735 US-331 | Freeport

- Storytime in the Park 28 10:30am | Niceville Children's Park | Niceville
- Concerts in the Village: The Duchess 29 Artful Things | Niceville



CONNECT.

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The community

Destin – FWB Airport Welcomes a New Airline

The Destin–Fort Walton Beach Airport (VPS) announced the new air service carrier Southwest Airlines to its flight lineup, with service beginning May 2021. The carrier's initial flight schedule for the region is now available for purchase on Southwest.com.

"Our arrival in these communities with daily service also ushers a new flexibility and everyday affordability for local travelers flying Southwest for



fun, family or work." said Andrew Watterson, Southwest Airlines Executive Vice President & Chief Commercial Officer.

New routes will begin oper-

ating on May 6th with one-way fares to Nashville, TN (BNA) three times a day with fares as low as \$69, Dallas, TX (DAL) once daily with fares as low as \$69 and Baltimore, MD (BWI) once daily with fares as low as \$79. Additionally, service to Chicago, IL (MDW) once daily will begin June 6th with fares as low as \$79. The summer travel days are fast approaching, and these routes will be beneficial for many traveling to and from the panhandle of Florida.

"The daily direct service will bring enormous economic impacts and provide great travel options for our community and businesses," said Airports Director Tracy Stage.

"Today we celebrate the economic impact that Southwest Airlines will bring to Okaloosa County and recognize the work to make this partnership possible by Airport Director Tracy Stage, the entire VPS staff and our Aviation Governing Board" said Chairman Carolyn Ketchel, Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners.

Recently, U.S. Navy veteran and former first responder, Michael Olson, crafted a dagger that was on display at Copeland's in Freeport. It was then raffled off for the sheriff's K-9 Unit Saturday, March 13, for National Service Dog Appreciation Day. "I had the privilege to hand over \$750 to the K-9 Unit Lieutenant with the Walton County Sheriff's Department, which is quite a large amount for a short project that I did not even know

how to promote properly," Michael, savs attending the event with his service Mobility dog, Ruger. Michael says he has other projects coming up such as one that will be called the Walton County Line and an-

Knives for a Cause



other he'll be creating entirely from material that came from Ground Zero that will be Phoenix Rising. "I am once again donating my time and efforts," says Michael. "Just because I'm disabled doesn't mean I can't be of some service. With people openly calling to defund the police, I am doing everything I can do to try and help fund our local deputies, so they can do their job safely!"

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Dotty Blacker Contributes \$40,000 to Support NWFSC's Aviation Center of Excellence

A champion for Northwest Florida State College, Dottie Blacker's first gift nearly 21 years ago was a \$100,000 "challenge" to encourage raising funds to build a visual arts center. Since that time, Dotty has provided nearly \$800,000 in support for various programs at the College. From visual arts, to science development, to first responder training, circling back to the performing arts, Dotty's generosity is evident, and visible in many cases, throughout NWFSC's Niceville campus.

The impetus for her most recent gift of \$40,000 to the Aviation Center of Excellence, located in Crestview, stems back to a passion she had in early adulthood. Having completed twoand-a-half years of college in Enid, Oklahoma, she excelled as a legal secretary but was tired of working hard to pay expenses on a seventy-five cent hourly wage. She discovered that American Airlines was hiring stewardess applicants and sought out an interview. She was hired at 20 years-old on the spot, just barely meeting the height requirement of 5'2".

Stationed in Tulsa, she flew in DC-6s and DC-7s (pre-jet) round trip to New York and Los Angeles. There were usually 50 passengers on board who enjoyed big seats, plenty of legroom and ample space for luggage. Two stewardesses served free cocktails and full meals, complete with a pack of cigarettes.

During her downtime, she spent as much time as possible observing the inner workings of the cockpit.

Her husband enlisted in the Air Force his final year of medical school and that, as she puts it, was the start of their great and unusual adventures. They both joined the Lackland AFB Aero Club and signed up



for flying lessons. Dotty passed the written and flying FAA exams on her first try, earning her ticket (license) in record time. When the Aero Club celebrated its first female pilot, a San Antonio news affiliate sent a photographer to film her taking her husband for a ride. She and her husband enjoyed many more hours of flying together.



Dotty's generous gift of \$40,000 to the Aviation Center of Excellence is a way of celebrating her treasured memories and impacting the aerospace industry at the same time.

NWFSC's Aviation Center of Excellence

will serve as an incubator for aerospace and high-tech industry careers, where students have the opportunity to earn degrees in Professional Pilot Technology and Unmanned Vehicle Systems Operations (drones) along with industry-recognized credentials in Aviation Airframe and Powerplant Mechanics. The Aviation Center of Excellence is a public-private venture providing industrial lab space, hangars and classrooms to meet area training needs. Collaboratively with the Hsu Educational Foundation, the College is committed to inspiring and preparing a strong pipeline of students to seek and take advantage of these high-demand aviation training opportunities that lead to promising careers, a strong source of local workforce talent and a bright economic future for the region.

We encourage you to visit www.nwfsc.edu to learn more about our programs, or call 850-502-2895 to speak to one of our Student Success Navigators.

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Northwest Florida State College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. Contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Northwest Florida State College. Northwest Florida State College is committed to equal access/equal opportunity in its programs, activities, and employment. For additional information, visit www.nwfsc.edu. Materiales de la Universidad son disponibles en Española llamando a la Oficina de Admisiones de Northwest Florida State College al 850-502-2895.

The community



By GAIL PELTO

Have you thought about selling your home in the near future? Then I am here to tell you, "don"t wait!" Right now, sellers are garnering top dollar for their property, but how long will it last? Wish I could tell you a specific date. However, my crystal ball is currently in the shop. Darn!

So, why should you sell now?

• Right now, 1000 people per day are moving to Florida, and they gotta live somewhere.

• Our housing inventory for single family homes is short, which means:

• We have more buyers than sellers.

• Properties are not staying on the market long.

The Market is HOT! Going Once, Going Twice...Sold! Congratulations!

• Many are getting multiple offers.

• Sale prices are being driven **above asking price** (and how cool is that?)

• Interest rates are still extremely low, which means:

There are more buyers that can afford more house—as little as $\frac{1}{2}$ a point can be the difference in buying your home vs. one that's less expensive.

When interest rates go up, the buyer pool is apt to shrink. Will interest rates go up? Probably.

Once the market shifts, and historically it always does, prices could flatten or even come down.

Do you know anyone who waited back in 2008 for the market to get hotter and then got burned? Listen people, you gotta **strike while the iron is hot! Supply & demand is in the seller's favor!** FYI: The last two listings I sold were under contract in less than one day and before the buyers even saw them; that is how hot the market is!



Is now the right time for you?

Yes, if you're down-sizing. Yes, if you need to move within the year.

Yes, if you're upsizing and want to take advantage of the low interest rates.

Yes, because Spring is a great time to sell and well, it's pretty much... Spring!

"So, Gail, YES, I want to sell. What do I do next?" E-Z, P-Z ... 5 steps!

Decide why you want to sell, where you'd love to go, and ideally what type of home you would like to purchase. Then...

Consult with a great agent (ME!) and folks, not just any agent, a Market and Marketing Expert. I know, I know, there are

thousands of agents. I mean, I work with them daily. However, I don't know what they do to market and sell homes. I do know what I do and I "guarantee," in writing, what I do! But that's just me! Then...

Get your house ready to sell. People buy what they see! So, if you want to make the most money, then your house needs to look good...curb appeal, cleanliness, broken stuff fixed; remember that eye appeal = buy appeal. Then...

Determine how you will purchase the next home (cash or lender financing) with your agent, which would be ME, I hope. I'll hook you up with my very best financing team. Keep in mind that we must be ready to strike when a great opportunity comes your way and having the financing ready will give you the edge when and if you're competing with others!

Now, relax! Because you took care of 1-4 and because I've got YOUR back and all of the details in between—you're covered! Stress free, well maybe a bit, but, really? It's E-Z, P-Z!

So, that's it! The market is great! Rates are low! It's a great time to take advantage to sell and buy! I've got your back! Boy, it's perfect...isn't it? And it will be (if I have anything to do with it!).

One last thing: If now is not that time to sell, that's ok. You might want to consider just buying a great investment property for yourself and your legacy. I wrote a series on the A.C.E.S. of Real Estate Investing. Pop me an email or call me and I'll get it over to you. My number is 850-374-0454 or email is gail. pelto@kw.com

Thanks for your time. Please pay this forward to any friends, family or colleagues.

Gail Pelto is a full-time real estate agent with Keller Williams and a board member with both the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation and The Rotary Club of Destin. If you have questions about real estate, call her at (850) 374-0454.

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CBA and the Walton County BCC are "All Hands on Deck"

A draw for residents and tourists alike, the diverse natural areas of Walton County, including waterways, wetlands and shorelines are especially unique and critically important. In an effort to restore a footprint of 6.71 acres of oyster, saltmarsh, seagrass, dune and coastal dune lake wetland habitat, the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) of Northwest Florida and the Walton County Board of County Commissioners partner to roll out "All Hands on Deck," an overarching educational campaign. The partnership plans to remedy habitat degradation and provide stewardship in coastal areas of Walton County. "The Choctawhatchee Bay is an important asset to our community. These restoration efforts by the CBA will help with recovery and resiliency efforts for the Bay," says Commissioner Trey Nick, District 4 Commissioner.

The campaign's purpose is to create a community of steward-



Northwest Florida State College

ship for local habitats through education, outreach and volunteer opportunities. The education component will directly impact students and adults, familiarizing multi-generations on the unique habitat types that support the native birds, fish, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates that call Walton County home. "This project is an amazing opportunity to improve the estuary ecosystems in the area as well as educate the public on their importance," says Melinda Gates, Environmental Coordinator, Walton County.

Citizens of all age levels will



be invited to learn about local habitats and provide hands-on labor to aid in restoration. The CBA, uniquely placed to carry out this project through a network of community partners and volunteers, hopes to expand their reach and begin building a culture of stewardship for valuable coastal resources, a stewardship that not only addresses the issues of the present, but leads to the continuation of a community of stewards.

All Hands on Deck

"All hands" are needed to care for our natural resources. Learn about upcoming volunteer events by following the CBA on Instagram and signing up for the CBA newsletter on the website basinalliance.org. Citizen groups will encompass K-12 students, college students, snowbird groups, military, and employees from local retails, real estate and corporate groups. Sites chosen for restoration are all public lands.

Future projects include:

• Charles E. Cessna Park

• Walton County-owned Inlet Beach Access

- Alaqua Bayou
- Live Oak Point
- Big Redfish Lake
- Alligator Lake

The Florida Coastal Management Program funded this project with a grant from the NOAA Office for Coastal Management, awarded under the Coastal Zone Management Act with matching funds contributed by the St. Joe Community Foundation. For information about the CBA and its many programs, initiatives and events, visit the CBA website at www. basinalliance.org.

Saving Heroes Money When They Buy or Sell a Home!



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M Community

How Can You Help Prevent Child Abuse?

Are you aware that approximately 1,100 cases of child sexual and physical abuse are reported annually in Okaloosa and Walton Counties, an average of three a day? Despite those big numbers, nearly 2/3 of the actual needs to help child victims go unmet due to lack of reporting to authorities.

The Emerald Coast Chil-

dren's Advocacy Center (EC-CAC) is recognizing National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, and a time to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect. That is the 24/7 job of the multi-disciplinary team of staff and volunteers at ECCAC centers in Okaloo-



sa and Walton Counties. EC-CAC is a part of the National Children's Advocacy Center

Vaccination Age Group Expands to 60+ Years

In accordance with Executive Order 21-62 issued on March 8, 2021, the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County and its partners can now vaccinate the following groups of individuals:

• Persons 60 years of age and older with a birthdate of March 1961 or earlier (expanded age group)

• Persons 16 and older deemed extremely vulnerable to covid-19 by a physician with the either the DOH covid-19 determination of eligibility form or form with equivalent information (expanded vaccinators authorized in new executive order allowing improved access to appointment times for this group)

• Health care workers with direct patient contact, including long-term care, home health and hospice workers (For the definition of what classifies as a health care worker with direct patient contact, visit our COVID-19 vaccine page.)

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- K-12 school employees 50 and older
- Sworn law enforcement officers 50 and older

MIRAMAR BEACH

• Firefighters 50 and older

For more information or to make an appointment, visit okaloosa.floridahealth.gov.

non-profit organization. There are 950 Centers across the country, with 27 of them located in Florida. Now in its 21st year with centers in Niceville and DeFuniak Springs, ECCAC has provided more than 150,000 services at no cost to more than 15,000 children experiencing abuse, abandonment or neglect to include mental health therapy, crisis intervention, referrals to other community providers, interviews and medicals. But despite these amazing efforts, it is estimated that for every one child ECCAC helps, there are two children out there who are not helped.

That's why ECCAC likes to partner with people and organizations in our communities to help. Combining efforts can help further reach and resources.

For example, ECCAC and Gracie's Good Deeds developed an alliance. For the past few years, Gracie's Good Deeds has donated wipes, cleaning supplies, clothes, snacks, drinks, Pack 'n Plays, therapy graduation decorations, gift cards, toiletry items and diapers to ECCAC in honor of their daughter. Unfortunately, Niceville residents David and Courtney Konradt lost their almost 3-year old daughter unexpectedly in her sleep five years ago. In memory of their daughter, the Konradts established Gracie's Good Deeds and are helping others through random acts of kindness with donations made to a number of charities in Northwest Florida.

"It's our family's way of honoring Gracie's memory and spirit," says Courtney Konradt. "We also would like to inspire and help those around us. We personally know how much a kind word or gesture can help a person through the toughest of times, and we would like to share that feeling with others."

How can you help? Volunteer, donate, attend an ECCAC event, spread the word, or tour either of their Centers. For more information, visit www. eccac.org. If you suspect abuse, report it by calling the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.



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(*) Community

Meet our Hometown Hero: Laurie Hood

By Mary Chris Murray

Her belief that "every abused, neglected and homeless animal deserves a second chance" is what makes Laurie Hood, Freeport resident and founder and president of Alaqua Animal Refuge, a Hometown Hero.

A true visionary and passionate animal lover since childhood, Laurie founded Alaqua in Freeport, the Southeast's premier, no-kill animal refuge and sanctuary for both domestic and farm animals located in Northwest Florida, more than 14 years ago. "I discovered that untold numbers of animals, at a rate of nearly 100%, were being euthanized in a five-county area due to the lack of a no-kill shelter or adoption center of any kind in the region," says Laurie.

Initially providing shelter to only 38 animals, Alaqua has since placed tens of thousands of animals into loving homes and environments and helped countless others through partnerships and community outreach.

With Laurie at the helm, Alaqua is currently undertaking a bold endeavor to build a oneof-kind facility and sanctuary on 100 acres of land. The new Alaqua home will be the first of its kind in the U.S., with an expanded footprint to continue to do the important work of animal rescue and rehab, as well as be an educational and training center for animal welfare advocates as a place that will inspire, empower and educate others to make change in our society.

And Alaqua's new home isn't just for animals. It will also be a place to help heal people through the powerful effects that interactions with animals have on the human spirit and body.



Alaqua's mission is to provide protection, shelter and care to animals in need; a full-service adoption center; and numerous educational outreach and community programs including Equine Interactions, an equine assisted therapy program for children and individuals with special needs, and for veterans and military service members who may be battling a variety of physical or emotional issues, such as PTSD.

A recognized leader in animal care, protection and advocacy, Laurie has authored a curriculum to assist law enforcement across the State of Florida for investigating and prosecuting animal abuse cases. And she has starred in "Animal PD," a television series on Nat Geo WILD showcasing stories of Alaqua's Florida and the Advisory Board La for The Restore Act for Walton long County. Laurie has received numerous awards, including "Daily territ Point of Light Award" from President George H. W. Bush; anim the Pinnacle Award from 850 overa

animal rescue efforts in con-

junction with law enforcement.

many non-profit boards and

community organizations in-

cluding State Director for Flor-

ida for Animal Wellness Action; Founding Board Member of

The E.O. Wilson Biophilia Cen-

ter and Nokuse Education, Inc.;

District Leader for Northwest

Florida for The Humane Soci-

etv of the U.S.; and Board of

Directors for the Florida Wild-

life Federation. She has served

as the Vice Chair for the Com-

mittee to Protect Greyhounds in

Magazine for her communi-

In addition, she serves on

ty service and leadership; and Communicator of the Year for Non-Profit from the Florida Public Relations Association, Northwest Florida Coast Chapter. Laurie is currently featured in the "Female Disrupters" series in Authority Magazine and Thrive Global. Under her leadership, Alaqua has also been recognized as "one of the best overall organizations in the U.S." by The Humane Society of the U.S., and as a "prime example of what a sanctuary should be" from the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

Laurie says, "I've made a lifelong commitment to improve animals' lives as we continue to journey into bold, unchartered territory in an effort to educate others about the importance of animals in our lives and their overall welfare."



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The community

Feeding the Gulf Coast Continues Serving Free Meals for Children 18 and Younger

Feeding the Gulf Coast is partnering with local community organizations to offer free meals to children, ages 18 and younger, through a nutrition program supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

"We know that parents do not always have the resources to provide healthy meals for their kids," said Eugenie Sellier, Child Nutrition Programs Director at Feeding the Gulf Coast. "We are partnering with sites locally to provide meals for kids on a daily basis. Our goal is to ensure that all children have access to nutritious food."

Over 55,880 children are food-insecure in our panhandle service area. The far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 have created an increased struggle for families who are trying to balance a new normal while children deal with the complexities of school, some virtually, others in person or a mixture of the two.

COVID-19 presented a crisis of increased demand, declines in donations of food, and disruptions to the charitable food

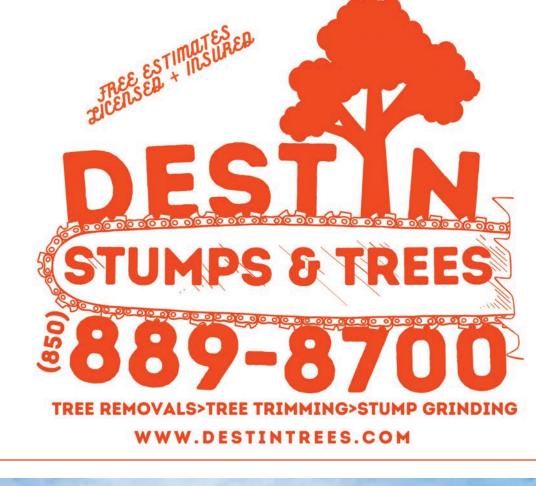


assistance system's operating model, creating an economic crisis unlike anything since the Great Depression. We continue to see elevated need now, and for some, the recovery will take years. 1 In 5 of our neighbors here along the Gulf Coast may struggle with hunger this year, which includes 1 in 3 children.

The food bank's child nutrition programs have a significant impact on children and families across the Central Gulf Coast. Last year, Feeding the Gulf Coast served over 1,330,500 meals and snacks to over 17.000 children across the Central Gulf Coast at area churches, schools, parks and community centers. Additionally, Feeding the Gulf Coast was able to address the increased need by distributing over 31.6 million meals in 2020. The food bank continues to work hard to address food insecurity in our community.

"We know that the hardships faced by many in the area have only grown as COVID-19 continues to present problems in 2021," says Michael Ledger, President & CEO of Feeding the Gulf Coast. "The food bank is thankful for our many pantry partners and Child Nutrition site partners who have linked arms with us as we work to meet the needs of communities. We are truly grateful for many volunteers and supporters who have helped us remain dedicated to our mission."

The "Find Help" feature available at www.feedingthegulfcoast.org is the best source of information for families and individuals seeking assistance. Individuals can also call (888) 704-FOOD. Parents can also text 'FOOD' to 877-877 for child meal sites near them.





Lasagna Mama!

Local resident Michelle Jannazo pulls into a Publix parking lot near her home in Freeport. "This is the third time I've been here in two days!" The shopping list for her lasagna is memorized. She hustles down the aisles. This is something she does often. Michelle is a volunteer "Lasagna Mama" for Lasagna Love.

Lasagna Love was started at the beginning of the pandemic when the founder was looking for a way to help moms in her community. She

started making and delivering meals to families in the neighborhood who were struggling, whether that struggle was financial, emotional or simply feeling overwhelmed.

Lasagna Love has since grown into a national movement with thousands of people all cooking and delivering meals to families in their communities. Lasagna Love's mission is to feed families, spread kindness and strengthen communities.



It helps address food insecurity among families, but also provides a simple act of kindness.

As a Lasagna Love volunteer, Michelle will make and deliver lasagna for a local family once or twice a month. "I include a few goodies, too—maybe some bread or a little dessert. It's just nice. Makes people feel good. Gives them some comfort."

Michelle has always been a community servant. "Growing *Continued on next page*

Community

Air Force's First F-15EX Arrives at Eglin!

By Ilka Cole & Samuel King Jr., Eglin Air

FORCE BASE PUBLIC AFFAIRS The F-15EX, the Air Force's newest fighter, touched down at Eglin Air Force Base March 11.

The aircraft will be the first Air Force aircraft to be tested and fielded from beginning to end, through combined developmental and operational tests.

"It's a special day for the base and our mission," said Brig. Gen. Scott Cain, 96th Test Wing commander. "We're very proud to be part of the next evolution of this historic aircraft. I look forward to seeing this unique test collaboration prepare the F-15EX for the warfighter."

The aircraft bears its unit insignia EX1 marked with "ET"



from the 96th TW's, 40th Flight Test Squadron. The EX2, arriving in April, will display the "OT" tail flash to represent the 53rd Wing's 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron.

To support the combined test

volunteers her time. But being

a Lasagna Mama is close to

effort, both test-squadron commanders ferried in the EX-1 together.

"Choosing to have the two commanders ferry the jet down was a concerted effort to reinforce the cooperation between DT and OT organizations and integration efforts," said Lt. Col. Jacob Lindaman, 85th TES commander.

The aim of integrated testing is to ensure the EX is delivered to the warfighter as soon as possible, while ensuring the aircraft meets test objectives. This combination of Eglin AFB's testers allows the teams to identify any system issues early on, so they can be addressed before the F-15EX's increased production and delivery to the squadrons.

The Operational Flight Program Combined Test Force, or OFP CTF, at Eglin AFB will manage test planning and oversee all the groundwork for the EX's test program.

"Combining these test capa-

bilities on day one of flight test helps ensure F-15EX is ready to execute on air tasking order day one. We're confident that along with our OFP CTF partners running test management, we will provide that capability faster to the warfighter than ever before," said Lt. Col. Richard Turner, 40th FLTS commander, who flew the new EX to Eglin AFB.

While the new fighter can be operated by a single pilot, it is a two-seat aircraft with an increased payload capacity, electronic flight controls, advanced cockpit and mission systems and software capabilities.

Before testing and evaluation begins, aircrews will familiarize themselves with the aircraft through local airspace flights.

LASAGNA MAMA

continued from previous page

up, my Mom ran our town's food pantry from our basement. Service to others is definitely in my DNA." When she's not managing her business, she serves on several nonprofit boards and her heart. "My husband and I both have Italian roots. So, it's something we enjoy and enjoy sharing." Becoming a "Lasagna Mama" or "Papa" is easy and there is no commitment or expectation for giving. Signups and donations are managed directly from Lasagna Love's website. "By serving those within their immediate community, Lasagna Love volunteers know to whom they are gifting a meal and recipients know from where their meal comes. This ensures

that each participant experiences the impact of giving and receiving–a memory neither will soon forget. Lasagna Love is not exclusively focused on delivering home-cooked meals to struggling families. It aims to normalize asking for help, something difficult for so many,

especially moms, who often shoulder the burden of doing it all by themselves.

"Ít's cool. No judgement. Giving without expectation. And, hey, delicious lasagna!"

To join Michelle and the Lasagna Love movement, or donate, visit www.lasagnalove.org.



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Community

Your Roof Age and Insurance Challenges!



By Victoria Ostrosky

"This can't be right!" Mark exclaimed. "Please tell me this is a joke.'

"I wish I had better news for you," replied Anne. "The insurance market has gone through some significant changes over the past 12 months."

"But I don't understand. This house isn't that old and it's in great condition. Why would the premium be this high? Isn't there another carrier you can try?"

Anne sighed. She had been doing that a lot lately. She didn't like giving unpleasant news to her customers. Finding the best rates and coverages was her thing.

"Maybe I can shed light on why rates have gone up so much," Anne said.

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Anne put on her instructor hat and shared with Mark the factors driving premiums up and what he could do about it. People all across the country dream of living in Florida, the Sunshine State. But as those who actually live here know, hurricanes are a bit of a pain. Hurricanes Irma and Michael in particular, then Sally last year, caused severe and catastrophic damage to large swaths of the state, which translated to many millions paid out in claims.

Whenever large disasters occur, carriers compile new data and make decisions on changes to underwriting guidelines going forward so they can remain solvent and profitable. The reinsurance companies do the same. Even the estimated \$50 billion in storm damage across Texas will impact insurance rates in our state.

One thing carriers discovered was that roofs, shingle, tile, and metal, didn't hold up as well as was calculated and anticipated. Based on the new data, almost every carrier revised their underwriting guidelines regarding roof age. Shingle roofs older than 10 years, and tile roofs and metal roofs older than 15 years are now ineligible for coverage on new business for the majority of admitted carriers.

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Wind mitigation inspection report findings can often help offset some of the hikes by getting credits for recognized characteristics when they're available. For homes built in March 2002 and later, admitted carriers automatically apply several credits, but for older homes, or homes with newer roofs, a wind mitigation inspection report can often make a premium more affordable.

Wind mits (as they're referred to in the industry), look at six separate items regarding your roof.

• Roof covering and age with roof permit for verification

• Roof deck attachment how close is the nail spacing and length of nails

• Roof to wall attachment hurricane clips, toenails, straps or bolts

• Roof geometry - is the shape hip, gable, flat or combination

• Secondary water resistance yes or no to barrier installed before the roof material

• Hurricane opening protection - does it have shutters, impact glass or coverings and if so, what kind

Ideally, you would have all six credits. That would mean your roof is 2002 or newer (FBC credit), the closest nail spacing/

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length of nails, hurricane clips, hip roof style, secondary water resistance, and hurricane opening protection.

The house Mark had gotten a quote for was built in 1999 and still had the original tile roof. The inspector sent Anne a copy of the wind mit, and once she was able to apply two credits, the premium dropped down considerably, although it was still high compared to what it would have been a year ago.

Realtors' offices ask Anne to speak to their agents on occasion about the insurance industry, so she took notes for her upcoming talk to mention these same scenarios. She hoped to encourage her Realtor friends to educate their sellers and buyers so that the selling and buying process would go more smoothly. Making a new roof part of a purchase agreement negotiation could help seal the deal from an insurance standpoint.

If your home's roof is older and you're thinking of selling, you may want to get some estimates for roof replacement. If you're a buyer, keep in mind that



the roof age will be a large factor in calculating your insurance premium.

Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is a full service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Niceville, Valparaiso, Freeport, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach. Visit their Video Library on www.ins-zone.com and watch several informative videos, including Annual Insurance Review, or call 850.424.6979. Victoria Ostrosky, author of this article, is a Personal Lines and Life Agent/CSR with IZ.



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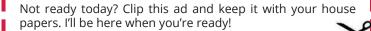


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🐲 Community

Bay Buzz

6th Annual Sock Burning -LJ Schooners

Bluewater Bay Marina invites you to join in ushering out winter and welcoming spring at its 6th Annual Sock Burning Party/Ceremony on Sunday, March 21 at 5:30 p.m. This is an annual event on the beach of LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar to celebrate the start of Spring. This coastal tradition, dating back to the early 1980s, started in Annapolis with Bob Turner burning his winter work socks. It is a great, fun way to get rid of the winter blahs, burn your socks and put on the flip-flops. The event features live music with Alyssa Sease. For more information, contact Bluewater Bay Marina at 850-897-2821.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Needs Bigs

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwest Florida (BBBSN-WFL) has launched its March MATCHness recruitment campaign, aiming to recruit 30 Bigs in 30 days to help fill their bracket and match new mentors with local youth. To play off the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA)

March Madness basketball tournament, BBBSNWFL has created this fun campaign to recruit mentors for its life-changing mentoring programs. There are almost 100 children who are currently waiting for their Big Brother or Big Sister. Throughout the past year, children have been challenged in many ways, which is why BBBSNWFL needs mentors to provide consistency and stability for Northwest Florida children. BBBSNWFL requires in-person contact with your Little 2-4 times a month and a weekly touchpoint via call, text, email, etc. Virtual contact is also acceptable. A Little can be easily incorporated into the Bigs' everyday life! Now is the time to be the game-changer in a child's life. Anyone interested in becoming a Big can visit the BBBSNWFL website at bbbsnwfl.org/get-involved, or call

(850) 433-5437 for Escambia/ Santa Rosa/Okaloosa/Walton Counties or (850) 763-5437 for Bay County.

Congratulations to Okaloosa County's Art in the Capitol Winner



Ruckel Middle School 7thgrade student Brodie Lacanilao is the school district's winner in the state's Art in the Capitol competition. Lacanilao's winning entry, a portrait entitled ZHC, is now on display in the Florida Capitol. Gina Piccorossi is Lacanilao's art teacher at RMS. The Art in the Capitol Competition is a statewide visual arts competition for Florida students in grades 6 through 8. Each school district holds an annual art competition with artwork judged by a selection committee consisting of art teachers. The winning art from each district is displayed in the Capitol during the legislative session.

Congratulations to Okaloosa County's Teacher of the Year



Now in her ninth year of teaching and loving it just as much, Jessica Landry of Plew Elementary School has been named the Okaloosa County School District's Teacher of the Year. Jessica along with the other finalists, Joy Robertson, Bluewater Elementary School, Megan Mueller, Fort Walton Beach High School, and the School Teachers of the Year, recently were honored and celebrated for their accomplishments in and out of the classroom.

Freeport Library Announces Officers

The Friends of the Freeport Public Library have announced its new officers—Lori Logue as President, Kristine Bacon as Vice-President, Krissy Belayev as Secretary, and Rita Smiley as Treasurer. Their mission is to raise funds exclusively for the support of projects, including capital projects and programs of the Library, and to promote public awareness of the services and programs available through the Freeport branch and the Walton County Library System.

Defuniak Springs Hosts Sprint Triathlon May 15th

Historic DeFuniak Springs is the site of a Sprint Triathlon May 15, hosted by Forward De-Funiak, Inc., a 501c3 organization focused on the progress *Continued on page 39*



Why Should I Go Solar?

By Erin Bakker

Q: What are the financial benefits of solar energy?

A: When you install a solar energy system on your property, you save money on your electricity bills and protect yourself against rising electricity rates in the future. How much you can save depends on the utility rates and solar policies in your area.

Q: What are the environmental benefits of solar energy?

A: Solar power, like other renewable energy resources, has many environmental and health benefits. Going solar reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change, and also results in fewer air pollutants like sulfur dioxide and particulate matter, which can cause health problems.

Q: What is net metering? A: Net metering is the system that utilities use to credit solar energy system owners for the electricity produced by their solar panels. With net metering, you only pay for the electricity that you use beyond what your solar panels can generate.

Q: How does solar im-

pact my property values?

A: Studies have shown that homes with solar energy systems sell for more than homes without them. However, your property value will only increase if you own, rather than lease, your solar panel system. In most parts of the country, going solar will actually increase your property value more than a kitchen renovation. (Zillow Tool)

Q: What solar energy rebates and incentives are available?

A: Solar rebates and incentives vary depending on where you live. The most significant is the 22 percent federal investment tax credit (ITC), which allows you to deduct 22 percent of the cost of your solar energy system from your taxes.

Solar Panels and My Home Q: How do solar panels work?

A: Solar panels absorb the sun's energy throughout the day and convert it into direct current (DC) electricity. Most homes run on alternating current (AC) electricity, so the DC electricity is then passed through an



inverter to convert it to usable AC electricity. At that point, you either use the electricity in your house or send it back to the electric grid.

Q: Do my solar panels produce power when the sun isn't shining?

A: The amount of power your solar energy system can generate is dependent on sunlight. As a result, your solar panels will produce slightly less energy when the weather is cloudy, and no energy at night.

Q: Can I go off grid with solar panels?

A: When you install solar panels on your property, you will still be connected to the grid. This allows you to draw from the grid when your system is not producing all of the power that you need, and send power back to the grid when you produce more than you use. It is possible to go off the grid with a solar energy system that includes battery storage, but it will cost significantly more and is unnecessary for the majority of homeowners.

Q: Will I still receive an electric bill if I have solar panels?

A: Unless your solar energy system includes battery storage and you are fully off the grid, you will still receive a bill from your utility. However, you can dramatically reduce your bill, or even cut the amount you owe to \$0, with a solar panel system that matches your energy use.

Q: Do solar panels work in a blackout?

A: If your solar panel system is connected to the grid, it will shut off in the event of a blackout. This is to prevent emergency responders and electricity utility repair-people from being injured by your panels sending power back to the grid. However, there are certain inverters you can buy that provide backup power in a blackout when paired with a battery.

Q: Can I afford to go solar?

A: If you can afford to pay your electricity bill you can afford to go solar. Our Solar Experts can go over a customized proposal that will show you expected savings from going solar. Q: Is my roof suitable

for solar panels?

A: Southerly-facing roofs with little to no shade and enough space to fit a solar panel system are ideal for installing solar.

Q: What size solar system should I get?

A: That will depend on how much electricity you use on a monthly basis, as well as the amount of optimized roof space you have to install panels.

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Q: Do I need to replace

my roof before installing solar?

A: It is highly advised that the roof and solar installation occur at the same time. The Deco Tech system is integrated with your roof, meaning that the shingles and the solar panels install directly to the deck of your roof. These two systems working together provide both aesthetic and functional benefits to the homeowner.

Q: How long will my solar power system last?

A: Solar panels have no moving parts and are very durable. They are designed to withstand snow, wind and hail. Your system will continue to generate electricity for 25 years or longer and is guaranteed when installed by a GAF certified contractor.

Q: Do I need to install solar batteries with my solar power system?

A: Solar power systems that include solar batteries can be very expensive. Luckily, batteries are not necessary for most solar homeowners. As long as you are connected to the grid, your system does not need a battery: excess power goes back into the grid, and you can draw from the grid if you need more electricity than your panels can generate.

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BY CHRIS BALZER, ECES

If we could go back in time to 1797, we would witness John Adams become the 2nd U.S. President, the first ship of the U.S. Navy, the frigate USS United States being commissioned and the first washing machine being invented. Yes, the first washing machine, a simple tub and ridged board was used to wash clothes. Now, fast forward 224 years and some of you knew who our 2nd President

The Year Was 1797

ENERGY TIPS by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

was and some of you knew the date of our first commissioned Navy ship. I'm going out on a limb and guessing no one knew when the first washing machine was invented, but we all use one today and it has become an appliance used as often as several days a week or several times a month. So, what do washers and drvers have to do with energy savings? Washers and dryers are among the costliest appliances to operate, so it's worth taking steps to reduce energy use while using them.

Here are some things you

can do to save in the laundry room and reduce wear and tear on clothes.

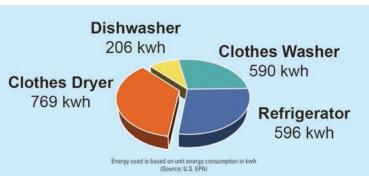
Wash with cold water. Using cold water instead of hot can cut a load's energy use by more than in half. Many detergents clean just as well in cold as they do in warm or hot. So save the hot water for your shower.

Wash full loads. Your washer will use about the same amount of energy no matter the size of the load, so fill it up.

Dry right-sized loads for your machine. If the dryer is too full, it will take longer for the clothes to dry. Loads that are too small can also take longer to dry, plus you spend more per item when running the dryer to only dry a few things.

Use dryer balls. Wool or rubber dryer balls will help separate your clothes and get more air to them, cutting drying time. The wool balls are said to absorb some moisture, further cutting drying time.

Switch loads while the



dryer is warm. This allows you to use the remaining heat inside of the dryer for the next cycle.

Clean the lint filter on the dryer. The dryer will run more efficiently and safely. If you use dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month with a toothbrush to remove film buildup that can reduce air circulation.

Use the high-speed or extended spin cycle in the washer. This will remove as much moisture as possible before drying, reducing your drying time and the wear on your clothes from the high heat of the dryer.

Use lower heat settings in the dryer. Even if the drying cycle is longer, you'll use less energy and be less likely to overdry your clothes.

Dry towels and heavier cottons separately from lighter-weight clothes. You'll spend less time drying the lighter-weight clothes.

Check with your utility company on time of use rates. Utility companies offer reduced kWh rates everyday called off peak times, almost by half. Check with your utility company when off peak hours are and use high demand appliances—washers and dryers, pool pumps, dishwashers and sprinkler pumps during those times, saving you money.

Chris Balzer is founder and president of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions, a Smile Provider Company. ECES provides smiles to its customers after installing high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save this summer and become energy efficient, schedule an inspection by calling (850) 588-2870, visit www.trusteces.com or email wecare@trusteces.com and Beat the Heat!

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Community

Are Electric Vehicles in Your Investing Future?



By MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL Advisor and Branch Manager

So much is being written and said about electric vehicles. The new administration, investors, environmentalists, car enthusiasts and just about anyone has heard about them of has an opinion on them. What then is the current and future state of electric vehicles from cars to buses, to tractor trailers and even school buses? And what will be the impact on the various forms of energy consumption?

Electric vehicles (EVs) are not new. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the first electric cars were introduced well over 100 years ago. Early on the likes of Thomas Edison

and Henry Ford collaborated on ideas for electric cars as far back as 1914. Ironically, it was Henry Ford's mass production of gasoline powered vehicles that lead to the decline of EVs at the time. Gas powered vehicles proved to be less costly to produce, less costly to run and were more powerful and would go greater distances than EVs. The Energy Department went on to say that the early attraction of EVs was due to their being quieter, cleaner-however they were best suited for short distances. They were also two and half times more costly. It was not until Americans became more mobile that the demand for gas powered vehicles took on added growth. What then are the considerations for investors?

First, break down the components of EVs: There are electric passenger cars, light duty vehicles, and growing development of public transportation buses, school buses and freight vehicles like 18 wheelers. Investors see opportunities in the design, manufacture of all of these through the various companies in America and abroad. There is growing interest in



mand, expressed in millions of

sumes about 100 million BPD

which is up from about 90

million BPD ten years ago.

Expressed in numbers, about

576,000 barrels per day less are

being used by autos since those

are electric. By 2025 that is ex-

pected to have an impact of

1.95 million BPD or about 2%

of today's consumption. Where

might this be in 2030? The EV

leaders profess that it will be

substantial. It really depends

upon the growth of the EV

market. Market share of sales

ended 2020 at 6.9% of vehicle

sales in December and 4% for

the year worldwide. That is a

year over year increase of 41%.

It also depends upon recharging

infrastructure and battery life as

investors who have an interest in

investing in EVs? First, do your

research or work with an advi-

sor to learn about and discover

potential opportunities. When

analyzing and looking at invest-

ment, consider both value and

growth. A value investor might

look at legacy bus or semi man-

ufacturers and determine if they

hold value because of potential

users within their current mar-

kets. Also, what about batteries?

There are a host of equities and

ETFs that offer opportunities.

As always this involves risk and a

personal analysis of the amount

of risk and the amount of mon-

What are considerations for

well

The world currently con-

barrels per day (BPD).

public transportation buses and school buses, since they travel shorter distances on a given day and require less recharging of their batteries. This would also include the suppliers to these firms which include engines, batteries and drive trains. Interested investors can invest directly through these companies in the form of common stock or through several funds (mainly exchange traded funds).

Raymond James recently released its annual report on electric vehicle adoption. It includes a review of the EV industry as well as the potential impact it will have on the fossil fuel industry. That impact remains to be seen and, as of this writing energy stocks have rallied significantly from their 2020 lows. Reasons for this have been pointed out: 1) the economy is seen emerging from the effects of the pandemic, 2) inflation and the history of outperformance that energy stocks have typically enjoyed in times of price inflation 3) energy companies are investing at a rapid pace in to green or renewable energy.

The growth of EVs is going to have an impact on world oil consumption according to the Raymond James report. Today, electric vehicles sales make up 1% in the USA but are substantially higher in China (7%) and Europe (3%). In fact, the USA is a distant third to China and Europe in EV sales EVs on the roads. How significant might that impact be? According to Raymond James, it is having an impact today of approximately .6% of the world's daily oil deand Raymond James and resides in Grayton Beach. He has been in financial services for over 33 years. His main office is located at First Florida Bank, a division of the First, A National Banking Association, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, FL 32541, with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City, Pensacola, Tallahassee and Moultrie, GA. Phone 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymondjames.com. Securities offered through Raymond James Financial Services, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC, and are not insured by bank insurance, the FDIC or any other government agency, are not deposits or obligations of the bank, are not guaranteed by the bank, and are subject to risks, including the possible loss of principal. Investment Advisory Services are offered through Raymond James Financial Services Advisors, Inc. The First Wealth Management First Florida Bank, and The First, A National Banking Association are not registered broker/dealers and are independent of Raymond James Financial Services. Views expressed are the current opinion of the author, not necessarily those of R7FS or Raymond James, and are subject to change without notice. Information provided is general in nature and is not a complete statement of all information necessary for making an investment decision and is not a recommendation or a solicitation to buy or sell any security. Past performance is not indicative of future results.

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ey you might want to risk. Maurice Stouse is a Financial

Advisor and the branch manager

The Hook

Off the Hook: Spring Fishing



By Cali Hlavac, To Do in Destin

Spring has officially arrived and so has Spring fishing season! While many fish bite year-round in our lucky fishing village, three of the most prominent this time of year are Triggerfish, Sheepshead and Bull Redfish.

March 1st kicked off Triggerfish season, which many offshore anglers were excited for. In our area, Triggerfish are normally found nearshore and offshore, hanging around artificial reefs and natural bottoms, in depths between 50 to 300 feet. They share the same habitat as Red Snapper and Gag Grouper. So, catching a Triggerfish is usually a sign that additional species are below as well.

Triggerfish are pretty aggressive feeders; a positive if you've set out to catch them specifically, but a con if you were trying to reach the Red Snapper or Grouper they hang around with. Shrimp and any sort of cut bait will do the trick as they typically chase anything they perceive as being food, and a small hook is necessary due to the size of their mouth.

Next up are Sheepshead, which some fisherman refer to as convict fish for their striped pattern. They've also been referred to as 'the fish with the human teeth' as if you've ever opened the mouth of a Sheepshead, they look like they stole a pair of sailor's dentures. They move nearshore during late winter/ early Spring to spawn, and you can find them near structure like bridges, wrecks or rocks.

The other fish we like to chase in the Spring are the bull Redfish. Sight fishing these monsters is what most anglers prefer as you can find them schooled up nearshore on our beaches or inshore in our Bay, looking for food. Bull Reds can range from 25-40 lbs. and will put up a fight once you get them hooked.



Redfish are a beautiful fish, known for the spots on their tails. Their scales color with their surroundings, ranging from white to golden brown here on our coast. While schooled up, they're known to eat just about anything you put in front of them. Once hooked, they will run, and





run, and then run some more, in the other direction. Let them run and tire out, before starting the pull back to your boat. Too

much pressure could cause your line to break. So, remember: patience is key.

It's a heart racing, adrenaline pumping experience to feel a Bull Redfish on the end of your line, and one that is easy to get addicted to. If you've never caught one, Destin is the perfect place to start. A flat day on the water and the right gear will get you all hooked up and there is no better time than Spring.



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Off the Hook

Gone Coastal: How to Start Your Fishing Adventure

By Jasmin Graham and MELISSA CROUCH

Fishing is an enjoyable pastime, especially here in our area. In fact, there are approximately 4 million saltwater and freshwater anglers in the state of Florida.

I love saltwater fishing for several reasons:

1) You get to be outside enjoying nature.

2) Crisp sea breezes and the smell of sea salt.

3) Every catch is a surprise, with so many fish in the ocean, you never really know what you are going to get.

4) The opportunity to un-

Bluewater

plug; fishing is an activity where you can often just relax.

5) I love to eat fish and there is something particularly satisfying about catching your own dinner.

Have I persuaded you to try your hand at fishing? If so, I'd like to help you get started on your fishing journey with this quick guide for new anglers.

Step 1: Obtain a **Fishing License**

In Florida, you need a saltwater fishing license if you are over 16 unless you are a Florida resident age 65 and older or are otherwise exempt. You can purchase your license online

GoOutdoorsFlorida.com, at through the Fish | Hunt FL mobile app (which conveniently stores your licenses for you) or by phone at 888-FISH-FLOR-IDA (888-347-4356). Licenses can also be purchased in person at your local tax collector's office or a license agent such as a tackle store. If you are a Florida resident and plan on only fishing from the shore, you can get a one-year shoreline fishing license at no cost. And don't forget about our saltwater fishing license add-ons; if you are fishing for snook, spiny lobster, several reef fish species, sharks from shore or using traps to catch blue crab or stone crab,

New Inventory

you'll need to have these addons on your license.

By purchasing a fishing license, you also are supporting the Sport Fish Restoration Program, which funds fishing outreach and education, boat ramp construction and maintenance, artificial reef construction, fisheries research, stock enhancement, and fisheries habitat management. Any fishing gear and boat fuel you purchase will also support this program, so your investment in your hobby will come back around to make fishing even more accessible. Learn more at MyFWC.com/SFR.

Now the question is, what gear do you need?



Step 2: Become Familiar with Your Gear

There are a few must haves for fishing gear. First and foremost, you are going to need a fishing rod and reel. There are many options to choose from but, for beginners, I recommend a spin-cast rod and reel or a spinning rod and reel. The spin-cast reel offers a push-button control to release the line, which makes casting a breeze. For a spinning reel, instead of pushing a button to control the release of fishing line, you must manually manipulate the bail, which is a piece on the reel that guides the line back onto a spool. Choose the rod and reel you think will work best for you.

Next, you'll need fishing line, non-stainless-steel circle hooks (which are more likely to hook the fish in the corner of the mouth) and a dehooking tool. If you want to fish the bottom, you might also want to pick up some



GONE COASTAL *continued from previous page*

small weights and, if you want to fish the surface or middle

to fish the surface or middle of the water column, you may want to pick up some floats or bobbers.

Learn how to rig up your gear by watching our how-to videos on our YouTube channel at YouTube.com/FWCSaltwaterFishing and checking out our How to Fish page at MyFWC. com/Marine by clicking on "How to Saltwater Fish."

Lastly, you'll want to think about what kind of bait you'll use, which will vary based on which species you want to target. Shrimp and small fish are good live bait to start out with. Now that you've got what gear you need, it's time to pick a fishing spot.

Step 3: Decide Where to Fish

Where you fish can have a big impact on what you catch. Of course, it's impossible to know where the fish are at all times and fish aren't always hanging out in the same places but there are some ways you can make informed decisions about where to fish. FWC's Boating and Angling Guide maps are a great resource to learn about fishing locations. These guides are available without cost at many marinas, tackle shops, boating supply stores and other marine businesses; or by visiting ocean.floridamarine. org/boating_guides.

If you plan on fishing from shore, try fishing places with structure. Maybe there are a few piers where fish seem to be biting more than others, try checking out those. If you plan on fishing from a boat, you can find boat launches and learn where artificial reefs have been deployed on our website, MyFWC.com. You can also check with local tackle shops for tips on the best places to fish. For more on fishing locations, visit our Where to Saltwater Fish page at MyFWC. com/Marine. For safety's sake, remember to tell somewhere where you are headed before vou leave.

Once you have your spot, it is very important to understand the rules and regulations before you go fishing.

Step 4: Understand the Rules and Regulations

Fishing regulations are available in paper booklets and can also be found online at MyF-WC.com/Marine by clicking on "Recreational Regulations." You can also find them in the Fish Rules app that can be downloaded onto your smart device. Read through the regulations before you go. Do you understand the terms (bag limit, size limit, closed season, etc.)? Do you understand how to measure your fish? Do you feel comfortable identifying common fish you might encounter? (Fishing Lines field guide, also found on our website, is a great resource for this.) What fish may you harvest and at what size? How many of each fish may you harvest? These are important things to understand before you go fishing.

Step 5: Go Fishing

Finally, the time has come! You have your license, you have your gear, you've read the rules and you've arrived at your fishing spot. Now it's time to cast out and catch yourself a fishing

memory. One of the most exciting things about fishing is feeling that sudden tug on your line as a fish grabs your bait. Reel it in and reel it in fast. Safely remove hooks using a dehooking tool, wet your hands before handling fish and support the fish horizontally. Don't handle the fish too long and safely release any fish you aren't keeping. Remember, to be a conservation minded angler don't leave trash behind and be sure to recycle your monofilament line in an appropriate receptacle.

I hope you grow to love saltwater fishing as much as I do. It's relaxing and it's a great way to enjoy the outdoors. FWC also offers saltwater angler recognition programs through Catch a Florida Memory. Learn more at CatchaFloridaMemory.com or like and follow Catch a Florida Memory on Facebook. There are nine Saltwater Grand Slams that reward you with prizes for catching various fish in a 24hour period, Saltwater Reel Big Fish rewards you for catching fish exceeding a certain length, and there are 70 fish you can try adding to your Saltwater Fish

OBIA

Life List. These are fun programs for both kids and adults to participate in. So, dive into these fishing resources, get out there and let's go fishing!

SUP Board Races

Thursday Throw Downs through Oct. 28!

LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar & Bluewater Bay Marina began its Thursday Night Throw Downs on Thursday, March 12. These races continue until October 28, every Thursday evening! This is a fun Stand-Up Paddle Board race with a unique race format.

All Stand-Up Paddlers are welcome, all ages and all levels of expertise. Points are awarded throughout the season and over- all winner will be recognized on October 28 at an awards ceremony. For more information visit bluewaterbaymarina. com or call 850-897-2821.

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Brothers Kitchen



Brothers Kitchen is a casual, Southern-style restaurant, a place where you can get all your comfort food favorites. Blue Plate Specials are featured each day-meaning you choose one meat and two vegetable options from the daily list. So many options such as hamburger steak with mushroom gravy or red beans & rice with sausage. So many options. Other delicious options include fresh salads, smoked chicken breast sandwich and the famous Boss Burger. Nightly specials vary each evening, but can include sirloin steak, shrimp & grits and some pasta dishes. Come on by and "taste" for yourself! Or checkout the Brothers Kitchen Facebook page for the daily specials and call, stop in or order ahead. Or pre-order for the weekend 24 hours in advance: Smoked whole pork butt, full or half racks, barbecue smoked meatloaf, smoked wings all slow-smoked on the Big Green Egg. And don't forget the sides! Call 850-842-2687 to place your order!

All the Time: Dine In, Curbside, Pickup, Delivery, Outside Dining Open Tue.-Sun., 11 a.m. – 9 p.m., Closed Mon. (850) 842-2687 4538 E. Hwy. 20, Niceville Facebook @LoveBrothersKitchen

Jojo's Coffee and Goodness



JoJo's is owned and operated by Angela "JoJo" Stevenson who wanted to incorporate a cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere to accompany her attached teaching studio. Her

dream team bakes fresh "gooddaily-breakfast ness" and lunch-Tuesday-Saturday. Feel free to come work (free WiFi) or meet up with friends or family. Stop in and see Jojo and the team today for Cinnamon Rolls; Scones: Blueberry Lemon, Bacon Cheddar Jalapeño and White Chocolate Coconut w/ Lime Glaze; Blueberry coffee Cake; Cappuccino Chip Muffins; Vanilla Pound Cake; Espresso Brownies and Caramelitas; and breakfast specials such as quiche (spicy sausage, ham, roasted red pepper or keto) with hash brown casserole; breakfast burritos; freshly Roasted Coffee and GREAT DOSES OF GOODNESS!!! Order ahead and pick up some for the office, a gathering or your next meeting! And please tell Jojo that Bay Life says hi!

Hours 7:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Tuesday - Saturday (850) 737-6194 4652 Hwy. 20 East, Niceville bigorangehousedesigns.com

House of Thai



With 20 years of experience cooking traditional Thai food here and in Thailand, House of Thai is a veteranand family-owned restaurant that focuses on food eaten every day in homes throughout Thailand. Traditional recipes handed down from generations of Thai family chefs date back 400 years. Ingredients from local farmers markets are used to ensure freshness. The menu has just the right amount of offerings, and food is fresh and seasoned to your preference, served in just the right portion sizes to share with another or to enjoy at home later. It's also allergy friendly with no added MSG and non-dairy. Garlic lovers will love the Garlic Pork on the Specials menu. And there's fun, tasty features such as Ginger Shrimp Glass Noodles (Goong Ob Won Sen), Pineapple Fried Rice or Stir-Fried Glass Noodles (Pad Woon Sen) all \$15.95. Perfect for a special meal with variety! House of Thai is also available for private events: weddings, business lunches, dinners, cocktail receptions and more.

Dine-in, Pick-up, To-Go Open Mon - Sat: 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. (850) 353-2971 4542 E Highway 20, Niceville houseofthaifl.com

L.J. Schooners Dockside Restaurant



Welcome to L.J. Schooners Dockside Restaurant located at the spectacular Bluewater Bay Marina Complex. The restaurant is named after "L.J. Schooner" (the L.J. is for Lazy Jack) who was a cherished four-legged icon on Bluewater Bay Marina docks. The open air Oyster Bar and restaurant is open to serve you! Almost all seats offer a magnificent view of the water, marina and unparalleled sunset with, of course, oysters and a delicious varied menu with dinner specials such as Blackened Mahi and grilled shrimp with hollandaise, served over cheese grits! Join L.J. Schooners for Sunday Brunch, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. and drink your bottomless Mimosas for \$10! Adults \$13.95; Children 7-12 \$4.50; Children under age 6 free. Call to order take-out and pick-up in the L.J. Schooners Oyster Bar or call when you arrive for curbside pick-up. And don't forget, now through Oct. 28, 2021, it's the Thursday Throwdown Fun Paddle Board Race series! Bring your own or rent for \$10. All ages welcome. Every Thursday at 6 p.m. Call 850.699.0045 for more information.

Dine-in, Pick-up, To-Go Open Wed.—Sun., 11 a.m.—8 p.m. (850) 897-6400 290 Yacht Club Dr., Unit 200, Niceville bluewaterbaymarina.com/schooners

🀞 Dining

3rd Annual Mac & Cheese Festival a Huge Success

The 3rd Annual Mac & Cheese Festival held March 7 at Destin Commons was a huge success. The event raised \$45,000 and welcomed roughly 2,000 attendees throughout the day. Proceeds from the event benefit the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast, a local non-profit organization whose mission is to promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence through its programs focused on academic success, good character and citizenship, and healthy lifestyles.

The family-friendly event featured gourmet, chef-inspired

twists on the South's favorite

comfort food. Local restaurants

cheese.

brought their A-game to compete for the best mac and cheese



in town. Visitors were able to Catering & Events, and Destin sample each vendor and cast

in their vote. There were three categories in total, Judge's Choice Award, People's Choice Award, and Kid's Choice Award. Judge's **Choice:**

Stanley's Street Treats **People's Choice:**

Jackacuda's Seafood and Sushi

Kid's Choice: Gulf Coast Burger Company

This event was made possible by these generous sponsors: Publix Charities, Step One T-Mobile, Automotive, SimpleHR, Stephen and Joan Carter, Specialty Roofers, Old Bay Steamer, Rock Out Climbing Gym, Coastal Kitchen

Commons.

Recipe: Breakfast Pizza with Galileo Salame

Crack 5 eggs directly onto

BY SUSAN BENTON, 30AEats.com



Ingredients:

- 1 large or two small store bought pre made pizza shells
- 2 tbsp good olive oil for pizza + 1 for onion saute
- 2 cloves of garlic minced
- 8-10 slices Galileo Salame
- 1/4 onion sliced thin
- 1.5 cups shredded mozzarella
- 1/2cup freshly grated Parmesan
- 5 large eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In a medium skillet on low to medium heat, add 1 tbsp. olive oil and saute garlic and onion until tender or caramelized.

Rub pizza with 2 tbsp. of olive oil.

Sprinkle red pepper flakes on pizza base.

Salt and pepper pizza base.

Add Parmesan to pizza base. Layer with mozzarella

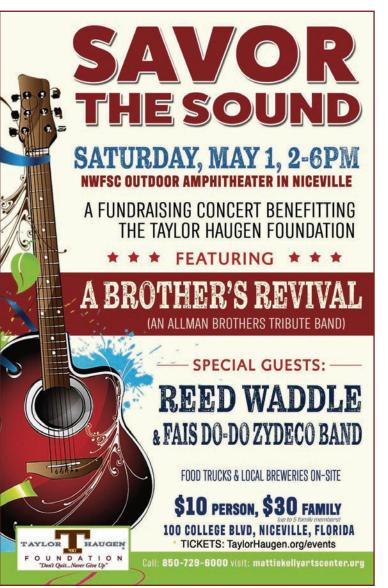
Layer Galileo brand salame.

the pizza.

Place into the oven for 15 minutes or until eggs are set.

Top with fresh arugula and serve immediately. Note: My mother began making breakfast pizza in the

1970s. You can add salsa as a base, scramble the eggs, and come up with your own variation as well.





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Sports

All Sports Association Award Winners

"One thing I've always learned is that I'm gonna get up!" — Herschel Walker

BY M. SHAYE SMITH

On Saturday, February 20th, athletes, fans and supporters of the All Sports Association gathered at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center located at Northwest Florida State College for the 52nd annual awards ceremony featuring the athlete award recipients, a live auction which brought in \$64,700 for the Association, and keynote speaker, Herschel Walker. Athletes in various categories were recognized for their hard work and dedication - not only on the field, but also in other areas.

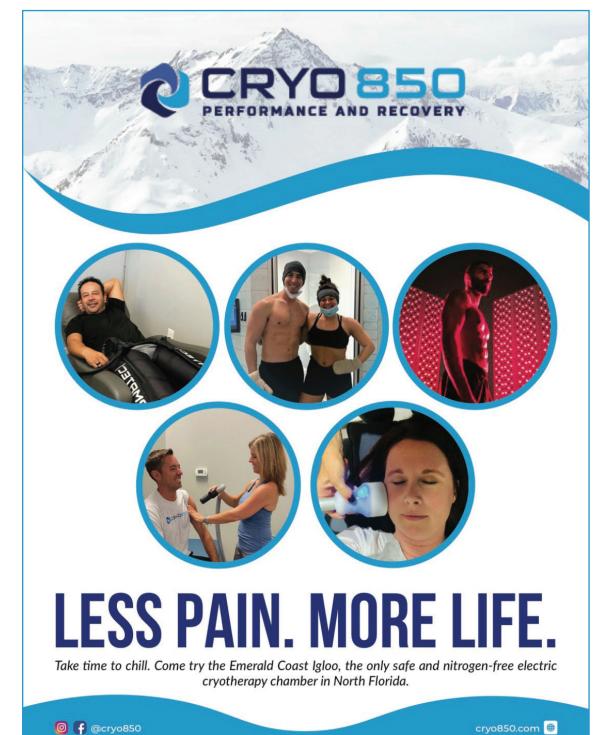
Closing the ceremony, attend-

ees got the opportunity to hear from former professional and collegiate football player, bobsledder, and mixed martial artist, Herschel Walker. He entertained the attendees with stories of his experiences, and didn't shy away from what it took to get him where he wanted to go in life and reach the achievements he did. A few attendees even managed to snag a few selfies with him as he mingled and greeted attendees seated close to him.

"I remember my mama told me, 'Man can't stop what God's got in store for you," Herschel



said as he encouraged the athletes and attendees to push into



Scott Miller, Herschel Walker, M. Shaye Smith.

their faith and hard work to achieve the goals they set out for.

Six of the eight athlete award recipients were in attendance and were honored with trophies and recognition during the ceremony. "The All Sports Association does so much in our area for youth sports and supporting our community, and it's a huge honor to be recognized because there are so many amazing female scholar athletes in our area," said Fort Walton Beach High School Student, Colby Orcutt, who received the Female Scholastic Award and shared that she has her sights set on Michigan State University following high school where she has received a rowing scholarship.

2020 All Sports Association Award Recipients:

Teton Saltes: Wuerffel Trophy Winner, University of New Mexico

Drew Frederic: Male Collegiate Winner, Troy University

Amber Leggett: Female Collegiate Winner, Sam Houston State University

Joe Brunson: Male Scholastic Winner, Baker High School Caroline (Colby) Orcutt:

Female Scholastic Winner, Fort Walton Beach High School

Tinsely Abbott: Taylor Haugen Award Winner, Walton High School

Brandon Lockridge: Professional Award Winner, Charleston Riverdogs

Regan Rountree: Special Olympics Award Winner, pickleball

Kennedy Hansen: Amateur Award Winner, Water Skier

ASA has donated roughly \$1.1 million to local youth sports over the last seven years, and "it will be at 1.3 million by the end of this year," says Don Collins, ASA president. "\$145,000 was given Saturday evening!"

Congrats to all of the award winners and thank you to the All Sports Association for everything it does for our communities. To view the photo album of photos from the event and award recipients, visit facebook. com/MyDestinLife.

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🐲 Wellness

Thousands of Runners Run Virtually in Seaside School Half Marathon & 5K

Nearly 1,700 runners participated in the 19th Annual Seaside School Virtual Half Marathon and 5K race from Sunday, February 14th to Sunday, February 28th, 2021, and raised more than \$300,000 for Seaside Neighborhood School & Seacoast Collegiate High School. Ranging in ages from two to 82, participants represented 37 states and various countries including Spain, the United Kingdom and Canada.

All funds raised from the race benefit the Seaside School Foundation, which supports the operating budget for the Seaside Neighborhood School and Seacoast Collegiate High School. The Seaside School is a tuition-free, public charter school comprised of two schools serving students in Walton County.

"Along with many other organizations, we have experienced one of our most challenging years to date with fundraising for the Seaside School Foundation," said Teresa Horton, Executive Director of the Seaside School Foundation. "But I'm so proud of our volunteers and participants. They rose to the occasion and exceeded all of our expectations with unprecedented levels of support from our community at large!"

In sponsorships alone, Seaside School Foundation secured \$163,500 in support with 73 local and regional businesses sponsoring this year's virtual





race. Targeted sponsors included Vera Bradley, South Walton Florida, Bud & Alley's, Corcoran Reverie, Fisher's Flowers, Forty-Five Central Wine and Sushi Bar, Porath & Associates, P.A, Scenic Sotheby's International Realty, Scheduling Institute, St. Joe Community Foundation, VESKCO, and Barker Williams Attorneys at Law.

Traditionally the race puts on the lively Taste of the Race party which features local restaurants. Due to the pandemic, event organizers tweaked its format this year to a local restaurant-support concept. The program encouraged locals and visitors to dine in, take out, or purchase gift cards from the 28 participating restaurants. A special thank you to Silver Sands Premium Outlets and Buffalo Rock for headline sponsoring the inaugural Grub for Good initiative. "We are so thankful for Grub to Good and the Seaside School Foundation's efforts to support local restaurants this year," said Shanda Williams, owner of 30AGrub2Go. "We had many more delivery orders during the promotion and we are thrilled to

Newsweek Names Local Hospital for Best Maternity Care

Ascension Sacred Heart's hospitals in Miramar Beach and Pensacola have been named to Newsweek's 2021 list of Best Maternity Care Hospitals. Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast and Ascension Sacred Heart Pensacola were two of only seven hospitals in Florida named to the list. The Best Maternity Care distinction recognizes facilities that have provided exceptional care to mothers, newborns and their families, as verified by the 2020 Leapfrog Hospital Survey.

The Leapfrog Group is an independent nonprofit that monitors the quality and safety of health care. Best Maternity Care Hospitals are hospitals that meet Leapfrog's tough standards for excellence in maternity care: hospitals that have low rates of C-section, episiotomy, and early elective deliveries, and follow important protocols to protect moms and babies. Though these are standards aligned with medical research and best practices, not all hospitals achieve them.

"Best Maternity Care Hospitals showcases an elite group of hospitals nationwide," said Nancy Cooper, Global Editor in Chief of Newsweek. "These facilities should be commended for the care they provide to women and families, and for giving babies a strong start to life. As families continue to cope with the effects on the pandemic, this information can support Newsweek's readership in planning for one of life's most precious moments."

Approximately 1,350 babies were born last year at Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast.

give back to local education. It was a win-win for education and local businesses for sure."

The Seaside School Virtual Silent Auction was the highlight of the race fundraising efforts featuring more than 200 items ranging from vacations and jewelry to local artists and signed sports memorabilia. The virtual auction surpassed last year's numbers and raised a total of \$70,000 for the Seaside School Foundation. "We were shocked and grateful at the level of enthusiasm surrounding this year's Seaside School Virtual Silent Auction," said Christine Glavine who served as co-chairman of the silent auction committee. "It was truly a group effort to successfully execute this auction. From business donations near and far to the volunteers who coordinated every detail, to the community who bid on every item to benefit education efforts—it is just amazing we were able to go above and beyond despite the challenges!"

Dates and registration information for the 2022 events will be available soon at runseasidefl.com.

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Wellness

Considerations for Those Already Using Hormones

By Dr. Richard Chern, M.D. Women often ask us to optimize their creams or sublingual

put them on. Men ask us to get their testosterone shots dosed

hormones another physician correctly. Unfortunately, it's not possible to get consistent therapeutic levels of hormones using





these methods. Secondly, most research indicates these methods are the most dangerous and raise your risk of strokes, heart attacks, blood clots and possibly even your cancer risk. Lastly, they provide little to no health benefits.

When we discuss hormone pellet therapy a few concerns usually arise. What if the dose is wrong? BioTE has dosed well over a million patients and we are the oldest and largest hormone clinic in the region. Secondly, we don't dabble in hormones, this is our specialty. We do hormones and do them well. Because this is our area of expertise we keep up with the latest research. We have knowledge of the latest studies many times before they are even published.

Because of our extensive knowledge and experience we are able to use your labs, symptoms, and many other factors to find a dosage that is personalized to you. We look at your levels both before and after treatment and adjust as necessary based on which symptoms have resolved and which remain.

There are two goals when optimizing hormones. The

first goal is to resolve symptoms caused by low hormone levels due to natural aging. The second goal is to reduce cancer risk, promote heart health, increase bone density, reduce pain, protect the brain and overall just decrease disease and increase health. I think many patients do not consider this second goal because I will hear, well I don't have hot flashes.

So, what's so bad about creams, sublinguals and shots?

First, creams & sublinguals last about four to six hours. And as for shots you may get two or three days of feeling good before things deteriorate. That's like slamming on the breaks each time you get your car to highway speeds or stopping your exercise routine right after the warm up. Pellets have consistent therapeutic levels for as long as six months. That means your body can actually use these hormones to really start repairing your mind and body.

Research shows any oral estrogen increases inflammatory markers, increases risk of stroke and clots. Creams are unable to get high enough levels in the bloodstream to even get into the uterus to help protect you from cancer. And synthetic testosterone shots are well known to increase clotting factors and increase risk for stroke and heart attacks.

Dr. Richard Chern, MD and his providers typically spend 30 to 60 minutes with new patients educating them on the benefits of hormone therapy and reviewing each lab to make patients feel 100% comfortable. They are accepting new patients. Change your life and call 850-837-1271 for an appointment and turn your life around.





QUESTION: I know that milk is not my friend, but I love it. I get the sniffles and have to clear my throat every time I have milk, yogurt or cheese. But I am not brave when it comes to milk alternatives. Which ones have the best flavor and are they really healthier than regular milk?

ANSWER: Be brave! You don't know what you're missing. You may be sensitive to the lactose (a form of sugar) in milk or to the protein. Either way, you are safe with these alternatives. It is easier the last few years to find milk, cheese and yogurt made with healthy alternatives. Wheth-

er you are cooking, drinking or eating these plant-based options on cereal or in smoothies or puddings, you have choices.

Listed below are some alternatives that are easily found in the grocery store. They are in order from my most favorite to lesser favorites, taking into consideration taste, tolerability and calcium/protein content. Brands differ, but values are based on popular brands of each example.

Almond milk has two grams of protein and provides 30% of the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet (about the same as 1% milk). Yogurt, powders, creamers and canned evaporated or condensed versions are also available.

Coconut milk has 0 grams of protein and provides 10% of the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet.

Rice milk has 1 gram of protein and provides 30% of the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet.

Hazelnut milk has 1 gram of protein and provides 0% of

mes to milk the same as 1% mill ones have e they really r milk? the same as 1% mill powders, creamers ar evaporated or conde sions are also available **Coconut milk** ha

Ask Dr. Marty: Milk

the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet.

Oat milk has 1 gram of protein and provides 0% of the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet.

Macadamia milk has 1 gram of protein and provides 45% of the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet (50% more than milk).

Cashew milk has 1 gram of protein and provides 4% of the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet.

Hemp milk has 2 grams of protein and provides 30% of the recommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet.

Soy milk has 7 grams of protein and provides 30% of the rec-

ommended amount of calcium in an adult's diet. It is last on the list because I don't recommend soy for children and some adults since soy contains compounds that are easily converted to estrogen in the body.

Look for unsweetened milks so that you can add your own healthy sweeteners if you like and organic, non-GMO options. Many are flavored with vanilla. You can even find many brands of a combination of almond and coconut milk. Use milk alternatives for guilt-free ingredients in creamy soups and sauces. Most options are stored in the pantry for up to a year. Once they are opened, they must be refrigerated and thrown out after 7 - 10 days. Chill before serving and shake well.

Hot Tip: Many individuals who phase out dairy from their diet find that they no longer have muscle and joint aches.

Stay well.

Marty Kernion, Ph.D. is not a medical doctor. She has a doctorate in naturopathy. Naturopathy uses natural, gentle ways to bring our bodies back into balance so that they have the God-given ability to heal themselves. She is a retired professor of herbal medicine and nutrition and has written 39 college level courses in natural approaches to health. She has published two books on natural health. She can be reached on askdoctormarty@cox.net for scheduling a class or consultation, or for sending in your questions for this column.



A Better Mammography Experience

Twin Cities Hospital has announced the addition of a new option for 3D mammography designed to elevate the patient experience through a platform built to increase comfort and deliver superior accuracy of screenings. Senographe Pristina from GE Healthcare features adaptable paddles and added cushioning to create a more customized, relaxing experience for women undergoing this important routine screening.

"Twin Cities Hospital invested in this new system because we are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our community, as well as the overall patient experience. Studies have shown one of the primary reasons women feel anxious or even skip their screening mammogram is the uncomfortable experience," stated Dave Whalen, CEO of Twin Cities Hospital. "But if women skip their screening mammogram, they could literally be putting their lives at risk. Investing in this new platform was a priority for us to ensure we could address this concern and we're glad to bring this option to the Niceville area."

A common issue with screening mammograms is that poor positioning can increase the risk of image problems, which often requires a repeat scan and can also reduce the sensitivity of the mammogram, possibly leading to missed cancers. The new platform at Twin Cities Hospital was engineered to allow women to lean comfortably on the armrests to relax their muscles which simplifies positioning, compression, and improving image quality. The design also improves the technician's workflow, which improves patient positioning that could lead to faster, more precise exams.

To schedule an exam at our Women's Health & Imaging Center, please call our scheduling office at (888) 894-2115.

Wellness



By Todd Craig

Do you ever find yourself unhappy, sensing you need to make a change, but confused about whether that change is going to help you toward the life you really want?

Often, feeling stuck is about fear of the unknown and false stories you tell yourself about what you are and are not capable of. In most circumstances, you have choices and the potential for change. The challenge is often getting the clarity you need to engage your choices and motivation to see the change happen.

10 Questions to Help You Gain Clarity About Change: Is this pain short term or long term?

Any decision to change comes with pain and grief. If you're considering change, your current situation likely has pain points. Both the decision to stay

How To Know When It's Time For Change

and the decision to change may result in pain. Ask, "Would I rather endure short-term, acute pain for a different future or long-term chronic pain of my current reality?"

Am I living a life of courage or fear?

The decision to grind things out in your current situation may require courage, but so can the decision to change. Fear can warn you when you are about to make a dangerous decision, but it can also be the emotion that indicates it's time for a change. Ask, "What would I do if I wasn't afraid?" and "What's the courageous thing to do?"

Am I fulfilled?

Being fulfilled is satisfaction with the ongoing development of your skills/character and using them to make a contribution in the world. Ask, "In what ways are my current circumstances contributing to or a barrier to my growth?" and, "In what ways are my current circumstances allowing me or preventing me from making my world a better place?"

Am I living in alignment with my values?

The answer to this question can provide blinding clarity about when it is time to make a change. Take time to clarify your values. Coaching can help

with this. Ask, "Am I becoming, or have I become someone I don't like?"

Am I living into my potential?

You have far more to contribute to the world than what you do in your job. How are your current circumstances contributing to you being the best spouse, parent, friend, employee, boss, and member of society you can be? How are you growing in these areas?

Am I healthy?

Ask these four questions about your emotional, relational, spiritual and vocational health: what's right, what's wrong, what's confused and what's missing. Not only is this tool helpful for determining health, but will nearly always reveal new insights about your current situation and your desires for your future.

Am I able to live in the present?

If you are spending significant time longing for the past or dreaming of a different future, it may be time to make a change. Longing for the past is an indication that you aren't finding fulfillment in your present circumstance. Dreaming of a different future is a hopeful indication of restlessness nudging you to take action.



Am I settling?

When people ask you, "How are you doing?" is your answer always, "fine"? You have one life. Your life is too precious for fine. What would have to change so the next time someone asks, "How are you doing?" you can respond, "Life is great!"?

Do I have evidence my current circumstances will get better if I don't make a change?

If you are restless and considering change, its likely because you are discontent in your current circumstances and have already made efforts to improve them. If you are hoping things will get better without making a change, what evidence do you have for that hope?

What are my next steps? Remember, change doesn't have to be monumental to make a significant difference. Change may come in the form of a new location, vocation, end of a relationship, starting and stopping behaviors, but it can also come in the form of a new attitude, perspective or mindset.

As you're seeking clarity about change in your life, Journey Bravely currently has coaching sessions available to help you along your journey. Connect with us at Journeybravely.com.

Todd Craig is a Life and Leadership Coach whose passion is to see others discover and thrive in the life they were meant to live. With over 20 years of having clarifying conversations and guiding people through life change, Todd has coached others to identify places of feeling stuck and overwhelmed in work and life and provide effective, strategic tools and questions to help them move life forward both at home and work. Todd offers coaching in both professional and personal capacities toward identifying, developing and living your goals, desires and dreams.



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Benefits of Having a Service Dog

By Elena Beplay and Rescue 22 Foundation

Service dogs can augment many different aspects of daily life for people struggling from a physical or mental disability. Here at the Rescue 22 Foundation, we provide task trained service dogs to veterans with service-connected injuries that have resulted in a diagnosis of PTS or other medical and mobility challenges free of charge. We also partner with the USF School of Public Health in order to continue research towards the efficacy of service dogs as a medical tool.

Before we dive into the story of one of our recipients, maybe you have thought about what services a dog can provide and why someone might need a service dog.

Service dogs can provide a variety of task trained jobs specific to help those with physical and emotional disabilities. Specifically, the dogs can be trained to perform tasks related to ambulatory problems, visual impairments and mental disabilities. Trained tasks could include: picking up objects for the owner, retrieving water or medications, turning on and off lights, calling a medical alert system, alerting family members, guiding the owner through daily obstacles, providing brace support for standing or sitting, providing wheelchair pulling, interrupting panic attacks or PTSD episodes, or providing consolation from chronic depression and emotional distress. Dogs can also be trained to provide different types of therapy such as deep pressure therapy and positional therapy. For centuries, man's best friend has been up for the job!



In order to perform a service, the dog must be highly trained by a reputable trainer. The dog should meet specific criteria in the area of breed, age, health and behavior. The trainer should have significant experience training reputable service dogs, and knowledgeable in dog behavior. Choosing the perfect helpful companion is not an easy task, but we strive to make it a seamless process for the veteran.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a common reason for someone to have a service dog. Our foundation specifically deals with this disability the most often. PTSD can occur from any traumatic event; it is not limited to combat alone. Symptoms are varied; however, many experience suicidal thoughts, recurring memories and nightmares, sleeplessness, a loss of interest in life or feeling numb, anger, irritation and fear. PTSD can thus impact their everyday life. Research suggests that psychiatric service dogs may be an effective complementary treatment option. It has been found that disrupting episodes of anxiety ranks is among the most important tasks a service dog can provide.

James, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, was one of our first recipients of a service dog. Although a veteran, his PTSD was not combat related. James lost his son to a very traumatic event in which James was the first on scene. Following his death, James had a difficult time functioning in society and was now alone in his home. He couldn't sleep, suffered from depression, and was prescribed a significant amount of medications. Hopeful, James reached out to our foundation and we went to work placing him with his service dog Zara.

Zara is a Belgian Malinois task trained by Coastline K9 and customized to James. She responds to panic attacks and anxiety by disrupting his distress. She senses when he is having an episode and will rush to him providing tactile stimulation by jumping on him, licking or nudging. She wakes James up when he is having nightmares and provides a companion for his daily life. After receiving Zara, James was able to ditch his sleep medication and get back to a social life.

"Zara gives me a purpose again. I can leave the house, be social, and get back to a normal life. She goes everywhere with me." James says.

Zara wears a service dog vest and collar that is properly marked with "service dog" patches and "do not pet" patches visible to the public. James is an information technologist specialist at a local hospital in St. Petersburg, Fla., and he takes Zara to work with him every day. She is trained to be neutral in public settings and pay attention to James's needs. Outside of work, both James and Zara enjoy competing in numerous "GORUCK" events and kayaking. When asked about some of the difficulties of taking Zara everywhere James said, "I have flown on a plane with Zara three times with no issues from Airline staff about having a service dog. When we go to restaurants, I choose to respect others around me by sitting a good distance from other customers, but I have never had an issue taking her to restaurants."

"I recommend getting a service dog; it really makes a difference in daily life and gives me purpose. Just make sure you are getting the dog for the right reasons and continue follow up training."

James's story provides an opportunity to share insight into the daily life of living with PTSD and having a service dog. He is a testament to what our Foundation strives to provide and the strength of others experiencing similar situations. For more information, visit Rescue-22Foundation.org or email Byron Beplay with Coastline K9 at byron.beplay@gmail.com.



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Business

Free Federal Income Tax Preparation Available in Walton County

Free Federal income tax preparation is being offered in three Walton County locations in 2020 for low to middle-income families and individuals, with special attention to senior citizens. This service is sponsored by the AARP Foundation and the IRS.

According to Joe Perry, Tax-Aide District Coordinator, "There are no age restrictions, AARP membership is not required, and the service is absolutely free. Secure electronic filing is offered, which results in

For parents of high school

students, SAT scores are a huge

deal. With college admissions

and scholarships on the line, paying for tutors and test prep

materials may be worth the

price. But watch out for local

con artists eager to take advan-

tage of this. Scammers - with

access to kids' names and school

information - are tricking par-

ents into paying for bogus SAT

prep materials.

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faster refunds, and clients still receive a paper copy of their return."

The AARP Tax-Aide program is strictly volunteer based. All volunteers attend classroom tax preparation training and must pass a test provided by the IRS, which provides reference materials and the tax preparation software.

Tax-Aide begins on February 3, 2020 and continues through April 15 at the South Walton, Freeport and DeFuniak Springs libraries. Taxpayers need to



bring last year's tax return, Social Security cards for the tax-

payer(s) and all dependents, picture IDs, and all tax documents received. Bring checking or savings account information if you want to direct deposit any refund(s) or direct debit any amounts due. If applicable bring Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) for each individual. Taxpayers who wish to itemize deductions must bring appropriate documents.

Find a more detailed list at www.aarp.org/money/taxes/ info-01-2011/important-tax-documents.html. Shut-ins and people in a nursing home who need a counselor to come to them can leave a message at any of the sites and will be contacted. Individuals seeking Tax-Aide service must contact one of the locations for an appointment:

Freeport Library

76 State Highway 20 West Freeport, FL 32439

- (Next to the Freeport City Hall)
- Hours: Monday Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday Closed. Call (850) 835-2040

BBB Scam Alert: Parents of High School Students – Watch Out For SAT Prep Scams

How the Scam Works

You get an unsolicited call from a person claiming to be from the College Board, the company responsible for SAT tests, or another educational organization. The caller claims to be confirming your address, so they can send test prep materials, such as books, CDs, or videos, that your child requested at school.

It seems so believable! Sever-

al victims reported to BBB Scam Tracker that the caller even had their child's name, phone number, and/or school information.

Of course, there's a catch. The caller needs you to pay a deposit, sometimes several hundred dollars, for the materials. They claim it will be refunded when the materials are returned. Unfortunately, if you provide your address and credit card details, the materials will never arrive, and your deposit will never be refunded. Scammers now have your credit card number and other personal information.

How To Avoid Test Prep Scams

Always be wary of unsolicited callers. If someone calls out of the blue, always research their organization before you share personal information or agree to receive services or products. Look up the business they claim to represent at BBB.org. Search the name along with the words "scam" or "complaint" to find out if other consumers have had negative experiences. Check BBB Scam Tracker to see if anyone else has filed a report about the company.

Double check with your child. If scammers say they are

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calling because of a service your child requested, tell them you need to check with your child and hang up. Make sure their claims are legitimate before you call back or accept a return call. The same is true for emergency scams.

Understand the College Board's practices. The College Board will never ask you for bank or credit card information over the phone or via email. If a caller suggests otherwise, hang up. Learn more about the College Board's policies.

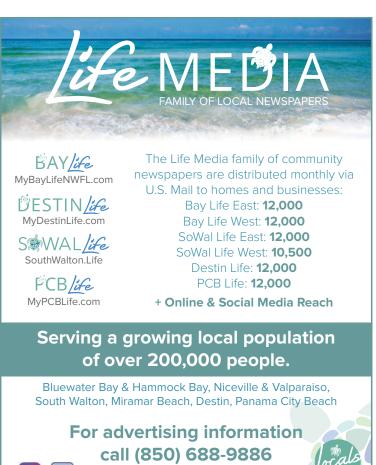
Use your credit card when possible. Credit cards may refund your money if they spot a fraudulent charge or if you report one in a timely manner. You may not be offered the same protection if you pay with your debit card or other payment options. Never agree to pay a stranger with a money wire, prepaid cards, or digital wallet, such as Cash App or Venmo.

Additional Information:

To learn more ways to protect yourself, read about imposter scams and the Federal Trade Commission's alert about test prep cons.

If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it

to BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at BBB.org/AvoidScams.



By Ricky Harper C12

Working from home, remote

work, teleworkers or virtual

teams; call it what you will, it is

fast becoming the nature of to-

day's workplace dynamics. But

working from home is nothing

new. I have been doing it since

1995 when the company I was

working for at that time, GE

Healthcare, closed all its satellite

offices. Computers and the in-

ternet were getting sophisticated

enough that GE saw an opportu-

nity to save millions on facilities,

and, thus, I started working from

a small area I cobbled together in

workers shot through the roof

due to Covid. And now that the

country is beginning to open

back up and the economy is re-

bounding, many business leaders

are trying to decide if allowing

their workers to stay at home

permanently is a good idea, especially given that many of them

did not see a drop in productivity.

So, what is a business owner

Last year, the trend of remote

my garage.

to do?

Pros and Cons of Working Remotely

vantages to a remote workforce. Cost is an obvious and not inconsequential one. Here is a list of why work from home makes sense...

• Reduces the need for space, whether rented or owned, space is expensive.

• Reduces utility costs and overhead.

• Less interruptions working remotely compared to the collaborative workplace.

• Flexibility in schedules.

Increases work-life balance.Some people are more creative working remotely.

• Remote teams enjoy greater innovation.

• Less stress due to lack of office drama, commutes, etc.

In fact, research by a collaborative group including Harvard University, Gallup, Stanford University, and Global Workplace Analytics found the following five benefits of having a work from home workforce:

• Teleworkers were on average 35-40% more productive than their office counterparts.

 \bullet They had 40% less quality defects.

• They enjoyed 41% less absenteeism due to stronger engagement.

• Turnover went down 12%.

• Profits were up 21% due to less cost, on average, reported at \$11,000 per employee per year.

Given these advantages and this evidence, what is not to like about having a remote workforce? Well, the answer might be, plenty.

There are many distinct ad- • Some workers simply need

direct supervision, a lot of it. • Working from home can dangerously feel like living at work.

• Remote workers can lose sight of the corporate vision and purpose.

• Research found that 65% of remote workers feel lonely and depressed and 78% become anxious about keeping their jobs when they do not get regular feedback.

Decreased work-life balance.
Remote workers are less likely to be promoted.

• Much more difficult for leaders to develop talent.

• Remote workers feel less appreciated, less engaged.

So, what is a leader to do? Based on the available evidence, and my own experience with working remotely, it seems the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. But how do you make it work?

First, your management style and process might have to change. Leading a workforce that is partially or entirely remote will require intentional effort to stay connected with your employees. Talk to them, call them regularly, plan occasional meet ups over coffee or lunch.

And when you do talk to them, spend time with the 'per-

son' before the 'employee.' Don't jump right into business, ask about them, their family and life. You are the steward of these human beings. Pay attention to their mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Doing so is essential to prevent burnout and protect mental health.

Second, keep them engaged by giving

them a sense of belonging. Working remote can disconnect your people from your purpose. So, be intentional at casting the mission, vision and purpose of the project and business.

Third, equip them with good technology and tools, and invest some time in training them how to look and act professionally in a virtual environment. There are many resources on this subject; use them. Mix up the use of your technology, too. Do a Zoom or team call and then do an audio only conference call. This prevents the routine from becoming mundane. And studies have linked innovative ideas and insights to team members that can 'walk and talk' when on a call

Finally, trust them. Some leaders fall prey to the notion that if they cannot see their em-



ployees, they cannot trust them. People who are treated as trustworthy usually act in a trustworthy manner. Your employees can sense when you do not trust them, which leads to your sensing their concern followed by a downward spiral of mistrust between everyone. Prudent leaders ask themselves, "To what extent are my concerns rooted in an unhealthy lack of trust?" Do not let your natural tendency to mistrust others doom the remote workforce before it has a chance to prove its worth.

Working from home can and does work. But, its success is more on the shoulders of leadership than the workforce. What will you do to foster a great remote work environment for your team? For more information on C12 or for questions, email me: ricky.harper@c12group.com.



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History of Florida Mosquito Control: Part I

Sometimes it is easy to forget that the common mockingbird and not the mosquito is Florida's state bird, especially when more than 80 mosquito species occur throughout the state. From Spring to Fall (and year-round in some counties), mosquito control districts battle with these bloodsuckers so that outdoor activities can be nuisance-free. But Florida has been at war with mosquitoes long before the state became a top worldwide tourist destination.

In 1513 when the Spaniards came to Florida, they landed at what is known today as Ponce de Leon Inlet and promptly named it "Barro de Mosquitoes" for the torment the pests brought them. Over the years, many inlets, swamps, and lagoons would bear similar names. The land lying between the St. Johns River and the coastal lagoons north of Cape Canaveral was known as "The Mosquito Country" or "The Mosquitoes" in the 18th century, and Mosquito Country became Mosquito County in 1824. Today it is known as Orange County. When Congress was debating Florida's statehood in 1845, the land was described as the "land of swamps, of quagmires, of frogs and alligators and mosquitoes." Many thought the state could never be developed.

Development did come to Florida in the form of settlements mostly along the panhandle, as the peninsular portion was too swampy for habitation. Mosquitoes made settlement life difficult, however. Summers brought swarms and sicknesses that halted commerce, and disease ran rampant through peo-



ple who could not afford to flee northward before the hordes of insects. Propensity for illness earned Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Tallahassee, and Pensacola the title the "malaria belt", and yellow fever epidemics raged in 1877, 1887, and 1888, affecting thousands and prompting the creation of the State Board of Health in 1889.

The cycle of man, mosquito, and malady continued without recourse until a landmark discovery was made by Ronald Ross in 1897 that proved the role of Anopheles mosquitoes in malarial transmission, followed closely in 1901 by the discovery of yellow fever transmission via Aedes aegypti mosquitoes. Though the connection between mosquito and disease had been made, it would not be until World War I before organized control efforts were started. While there were numerous malarial control projects between then and 1941 when the Bureau of Malaria Control was created, it was the establishment of districts in 1925 dedicated to mosquito control and the subsequent digging of 1,500 miles of drainage ditches that led to a marked decrease in mosquito breeding.

The need for organized mosquito control was recognized after a dengue fever epidemic hit Miami in 1922, and the Florida Anti-Mosquito Association (now Florida Mosquito Control Association) was born to coordinate state efforts. Control endeavors shifted to local organized mosquito control through the creation of districts in 1925, beginning with Indian River Co. and followed closely by St. Lucie Co. the following year. Today, there are over 50 control districts throughout the state dedicated to protecting the public from pestiferous and disease-bearing mosquitoes.

For any questions or concerns, please contact the district at publicinformation@swcmcd. org or call (850) 267-2112.

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For over a decade, Matthew Vanderford has worked in the Construction, Restoration and Insurance Industries as an Insurance Company Preferred Vendor, Insurance Industry Continuing Education Instructor, Public Adjuster/ Policy Holder Advocate and Licensed Contractor. He's proud to call Destin his home, with his wife Candice and four children: Matthew, Blake, Jordan and Scarlett.

Have Questions about Property Damage or Insurance Policies? Call Us: (850) 684-4794

You could have it answered in one our columns.



The Great Insurance Equalizer



By Matthew Vanderford, Claimology

There's a lot going on in the world of insurance these days. And I mean a lot. Over the last few years, Florida has been hit several times with severe hurricanes. And Floridians have been boots on the ground rebuilding their lives; living out brotherly and sister love; extending good will towards neighbors long forgot and strangers even longer so.

As a licensed Insurance public adjuster, I see first-hand, day after day, the insurance process of how claims are settled. I witness the stress of business owners trying to make repairs to keep their livelihoods afloat. I deal with the stress of parents who come home to houses torn apart due to broken dishwashers or faulty toilets, left either washing dishes in the tub or using one bathroom to accommodate six people. I LOVE what I do.

I LOVE to help people. As a public adjuster I feel like I really get to help and contribute to the welfare of the community. I get to be a part of helping people obtain the monies they need to rebuild their homes, their businesses, their lives, their dreams. Another part of what I love is learning about what goes on in the insurance world and how to use that information to help other Floridians when they need it most.

Most people aren't aware of the great advantages they have here in Florida. Other states aren't like this. For example, if you have to hire an attorney in another state, they can take 40% or more of the recovery. Not here in Florida. If you win a case here, then the insurance companies are required to pay the bills! That's called leveling the playing field-the Great Equalizer. I wanted to take the time to make sure this information gets out there. This is just one piece of information that people need to be made aware of. If you would like more information on this and other ways our staff at Claimology can help you with your insurance claims, appraisal and umpire services, or estimating, please contact us at 850.684.4794, visit insuranceadjusterschoolhouse.com, or email claims@insuranceadjusterschoolhouse.com. We're here for you and to help keep Florida Amazing!

We are the builders of our lives, captains of our ships, architects of our dreams.



By Myrna Conrad

Repentance seems to be a long-forgotten word in our society today. In fact, no one likes to read about or talk about repentance. Therefore, I am very excited that you are reading this article. Repentance is seen as a very negative word, when in fact it is a very positive, restorative word. Repentance assures our future. Repentance means to realize you are going in the wrong direction and choosing the wrong actions, then choosing to turn and go a different direction. Repentance can only happen when someone realizes that they have done something wrong and then takes the responsibility for their actions, seeks forgiveness, and then turns their life in a different direction.

Today, it seems many people don't seem to think they do anything wrong. We seem to have lost the moral core of our country and everyone does what they think is best. The lines of right and wrong are blurred. Even if someone realizes that they did something wrong, the easiest and most comfortable course of action is to make excuses for it or blame it on someone else.

Pride is the main obstacle that gets in the way of repentance. Pride keeps us from seeing a need for something different. Pride causes us to not take responsibility for our actions, but to put the blame on others. Pride says we are fine just the way we are. But look at our world today. It is certainly NOT fine the way it is and that is because we are not always fine the way we are.

At the beginning of our nation, when George Washington, our first President, gave his inaugural address in New York City on April 30, 1789, he said, "The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself hath ordained." We are a nation founded on the principals of God's Word and have received favor for so many years. Yet, we only have to look back in history to see that God's favor is lifted when a nation turns from God to follow its own ways.

Let's start by looking at Israel. When God chose Israel and gave His laws to Moses on Mount Sinai, He promised the people that if they would obey His voice and keep His commandments that were based on the principles of love for God and love toward others, then God would give them prosperity and power to live in peace with the nations around them. But the other side of that promise was that if they chose to disobey and go their own way, living like the nations around them, then God would remove His blessing and they would decline from within and be defeated by the nations around them. If we look back in history we will see this played out time and time again, not only with Israel but with Egypt; Assyria; Babylon; The Roman Empire; Greece the Ottoman Empire; and the Soviet Union. The decline of these nations started with moral decline from within.

"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it." Isaiah 30:15

The breakdown of a nation begins with the breakdown of the family. Even the word family has been redefined to include many different kinds of structure today. In fact, in some schools, children are being taught to disregard what they are learning or told in their families. Nothing can stand secure without a strong structure and strong families create that kind of sound structure within a society.

The good news is that God promises if a person or a nation comes to Him with a repentant heart and turns from their wicked ways and again decides to follow His ways, then He will heal their heart and their land and once again restore order, peace and prosperity.

I believe our country is on the precipice of a decision to either continue on in its immoral and selfish ways or turn back in repentance toward God – back to the foundation we were founded on (a nation under God); back



What Ever Happened to Repentance?

to the guidelines given to us by God. There are many Christian groups right now who are praying for this very thing. On September 26th, over 50,000 people gathered in Washington D.C. for repentance and prayer. We are part of a group called Unite714, where believers in 180 nations across the world are praying every day at 7:14 a.m. and 7:14 p.m. for repentance and the healing of our nation. This is based on God's promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 where it says, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." You can find the prayer at www. unite714.com.

How can we lead in turning our nation back to God? Here are a few strategies:

Be Aware:

First examine your own heart. Are there things that you need to change in your life? Change starts with each person.

Be aware of what your children are seeing and being taught.

Look around you and see the results of bad behavior and be an example of good behavior.

Be aware of the connotation that you give to the idea of repentance. Do you see it as a positive thing or a negative thing?

Be Intentional:

Don't ever be hesitant to say you are sorry and, if possible, make restoration.

Study countries that have flourished and countries that have fallen, and discover the actions that took them down the road of destruction.

Teach your children how to see the error of their ways and the steps needed for repentance. Lead by example.

Join millions in praying for our country to turn back to God.



Musings

A Pastor's Ponderings: Shared Dreams



By Rick Moore

My wife says she saw it in a dream. We had only been married a few months. It was the first, and one of the few times she has ever shared one of her dreams with me. She was in a pet shop the day before looking at several dogs, but could not decide which one was the right one. The next night she had a vivid dream of one of those puppies jumping into her arms and licking her face. That morning, she woke me up with great excitement in her voice. "It's him! It's him! I just had a dream about one of the puppies I saw in the pet store." She went back to the pet shop and there he was...Alex the English Cocker Spaniel. Alex became part of our family.

Having grown up around some people who were a bit mystical, I am skeptical when hearing others talk about their visions. But my wife convinced me this was the dog she saw in her dream, and I had the privilege of sharing in that dream. Alex was the best dog anyone could ever have, except for when it thundered and he tore up our kitchen floor. Even our dreams that come true can come with challenges.

While some people will share in your dreams and celebrate them with you, other peo-



ple may actually oppose your dreams. We can not control external challenges, but we can control the struggle within.

Every garden begins with a dream. Dorothy Day once said, "We plant seeds that will flower as results in our lives, so best to remove the weeds of anger, avarice, envy and doubt, that peace and abundance may manifest for all."

We dream of what our careers can become. We dream of what our family can be. We dream of achieving great things. But is it possible to find just as much fulfillment by sharing in someone else's dreams? My mother used to have a recurring dream that she was a swimmer in the Olympics. The only problem is, my mom never learned to swim. Yet, mom taught all four of her children how to swim. It isn't always healthy for parents to live vicariously through their children. But when mom would watch her children swim, she had a feeling that part of her dream had come true.

Years ago, my pastor started a program called Backpack 2 School. Each year we have the opportunity to bless children and families in our region to start the school year with a backpack, school supplies, a new pair of shoes, and a haircut. This was not my dream. It was my pastor's dream. But every time I participate by sponsoring a student, it feels great sharing in his dream.

My father-in-law loved sponsoring children at St. Jude Children's Hospital. You would think the children whose pictures were stuck by magnets on his refrigerator door were relatives. As his son-in-law, I certainly never had my picture on his refrigerator. It was the founder Danny Thomas who dreamed of creating a great medical facility like St. Judes. But my father-in-law shared in that dream by sponsoring children.

There is another, very humbling way to share in someone's dream. That is by being a recipient of someone else's help. My son was born with a club foot and had already experienced several surgeries before going to Shriners Hospital for Children. Thinking back to all of the love and care shown to my son still brings tears to my eyes. Thanks to the countless people who gave selflessly, the doctors and the nurses, many prayers, and everyone who shared in the vision of Shriners, today my son can walk!

Growing older, I try to think less of my dreams in life and more on what can be done to help others fulfill their dreams. Just because we can't help everybody, doesn't mean we can't help somebody. What can you do today to help make someone else's dream come true?

Rick Moore is Communications Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.



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By Sean Dietrich

Major League Baseball spring training started today. I sat on my porch, listening to a radio. And I was cheering. I mean genuinely cheering.

The Atlanta Braves play the Tampa Bay Rays. The national anthem was played. The umpire used his time-ravaged voice to shout, "Play ball!" I couldn't help but get excited because it's been a long year. Too long.

I closed my eyes and visualized the players trotting onto the grass of LECOM Park, greeted by their fans. I could almost see the Dads drinking beer, kids eating nachos, and teenagers taking selfies.

In the theater of my mind the game played beautifully. I could even visualize the occasional kid leaning over the balcony to catch a foul ball—which is one of the great moments of boyhood.

I almost caught a foul-tip once in Fulton County Stadium as a boy. I'll never forget it. The ball came soaring into the stands and I knew this was my moment. Time slowed down. The eyes of 52,000 were upon me. I stood beneath the ball. I waved everyone else away.

"I got it!" I shouted. "Gimme room! I got it!"

This was going to be the biggest day of my life. I extended my Mickey Mantle model glove into the air—a mitt my father bought from a yardsale for \$1. The ball came down, down, down... "Hey!" I thought, "I'm actually going to catch it!"

But it was not to be.

The ball bounced off the webbing of my glove and landed in the lap of a kid behind me. I heard the lucky bum scream with delight. "I caught it!"

I saw the kid leap. I heard people cheer. The crowd hoisted the kid onto their shoulders for a spontaneous ticker tape parade and the mayor gave him the key to the city.

I still have nightmares about that kid.

Baseball's spell over me is something I can't explain. After all, baseball is not real life. The game doesn't have anything to do with my mortgage, my work, or my family. And yet I treat baseball like it ranks somewhere just beneath national security.

Why do I care so much about the statistics of clean-up hitters whose performances have no bearing on my immediate future unless, of course, it's a pennant race?

The answer is: I don't know. Believe me, if I knew how to free myself from loving this game, I would. Lord knows the game brings nothing but misery and heartburn to those who love it.

There is no pain like watching your team lose to the Cardinals 13-1 in the National League Championship. It feels like a funeral, but with cheaper beer.

I ought to be more concerned about important things during a trying era like ours. Instead I spend time and money keeping up with multimillion-dollar team franchises. Yes! Baseball costs actual money to follow!

It's not cheap to be a fan these days. Used to, in olden times all you needed was a radio and a cooler. But today to watch a game you need a digital subscription, a smart TV, 12,981 account usernames and passwords, a streaming service, two major credit cards, liquid fast internet, three forms of legal identification, the blood of a wild boar, etc.

Springtime

Even so, I don't care. The game is still being played. And in the midst of a pandemic that has destroyed normal life for everyone, the game inflames me with joy.

Baseball is a link to our heritage. People have been playing baseball on U.S. soil since colonist farmers in knee breeches still spoke with British accents. Early Americans used sacks of wheat for bases and iron skillet lids for home plate. In all likelihood, George Washington probably had a batting average.

My best baseball memory, however, happened last year.

Every afternoon last summer, during the throes of a pandemic, four or five neighbor children would play ball in our dirt road, pausing every inning to allow oncoming cars to pass. They used old pillows for bases and a cooler lid for home plate.

Most often the kids would have a meager audience consisting of middle-aged parents and neighbors who all cradled koozies. We in the crowd would shout phrases like, "Good hustle!" and we'd slow-clap between each batter to prove that we were male.

Sometimes the kids even allowed a few of us neighborhood guys to play with them. Doctors say the cartilage of my knee will never grow back.



SEAN DIETRICH

Anyway, one night someone hit a foul ball and someone's 4-year-old brother was nearby shouting, "I got it!" The little white dot sailed above the child who held his hands out and positioned himself beneath the ball.

The baseball came straight down and plunked the boy on the face. The kid fell lifeless to the ground. He was limp. A crowd of panicked adults rushed around him, whereupon the kid leapt to his feet, teeth missing, blood leaking from his chin, smiling and shouting, "I CAUGHT IT, MOM!" And I'll never forget when the kid's mother looked at me, expressionless, and said, "This is why women live longer than men."

So, I realize there are more important things going on in the world right now. And I know there are bigger issues than baseball to worry about. But it's been a grueling year filled with squabbling, screaming, rioting, grumbling, coughing, cussing, and crying.

Gosh, it feels nice to cheer for a change.





Arts & Music



By LISA CYR

"I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music."—Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein loved to play violin. In the same way that each person is unique, each musical instrument has a unique attractiveness. Love at first sight becomes love at first sound. Like a relationship, one must spend concentrated time with their instrument developing a friendship and working out problems. The time spent together seems like minutes, your instrument takes you away from all the cares of life and becomes an extension of your innermost thoughts and feelings. And then you are in love.

Have you ever heard your inner self whisper, "I can see myself playing guitar." or "I just love to hear the sound of the violin or string instruments?" That's because the sound of certain instruments pulls at your heartstrings.

"I know that the most joy in my life has come to me from my violin."—Albert Einstein.

When a person draws the bow over the strings of a violin, something magical happens. The instrument becomes your voice singing to you. You can feel the vibrations of the melody as you move to the music. It's like a miracle in the making. And you smile.

"The piano is able to communi-

Studio 237 Music School: **Heart Strings**

cate the subtlest universal truths by means of wood, metal, and vibrating air."-Kenneth Miller

"I was 4 years old, when my parents moved into a home overlooking a lake in Massachusetts. Left behind was an old piano in the basement. The moment I pushed down on each key, I was drawn to the instrument. I joyfully realized that the combination of tones created an infinite possibility of creative sound, expression, and compositions. It was love at first sound and a love affair that has never ended."-Lisa Cyr

"I love the guitar for its harmony; it is my constant companion in all my travels."-Niccolo Paganini

There is nothing quite like watching a masterful guitarist perform from his/her heart. They have spent a large portion of their life pouring over their guitar. When they play together, their music touches your soul and you observe in awe the manifestation of miraculous melodies, chord progressions, and voicing. That is the moment when you shed a tear. Tears of happiness, sadness, and revelation which are often life changing.

"Sing again, with your dear voice revealing a tone of some world far from ours, where music and moonlight and feeling are one."—Percy Bysshe Shelley

The voice is by far the most intimate and unique of all instruments because it resides within the person. The combination of words, tone, and notes evoke great emotion and memorable moments in time. We all have those favorite songs that were performed at weddings, graduations, reunions, proms, dedications, marriage proposals, first dance etc. The singer literally breathes life into their song



which is probably why music is breathtaking. Everyone is born with a voice! Next time you are alone in your car, free yourself up by bursting your thoughts into song!

"Rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul."-Plato

"My musical journey began when I was 14 years old. I was sick in bed with my window open and in great despair. All of a sudden, I heard the sounds of music. I rushed down the stairs, and into the street. I was compelled to find where the sounds were coming from. It was a parade! I was walking alongside the drum line. A drum corp director approached me and said We need another drummer, can you help us?' That moment charted the course of my life as a professional drummer. All across the USA, I have had the opportunity to help people dance to my drum beat. For me, percussion instruments are the heartbeat of life."-Raymond Cyr

"He plays his song for one reason. It's simply what he loves. The musician."-Chick Corea

Let our Studio 237 Music teachers help you get started learning to play an instrument. We are located in Santa Rosa Beach, FL. Read about and view our teachers online at www.Studio237Music.com. To schedule a visit or lessons Call Ray or Lisa Cyr at 850-231-3199. Email: Studio237Music@gmail.com.



MKAF Presents 2021 Spring Concerts!

On Thursday, April 22, 2021, the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) kicksoff the 2021 Spring Concerts in the Village series with a collaborative and creative event. Presented by MKAF and performed by Sinfonia Gulf Coast, the non-profit duo brings "The Music of Queen" with Conductor Brent Havens and Vocalist Brody Dolyniuk to the Dugas Stage. The concert serves as a celebration of the new partnership between MKAF and Sinfonia Gulf Coast.

"This year's lineup has something for everyone and I can't think of a better way to celebrate the arts than with great music and friends," says MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller. "Revenue generated from these events enables us to provide the highest quality of arts education and outreach to Okaloosa and Walton Counties."

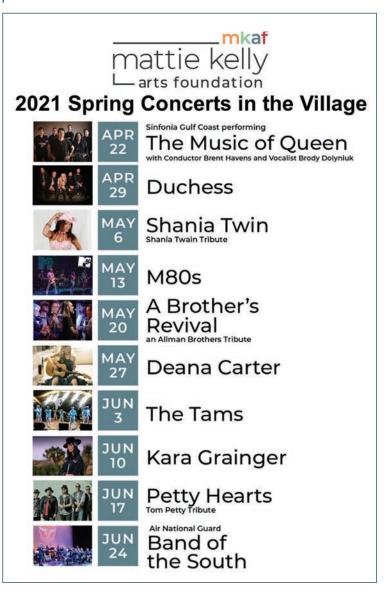
Gates open at 6 p.m. and concerts begin at 7 p.m.

for this come-as-you-are family-friendly outdoor concert series. Bring a lawn chair, picnic, and wine, or purchase food and beverages on-site prepared by featured restaurants and food trucks.

Admission for "The Music of Queen" is \$25 for adults; children (12 and under) and MKAF members are FREE. Purchase tickets online at Eventbrite. Admission for the remaining concerts is \$15 for adults; children (12 and under) and MKAF members are free.

Those interested in becoming an MKAF member can learn more at MKAF.org. Children 17 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. All sales are final, sorry, no refunds. Pets, tables larger than two feet, and drones are not permitted.

A limited number of VIP tables (provides a reserved table and seating with admission for up to 8 guests) are available. Please contact MKAF at 850-650-2226 for details.



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ECTC Presents "The Rainbow Fish"

March 26-27 & April 2-3 at 9 a.m. | Ages Six Months to 5 Years Old

The next offering in ECTC's Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) program is Marcus Pfister's "The Rainbow Fish" performed two weekends, Friday, March 26 and Saturday, March 27 and April 2 and 3. All performances are at 9 a.m. The running time is 60 minutes.

TYA productions feature ECTC professional actors performing for young audience members. Usually the theater is not a place for infants, not in this case. This special interactive TYA production is especially designed for the very young (from six months old to 5 years-old). In this special production, members of the Emerald Coast Theatre Junior Company perform along with professional actors to bring alive this colorful story of friendship and generosity

The cast features two ECTC actor/teachers: Tara Padgett (The Rainbow Fish) who has appeared on ECTC's stage in numerous productions including "Pinkalicious "Miss the Musical," Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley," "Red Riding Hood," "First Date," and most recently, "A Christmas Carol" and Samantha Savoie of Destin, who has worked as an actor, dancer, aerialist and freelance set designer throughout the

state. The cast also features Emerald Coast Theatre Junior Company players:

Alexis Billi, 13, who has worked with ECTC since relocating to



IMAGE BY PHILLIP PADGETT

(L to R): Samantha Savoie, Alexis Billi, Hanna Maes, and Gia Hall (on ground)

> Freeport from New York in 2019; Gia Hall of Destin, a 13-year-old

junior thespian who has performed with ECTC since 2016; and Hanna Maes, a 7th grader at the Ohana Institute, who has performed with ECTC since 2nd grade.

With book, music and lyrics by Austin Zumbro, "The Rainbow Fish," based on the beloved children's book originally published in 1992, teaches that sharing makes you shiny. The story is about a unique fish with shimmering scales. Other fish admire him and request some of his scales because they want to share in his beauty. At first

reluctant, Rainbow Fish eventually relents and finds he enjoys sharing his scales. In this beautiful adaptation of the children's classic, audience members get to experience this powerful story through movement, song, color and hands-on sensory opportunities as they become part of the story with the actors.

This production will be staged at ECTC's performance space located on the second floor of 560 Grand Boulevard in Grand Boulevard at Sandestin in Miramar Beach.

Tickets to "The Rainbow Fish" are \$18 per person; children ages 4 to 12 are \$12 and children ages 3 and under are free. Purchase tickets online at www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

Artful Things Niceville

Upcoming workshops at the gallery:

3/18/21 & 3/19/21 Acrylic Pours with Marcy Breault

3/20/21 Writing Workshop and Book Signing with Eliza Scalia

3/27/21 "Scribe"Calligraphy- Black Letter/Gothic workshop with Elia Saxer

4/03/21 Open Air Art Day 12- 2PM Family Fun

4/15/21 Encaustic Wax Cards

4/23/21 Date Night Pourwith Debi Profeta

4/24/21 Swipe and Shoe String Pour with Debi Profeta Ongoing Classes: **Tuesdays:** 10 a.m. – noon or 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Acrylics and Oils. \$20 per session plus supplies - Rosalyn O'Gradyogradytr@ cox.net

Wednesdays: 3:30 – 4:30 pm. Drawing Basics and Anime. Suggested ages, 10 - and up. \$10. MJ Montgomery - text 505-690-3945

Friday: 10 a.m. - noon. Basic and Essentials in Oil Painting. \$25 per session plus supplies- Ed Nickerson- text 850-420-9609

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Skylar Capri:

Area Local Takes Her Talent and Tunes to Nashville and Well Beyond

By WILL ESTELL

It's often said that our current members of Generation Z, colloquially known as "zoomers," tend to be more indecisive, less driven and lack the focus that generations preceding them exhibited. While I'm one to really steer away from the use of such broad generalizations, I do understand the perceptions leading to some to those conclusions. That said, I relish in the opportunity to help prove that stereotype wrong-in writing, when the opportunity avails to talk with an up-and-coming talent like Skylar Capri, who just happens to be an age 21 Gen Z'er herself.

Though I'd previously seen her perform at one of our Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation concerts and in Destiny Worship Center's praise band, I wanted to know a little more about the person behind the voice and that incredible stage presence. I recently sat down with Skylar to talk about just what makes her tick and how she channels that creativity into so many facets of her work, from songwriting to performing to creating her recent music videos.

Skylar (who using her middle name, goes by the professional name of Skylar Capri) has been performing since she was just 13, when she formed her first band, RandomZ (there's that generational reference) with her brother and three other boys. Skylar went on to say that the band had no original music and no guitar player. It was at that moment she began to cultivate her passion for songwriting and performing her own original music.





She taught herself guitar, and began writing daily, honing her skills, and developing an indepth love, and understanding of the entire creative process surrounding the music, remember, at age 13. I'd say that's pretty decisive determination for someone who's supposedly in a generation lacking drive and direction. Having spent time interviewing and getting to know major artists from various generations and genres from Jimmy Buffett and Darius Rucker to Kenny Chesney and Amy Grant, along with many others-I haven't met many performers who've told me they definitively decided at that age they absolutely knew what they wanted to do, and took it upon themselves to go through the motions, taking the steps to make it happen. Skylar Capri did just that, and continues to.

When I asked Skylar where she wants to be and just what she expects to get out of this musical journey, she seems to have that pretty well laid out, too. Having made several trips to Nashville, and now writing and recording regularly in Music City, she is planning a full time move to Nash this summer, so that she can better collaborate with other creatives and further hone her craft as both a writer and performer. Though I'd say Skylar's music is best described as indie-pop meets creative rock (think lots of unique sounds and experimentation, from the guitars to keys and synthesizers), Nashville is such a hub for all things music, nowadays, that even though she doesn't consider herself country, or have a real desire to get into country, she will gain a lot by living and breathing the booming creative scene that Nashville has become across all genres.

Beyond the music itself, when talking to Skylar one immediately gets a sense of who this young woman is and how her upbeat and vibrant attitude and outlook has, and will continue to propel her not only musically, but in all facets of life. During our interview, it became very evident that Skylar is passionate in building people and community through music. In fact, that desire has already enabled her to bring others along on her intriguing journey. One such example is her friend, Keno Manwell, who she became friends with in highschool, and now does her music

videos, co-creating alongside her vision, and providing his attention to detail filming and editing skills for Skylar's music video productions. There are others she talks about too, excitedly, in a way that you can just feel how much pleasure she gets out of helping other people get where they want to be, while also getting there herself.

In August of 2020, Skylar released her debut single, "Sway," that has now amassed more than 250,000 streams on Spotify alone, and recently was added to an internally created Spotify playlist with hundreds of thousands of subscribers. The video for the song is also moving toward 25,000 views on YouTube. Unfortunately, there's only so much room to talk about the music within the confounds of my word limit given here, but I could go on and on about how impressive Skylar Capri is as a person, a creative force and a performer. I encourage you to dive into her work yourself, especially watching the videos for "Sway," and her breakup anthem, "Wax Lips." Skylar went on to talk about her new work releasing this spring, including the singles "Road Trip" and "Right About Us." So, be on the look for both of those, too.

You can find out more about the talented Skylar Capri at SkylarCapri.com, as well as following her on Facebook and Instagram, and of course hitting up Spotify to help make them hits.

Moon Crush Teams Up with Alaqua Animal Refuge

Moon Crush is teaming up with Alaqua Animal Refuge to invite local residents and community members to attend the upcoming, unique music festival to be held April 26 – May 1, 2021 at Seascape Resort Golf Course. Moon Crush will be donating a portion of the sales from local, Music Only passes directly to the Refuge.

Moon Crush performers include Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit, Sheryl Crow, The Revivalists, NEEDTOBREATHE, St. Paul and the Broken Bones, Lake Street Dive, Grace Potter, Margo Price, Shovels & Rope, Vintage Trouble, The War and Treaty, Sammy Rae and the Friends and Yacht Rock Revue.

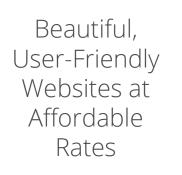
An innovative, first-in-kind, five-day event, Moon Crush is all about being together under the stars, listening to great music and connecting — or "crushing" on friends and family! Bands will perform live at the Seascape Golf Course where guests can enjoy shows in their own private viewing area that is safely distanced from other guests.

Music Only passes are now being offered to Walton and Okaloosa County residents, property owners and their guests. Private viewing areas, or coves (contained open-air viewing environments), are available for groups of four, six or eight. Larger groups or organizations can also be accommodated. Music Only passes must be purchased through this special link to help benefit Alaqua: www.bit.ly/MoonCrush-Alaqua.

Designed to bring people together safely and set during the Super Pink Moon of 2021, your party will enjoy performances from your own cove, and Moon Crush will provide contactless food and beverage service delivery directly onsite. All participants are required to show proof of a recent negative COVID test prior to check in and must wear a mask at all times when not in private, cove-specific viewing areas.

Out-of-town guests can reserve one of over 300+ beachfront and beachside homes and condos, each located just a short walk or golf cart ride to the music stage. Learn more about Moon Crush, the lineup, safety and the experience here: https://www. mooncrush.live/ and purchase Music Only passes via www.bit. ly/MoonCrush-Alaqua.

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🎪 Bay Buzz

(Continued from page 15)

and preservation of DeFuniak Springs.

Contestants and spectators will enjoy the swim in the perfectly round, crystal-clear lake in the center of town. The bicycle portion is in the rolling timber and farmland east from town into the Eucheeanna Valley. Finally, the running course is set within the historic district that contains many formal and informal architectural styles from the Chautauqua era (circa 1900).

To register, visit dfstriathlon. com.

Cartercraft Roofing, Inc. Celebrates 30 Years in Business

2021 marks the 30th year in business for Cartercraft Roofing. It all started in 1989 when Jamie Carter had a friend with a roofing company who had a lot of work along the Gulf Coast. Jamie worked alongside him for two years, until he decided to strike out on his own. In 1991, Jamie Carter Roofing was founded and later became Cartercraft. Jamie and his wife Desma Carter have continued to uphold their philosophy in



business over the last 30 yearshonoring their word and giving customers more than they pay for. Their main goal is to be an honest dependable company who can be trusted to do a great job at a good and fair price. The crew continues to learn about new materials and products along with new code changes, but are most excited to have added to their sheet metal shop. Their office is located at 52 N Nick Wilson Way, Freeport, FL 32439. Visit them at cartercraf-

Visit the Easter Bunny and New Video Arcade at LuLu's Destin

troofing.com.

11 a.m. to 2 p.m. | Saturday, April 3 & Easter Sunday, April 4

Bring the family and hop on over to LuLu's to see the tropically clad Easter Bunny. He will be on hand for free socially distanced photo ops with the kids on Saturday, April 3 and Sunday, April 4, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. He'll be giving kids Easter gift bags with candy, crafts and plastic eggs. While at LuLu's,



families can check out the new Lucy Buffett's LuLu's Beach Arcade with video games for all ages. Free \$20 Arcade play cards will be given to the first 50 kids, both on April 3 and 4, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and four lucky kids will find "Gold-

en Eggs" in their gift bags with a \$100 Arcade play card. LuLu's is located in Destin at the foot of the Mid-Bay Bridge next to Legendary Marina. For more information, visit www.lulubuffett.com/destin.

Billy Bowlegs is On!

The 2021 Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival and Torchlight Parade in downtown Fort Walton Beach will be held Friday, April 30, and Saturday, May 1, with the Torchlight Parade set for Monday, May 3. It's the 65th annual festival. In recent years, the pirate festival was held the first weekend in June. For more info, visit fwbchamber.org/events.

Mattie Kelly Arts Center,

May 1, 2021, 2 – 6 p.m. Introducing "Savor The Sound" a family friendly Saturday afternoon event at the Niceville NWFSC outdoor amphitheater supporting the Taylor Haugen Foundation. For this first annual fundraiser, they will be showcasing several homegrown, well known musicians headlining with the Allman



Brothers tribute band, A Brothers Revival, featuring former Allman Brothers Band bassist

David Goldflies. The venue will also host local food trucks, local breweries and exciting raffle items. Tickets: \$10 per person, \$30 for a family (up to 5 family members).

Visit taylorhaugen.org for sponsor opportunities and mpv.tickets.com to purchase tickets.



Bay Buzz



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