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Postal Customer Local

Celebrating the Greatest Generation: The 80 Raiders 80 Years After

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Okaloosa County was privileged April 18 to host history in the making. Almost 2,000 of us were blessed to say, "I was there to witness this historic event." This date marked the 80th anniversary of the World War II Doolittle Raiders bombing of Tokyo. Eighty men launched the first retaliatory strike against Japan's unprovoked attack upon America 80 years ago.

Lt. Col. James Doolittle (later a lieutenant general in the Army Air Forces and the Air Force Reserve) led the raid on Tokyo. The USS Hornet launched 16 B-25B Mitchell medium-range bombers, each carrying a crew of five men. They bombed Tokyo on April 18, 1942.

The raid was the first on Japanese soil, four months after their attack on Dec. 7, 1941, when 300 Japanese aircraft destroyed much of the Navy's Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor. The Doolittle Raid on the Japanese capital boost-



ed American morale and exposed Japan's vulnerability from the air. Although the damage to Tokyo was minimal, many historians credit the raid as the critical factor in the Japanese defeat at the Battle of Midway – often cited as the turning point in the Pacific.

Since April 1947, a cere-

monial "roll call" has honored the 80 Doolittle Raiders. Ted Cocoran, with the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, and Dr. Devin Stephenson of Northwest Florida State College (Home of the Raiders) played host to the "Final Doolittle Raiders Goblet" ceremony. It marked the passing of Doolit-

tle Raider Col. (ret.) Richard E. "Dick" Cole. This event also celebrated the Air Force's 75th Anniversary by the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC).

Ted's heart seems to skip a beat at the mention of the

80 RAIDERS
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Destin's Got Magic!

Summer beach days are here, but what is there to do at night? (Especially for families!) PRESTO! at the Magic Parlor is bringing some of the best magical talent from around the world for a show filled with illusion, showmanship and outright hilarity. This 90-minute magical masterpiece is Inspired by early 20th century magic performances and the beauty of vintage, traveling European dance halls, PRESTO! delivers an experience unlike anything previously seen in North America. Under the velvet dome of The Magic Parlor at Destin Commons, you and your family will witness some of magic's greatest minds perform

PRESTO!
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 Community
80 RAIDERS*continued from page 1*

Doolittle Raiders. Talking with him is like conversing with a Doolittle historian and cheerleader. One of Ted's many insights: "My awakening to the significance of the Raiders started in 2006. Since then, I have come to love the Raiders as a group and individually on a personal level. I am proud that the Chamber was able to bring the Raiders to this area in 2008, 2013, and finally in 2022. It is important to me to educate the community concerning their history by bringing the knowledge of the Raiders to the forefront. I am thrilled to have played my part in getting them to be relevant again in this area after being overlooked for far too long."

Okaloosa County and the Raiders: The Doolittle Raiders trained at Eglin field in 1942. Although the Army/Air Force had just been formed in 1941, AFSOC considers the Doolittle raid the first special operations mission. The Raiders held their 15th reunion here in 1957, and they returned in 1968 for their 26th reunion. They then vanished off our radars until Ed Horton (crew 10) moved to Fort Walton Beach. In the late 1990s, the local newspaper mentioned that Ed's wife had passed away, thus preventing him from attending future reunions.

Wes Fields, a gunner at Hurlburt Field and an auxiliary sheriff's deputy, read the newspaper article. He volunteered to transport Ed to future reunions. The Raiders honored Wes by making him director of Raider security. In 2006, Wes introduced Ed Horton to Ted Corcoran, who soon realized the significance of that encounter. Ted watched his relationship with the Raiders bud and blossom after attending the 2007 and 2008 Raider reunions.

In 2008, only eight of the 80



Photo Credit: JDCPhoto

raiders remained, so the Chamber created a special event called "The Homecoming" on May 29-31, 2008. The Homecoming spawned the reintroduction and re-engagement of the Raiders with the Okaloosa County community. In 2013, Fort Walton Beach played host for the final reunion, and the five remaining Raiders attended.

The Goblets: For the annual reunion on April 18, 1959, the city of Tucson created 80 silver goblets. Each goblet bears a Raider's name, printed upright and upside down. At each reunion, the living Raiders toasted their fallen brethren. After a Raider passed, his goblet was inverted. A final toast with the

last three Raiders took place in November 2013.

Two years later, Congress bestowed the Congressional Gold Medal upon the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders "for outstanding heroism, valor, skill, and service to the United States in conducting their bombings of Tokyo." The last living Raider, Col. (ret.) Dick Cole died on April 9, 2019, at 103 years old. He was co-pilot of the lead plane with Col. Doolittle. Covid delayed the Final Goblet Ceremony for several years, with the Fort Walton Beach Chamber chosen to host the event.

The Ceremony: The featured attendees at the Final Goblet Ceremony included the

family of Col. Dick Cole, along with the other Doolittle Raider families. The historic ceremony was honored by the presence of the Air Force's top brass: Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall III; Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, Jr.; Lt. Gen. Jim Slife, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command; and Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of AETC. Secretary Kendall said of the Doolittle Raiders, "Like many of the greatest generation, they saw it as their duty and accepted it without any regret."

In recognition of the Air Force's 75th Anniversary, 16 local active-duty and distinguished veterans were honored to represent the legacy of each Doolittle crew and the contributions of fellow airmen to the rich history of the U.S. Air Force.

Lt. Col. (ret.) Rich Cole, son of Col. Richard E. "Dick" Cole, performed the ritual of turning over his father's goblet – the final goblet to be inverted. "The Cole family is deeply honored and appreciative of the Okaloosa County Community hosting the Goblet Ceremony for our Dad ...," he said. "We are thankful to celebrate this

moment in the city where it all began." The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Wright Patterson AFB in Ohio permanently displays the Goblets.

Later that evening, thousands of onlookers witnessed the historic beach flyover celebrating this momentous occasion. The aerial review took place over Okaloosa Island, featuring 30 vintage and current U.S. Air Force aircraft including a B-25 Mitchell bomber, a B-52 Stratofortress, an F-22 Raptor, an F-35 Lightning Stealth Fighter, a C-130 Hercules Transport, a CV-22 Osprey, a B1 Lancer Bomber, 2 F-15s and two Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. Lt. Col. Cole piloted the lead plane.



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PRESTO!

continued from page 1

their innovative, legendary acts. The acts in PRESTO! have been seen on America's Got Talent, Britain's Got Talent, World's Best Magic, Champions of Magic, Masters of Illusion, The Late Show with David Letterman, The Late Show with Stephen Colbert and more.

Yu Hojin is one of the many unique talents that is featured at PRESTO! this summer and the Magic Parlor won't be the only stage he'll be on. Yu Hojin received word that he passed the initial auditions for this season of America's Got Talent and will be moving on to the live rounds. This season of America's Got Talent will premiere in June while Hojin is performing at PRESTO! He may have to sneak out to Vegas during this summer for a filming, depending on how far he goes in the competition. As he prepares for America's Got Talent, Hojin says he is eagerly awaiting his chance to show the world his story through his performance. "I've always wanted people to remember my

name," Hojin says. "I am going to do my best to make people remember me".

A native of South Korea, Yu Hojin has been a visionary force in turning the world of magic into the world of artistic performance. At 8 years old, Hojin's participation in magic competitions were often followed by titles such as "The Youngest Competitor." He has won prizes in almost every international magic competition in the United States, Taiwan, Italy, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. He's risen to international stardom as one of the first magicians to perform in the concert hall at the historic Sydney Opera House as well as the first Asian magician to perform on Broadway.

Hojin's act is more than just a magic show or illusion show – it's an opportunity to use magic to tell his own story. Through every trick, attendees learn more and more about Hojin and what he wants to say to his audiences. Hojin will be in Florida for the first time for PRESTO! He says it has always been a dream of his to visit Florida and Hawaii, and he is excited to cross one location



off of his performance bucket list.

The show is hosted by David Williamson, who has been featured on ABC's Champions of Magic, CBS' Magician's Favorite Magicians, and NBC's World's Greatest Magic III, CW's Masters of Illusion and as a guest performer on America's Got Talent.

Additional performers include Chris Cox, the only mind-reader ever to have starred on Broadway, the Sydney Opera House and in London's West End and the star of Chris Cox's Mind-Boggling Magic (CBBC) and the award-winning Killer Magic (BBC Three) in the UK; The Great Kaplan, a modern-day vaudevillian master

who has made numerous headliner appearances at the Magic Castle in Hollywood; and Pablo Canovas, an internationally-known, dynamic magician prodigy.

PRESTO takes place in a beautiful imported antique theater from Belgium. Opulent palaces of red velvet and gold brocade, stained glass and deep mahogany, these European cabaret tents, known as spiegel tents (or mirror tents), were constructed in the 1910s by renowned craftsman Willem Klessens. It hosted dances, cabarets and celebrations throughout Europe for almost a century. About 35 of these remarkable structures exist, largely still seen throughout Europe.

You can see Hojin and the rest of PRESTO!'s amazing acts at the Magic Parlor through Aug. 28, with 10 shows per week at Destin Commons. See more information by following on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok. To purchase tickets, visit prestodestin.com or call the PRESTO! box office at (850) 688-1201.

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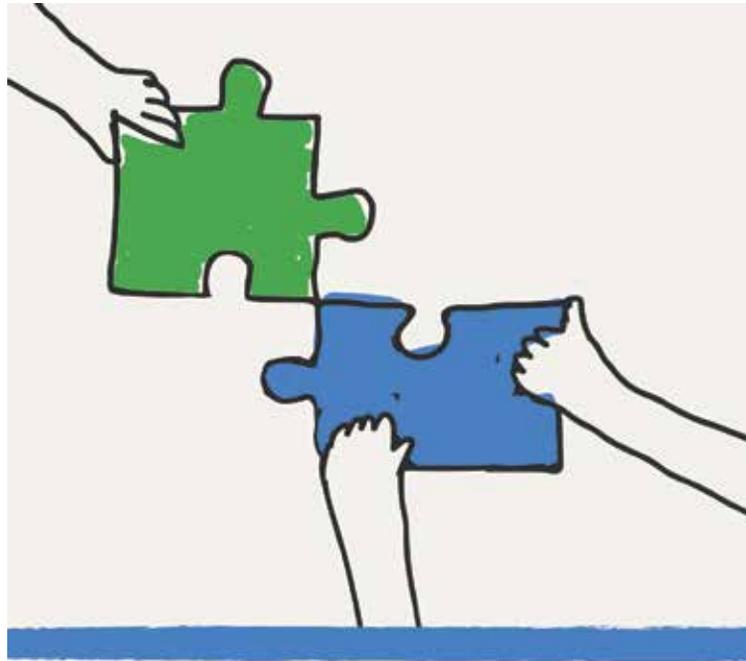
Emerald Coast Autism Center Breaks Ground on Second Facility 'Emerald Coast Learning Center'

The new building will be located on the Northwest Florida State College Campus in Niceville

Emerald Coast Autism Center will break ground Wednesday, June 8, at 5 p.m., for Emerald Coast Learning Center, a new building located directly next to Emerald Coast Autism Center on the campus of Northwest Florida State College in Niceville. This second facility will provide a safe, structured learning environment for the nonprofit's Transition to Work program and its academic classrooms.

The new building plans include a 20,000-square-foot building connected to the current facility on the campus. This new building will contain the pre-vocational Transition to Work program through the Florida Department of Education in partnership with NWFSC, designed to teach older students job skills. The new building will also expand the nonprofit's academic classrooms.

"We are so excited for this next phase of ECAC," said Hei-



di Blalock, CEO of Emerald Coast Autism Center. "The new building will help us grow with our students and their families by providing a space designed specifically to meet the needs of our vocational and acad-

emic students." Emerald Coast Learning Center will offer specialized facilities for vocational training, including a commercial kitchen, a laundry facility, Light It Up Brew (the organization's student-run coffee shop),



a car wash, and more. TTW students will continue practicing job skills in-house before heading out on campus or other community partner job sites. ECLC will also house several academic classrooms for students on track to graduate from ECAC and continue with their education at other local public or private schools.

"Transition-to-Work (TTW) is a great opportunity for our clients," said Patrick Mills, Transition to Work Coordinator. "Each day our students practice vocational skills that will help prepare them for meaningful employment. The program focuses on independence, social skills development, and frequent changing of routines, to better

assist in the transitions to the workforce." Currently, students work on campus in the following departments: Receiving (mail sorting and campus vehicle washing), Kay Litke Culinary Arts Greenhouse (planting, harvesting, and maintenance), Athletic Facilities (cleaning and organizing facilities) and the Mattie Kelly Arts Center (ushering at performances).

The organization plans to focus its current facility on younger students receiving one-to-one Applied Behavior Analysis therapy services. More information can be found at www.ecautismcenter.org or by calling (850) 279-3000.

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Dora Cawood, a Northwest Florida native, has been a part of the Ruckel Properties team since 1999. Dora manages RPI's commercial, residential, vacation, and airport rentals. She is a member of the National Association of Realtors®, the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors®, and the International Council of Shopping Centers, which helps her meet customers' rental needs. If you need a location for your business, family, or plane in the Niceville/Valparaiso area, Dora is happy to assist you.



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Yeska has been a REALTOR® since 2006, and has both the Seller Representative Specialist (SRS) and Military Relocation Professional (MRP) designations. Originally from Central America, she is bilingual and can easily assist both English and Spanish speaking clients. She values integrity and honesty in every real estate transaction, and builds strong relationships with her customers.



Yeska Sand

REALTOR® Hablo Español
Seller Representative Specialist (SRS)

850.368.5936

Kelly Shephard
REALTOR®

850.543.7353



Kelly has been a real estate agent serving Northwest Florida since 2005. She provides local knowledge and experienced guidance, and prides herself in making each transaction as stress-free as possible. She enjoys helping her customers, now friends, fulfill their home buying and selling needs. Her expertise includes resale, new construction, second home, and investment property purchases, as well as current home listing and sales.

Jodie became a licensed Florida REALTOR® in 2005 and has never looked back. Her greatest pleasure is matching properties with customers and knowing she has provided them with the best service and the best deal possible. She keeps buyers and sellers informed every step of the way, answering questions and explaining what comes next.



Jodie Snell

REALTOR®

850.621.6535

Valerie Waters-Auclair
REALTOR®

Military Relocation Professional

850.855.6205



Val understands the stress of relocating frequently and at a moment's notice, having been a military spouse since 1994 through seven moves. She and her family have lived in Niceville since 2004. She is a skilled negotiator for buyers, sellers, and real estate investors. She is passionate and full of energy, and would love to help ease your transition to Okaloosa or Walton County.

Crystal has worked on interior and exterior design elements of many homes, having been married to a builder since 1995. She became a REALTOR® in 2005, and works with both buyers and sellers, but she especially enjoys each step of the new construction process, from dirt to final inspection. You can count on her for honesty, integrity, and most of all, follow-through. Her job is to make your real estate transaction seamless.



Crystal Tingle
REALTOR®

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Community

Top 10 Reasons High Schoolers Should Enroll in an Associate's Program for 11th Grade

Make Seacoast Collegiate High School's Dual Enrollment Program Your Top Choice

Say hello to a flexible class schedule and college credits! Dual Enrollment is a breeze at Seacoast Collegiate High School. Students attend Northwest Florida State College in Niceville and can earn college credit while still in high school.

Can you imagine graduating with two years of college done? Students who earn 60 credit hours can be eligible to earn their associates degree and their high school diploma simultaneously.

Hang with other Seacoast students while taking college classes. As a Seacoast student, you have access to a dedicated Seacoast Classroom at Northwest Florida State College where dual enrolled students are able to collaborate and spend time with one another on campus.

Ride the shuttle! Seacoast Collegiate High School students are able to ride the shuttle from

South Walton to Niceville daily-free of charge! It's the ultimate carpool - safe and fun!

A built-in community of amazing like-mind students who are high achieving, motivated and FUN! Seacoast has all of the social aspects that make high school such a special time in a student's life: clubs, dances, prom, athletics. It's a small school environment and a close knit group of friends with all of the traditional high school rituals.

Fifty percent of Seacoast graduates earn Bright Futures Scholarships. The team at Seacoast are pros at making this an easy, engaging and fun process. Parents say again and again that it's a lifesaver to have so much help!

Personal attention from Seacoast guidance counselors will ensure that each student's dual enrollment program meets their individual needs. Additionally,

guidance counselors help make the college admissions process a snap with hands-on assistance with applications and everything else.

Scholarship Opportunities - this year's senior class has earned more than \$4.1 million in college scholarships. Seacoast Collegiate High School had three National Merit Scholarship Nominees for the 2021-2022 school year.

Spots are still available to enroll for the 2022-23 school year - but hurry - they are going fast.

It's worth repeating that enrollment at Seacoast Collegiate High School and dual enrollment coursework at Northwest Florida State College that can



Tanner Bates

earn students an associate degree and a high school diploma simultaneously are TUITION FREE!

For some students, the opportunity to earn an associate degree upon high school graduation is a springboard to further higher education. For others, it provides a headstart and a competitive advantage for entering the workforce.

Whatever the motivation, Seacoast Collegiate High School in Santa Rosa Beach has the team and the ability to help students navigate what could otherwise feel like an intimidating process.

Seacoast Collegiate High

Continued on page 11



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 Community

Bay Buzz

Join the **Walton Republican Women Federated** monthly luncheon, featuring District 1 dynamic firebrand Rep. Matt Gaetz Wednesday, June 1. Check in is at 11 a.m. with the meeting set for 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. The Miramar Beach location will be provided upon registration. Prepaid advance registration required: \$25 members, \$30 guests. Men are welcome, too. To register: waltonrepublicanwomenfederated.org/event-list/#!event/2022/6/1/june-luncheon-matt-gaetz

The **Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary Club 23rd Annual Charity Golf Tournament** will be played Friday, June 3, at Bluewater Bay Golf Course (Bay and Marsh Courses). Sign-in is at 11:30 a.m., with a putting contest and lunch. The shotgun tee off will be at 1 p.m. Charities include ShelterBox, Sharing and Caring, Relay for Life, Take Stock in Children, Polio Plus (Polio eradication), Salvation Army, The Heights Tutoring Center and student

scholarships. Call Mid-Bay Rotarian Art Jean at (850) 517-8030; authurkjean@aol.com

Call to artists! **The Okaloosa Arts Alliance (OAA)** invites Okaloosa County residents to participate in the **2022 Okaloosa County's Got Talent showcase**, Saturday, June 4, 6-10 p.m., sponsored by Enlightened Studios. Performing artists are invited to participate, including dancers, musicians, and theater groups/individuals. Divisions include local artists from K-12th grade in the first division and 18-plus artists in the second division. Enlightened Studios is located at 142 Miracle Strip Parkway SE, Fort Walton Beach.

The K-12th performances will be from 6 - 8 p.m. One winner will receive \$75; a runner-up will receive \$50. The second group of 18+ performers will be from 8-10 p.m. The winner will receive \$100, and the runner-up will receive \$50. Winners will be announced following each group. Find more

information and reserve a performance time at okaloosaarts.org/ogt.html or email Amy at amybaty1@gmail.com for more information about the contest.

The Rebecca Blount Buxton Memorial Library, a.k.a. the **Freeport Public Library**, will dive into "Oceans of Possibilities" beginning June 7 as the theme of the **2022 Summer Reading Program**. Because of a donation by the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors (ECAR), nearly all costs are covered. The Summer Reading Program encourages school-aged children to earn tickets for raffle prizes through reading and other community activities.

The **Freeport Republicans** will meet Tuesday, June 14, in Freeport at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse, 1830 Great Hammock Bend. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m.; meeting, 6-7 p.m. June's speaker is Brian Clowdus, candidate for the Florida House District 6. The Freeport Republican Club meets monthly on the

second Tuesday of each month at the same location and time. Future meetings are July 12 with speaker Shane Abbot, candidate for Florida House District 5, and August 9.

The **Freeport Merchant Association** plans the second annual **Night Out for Freeport**, June 18, 4-8 p.m. on the Hammock Bay Green on Victory Boulevard, benefitting Rise Animal Refuge.

There will be live music by the Shenanigans from 5-8 p.m., vendor booths, food trucks, bounce house, silent auction and 50/50 raffle. The event is open to the public and entry is free.

The **Walton County Republican Executive Committee (REC)** will meet Monday, June 20, at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse, 1830 Great Hammock Bend in Freeport. Registration begins at 5:40 p.m.; meeting 6-7 p.m. These meetings are open to Republicans in Walton County. The REC

meets monthly on the third Monday of each month at the same location and time.



The **Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary Club** will sponsor its second annual **Charity Cornhole Tournament** Saturday, June 25, at 3rd Planet Brewing, Niceville. All tournament entry fees go to Rotary charities. Two-person teams select their own partners for the double-elimination event. Entry fees are \$30 per team through Sunday, June 19 and fees increase to \$35 thereafter. Competitors can register under "Events" at midbayrotaryclub.org. Bags will be supplied. Sign in and practice begins at 9:30 a.m. with competition starting at 11 a.m. 3rd Planet is donating gift cards: \$150 for first place; \$100 for second; and \$50 for third.

Continued on page 10





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JUNE

02 | Concerts in the Village: Alter Eagles
7pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

03 | Sip N' Stroll
5pm | J.Leon Gallery and Studio | Miramar Beach



04 | Woman's Climbing Circle
9am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin

Pop-Up Used Book Sale
10am | Niceville Public Library | Niceville

One Stroke Painting
10:30am | Artful Things | Niceville

Below Alabama Live
6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

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

09 | Concerts in the Village: Sister Hazel
7pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

11 | Kids' Watercolor Cards
10:30am | Artful Things | Niceville

Free Women's Self Defense Workshop
3pm | BlackSmith Jiu Jitsu | Niceville

12 | Step One Fest: Celebrating 5 Years
10am | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | Fort Walton Beach

16 | Concerts in the Village: Sinfonia Gulf Coast
featuring The Music of Led Zeppelin
7pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

18 | Duchess Live
6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
Ballet at Twilight
7:30pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach

23 | Concerts in the Village: Boogie Wonder Band
followed by Silent Disco
7pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

25 | All Shooters Callout Match 2.0
9am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting and Sport | Valparaiso

FARMER'S MARKETS

Niceville Community - Saturdays
June 4, 11, 18 & 25

9am-1pm | Palm Plaza | Niceville

Freeport Farmers Market - 1st & 3rd Sundays
June 5 & 19

8am | Victory Blvd | Freeport

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After hearing our review podcast about his book Herding Tigers, author Todd Henry joins us on the Hello Frances Podcast this week. Todd is the founder and host of the Accidental Creative Podcast, an author, and an international speaker where he shares his expertise on creativity, productivity, and passion for work. Listen to the full episode to hear Todd's insight on recognizing strengths in your employees, balancing stability and challenge, the difference between your work and your job, and the best advice he's ever received.

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JULY
04 | Freeport 4th of July Parade

4pm | Middle School to Freeport Regional Sports Complex

 Community
BAY BUZZ

continued from page 8

Join Freeport's 4th of July

Parade. The route begins at the middle school and ends at the Freeport Regional Sports Complex. The parade will leave the middle school area and travel down Kylea Laird Drive to Hwy. 20 then turn west and go to 83A and turn left and go onto the Regional Sports Complex. Individuals, businesses, organizations, clubs, churches, etc. can participate with cars, floats, golf carts, trucks, motorcycles, horses, or walking or marching in groups, tractors, bikes and more. The assembly area is Freeport Middle School Football Field. The parade route is approximately 2-1/2 miles long. Parade participants assemble between 2 and 3:45 p.m. on Monday, July 4. The parade begins at 4 p.m. Request a form to participate in the parade and return them to the City Clerk by Wednesday, June 29 at 5 p.m. Contact Katherine Gatewood, City Clerk at CityClerk@FreeportFlorida.gov or call (850) 835-2822 x219.

Join the **Heritage Museum of NWF for Summer Camp 2022.** Week 1 is for Grades K-2 and will be from July 11-15. Week 2 is for Grades 3-6 and will be from July 18-22. Bring a daily lunch and the museum will provide a light snack. Classes such as weaving, gardening, science, history and more are offered. Roll call will start at 10 a.m. The museum, 115 Westview Ave. Valparaiso, will have an attendance raffle



Heritage Museum Summer Camp

for one lucky winner. Call (850) 678-2615 to register and pay: \$75 for the full week or \$17 a day.

Blue & White Gala Sparkles at Legendary Marine

Rocky Bayou Christian School held its signature fundraising event, **Blue & White Gala**, May 5 at Legendary Marine in Destin under a tent of lights. The sold-out event, presented by Green Energy Contracting, featured keynote speaker Willie Robertson of Duck Dynasty and kicked off the public phase of Rocky's Foundation for a Future capital campaign. The event raised \$173,000 for an exciting new project.

The evening began with a VIP reception at Legendary Yacht Club. Guests enjoyed a meet and greet with Robertson, featuring a photo op by Epic Photo Co. The VIP hour ended with a short question and answer session with Robertson.



Rocky Bayou Christian School Blue & White Gala

The main event in Legendary Marine's showroom featured an upscale buffet by Culinary Catering 365, and the Foundation for a Future campaign kickoff followed by the keynote address from Robertson, who spoke about how Christian education is vital to planting seeds for raising future Christian leaders. The \$173,000 in funds raised benefit Foundation for a Future capital campaign. Rocky's board of directors set a phased expansion plan in 2018, the first phase being a new high school building. This will be the school's first new project in 20 years. The building will give Rocky the ability to house 250 more high school students and feature eight classrooms, two science labs, a state-of-the-art STEM lab and more.

Children in Crisis (CIC) recently hosted the **Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)** training designed to prepare parents and adults to

work with children, families and in systems of care impacted by trauma. TBRI purports three principles are the foundation for working with kids from hard places – connecting, empowering, and correcting. Participants from Children in Crisis, Fresh Start for Children & Families, One More Child and The Pearl Project met at CIC's Kid's Clubhouse for the training, led by Mary Ann Day, Tyler and Leslie Fuller, TBRI Practitioners with The Pearl Project.

Foster parents and adults working with children and families left the training with tools to build relationships and help children as they work through their past-traumatic experiences and heal their emotional wounds. Edie Rodgers, Foster Parent at CIC's Emergency Shelter, said, "We are going to try several of the examples that were shared in the training. We are working with the kids to create a 'Respect' poster, featuring the children's words they have



CIC Trust-Based Relational Intervention

chosen to describe it."

There is a shortage of Foster Parents in District 1 area which includes Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton Counties. CIC is currently recruiting Foster Parents to come live in their homes in The Children's Neighborhood. For information on becoming a CIC Foster Parent, call 850-864-4242.

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"Step One Fest" Celebrates First Five Years

Step One Automotive Group plans a community festival to celebrate its fifth anniversary on June 12, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., at the Fort Walton Beach Landing Park. Step One Fest will feature live music, food trucks, non-profit organization booths, and a kids' zone, complete with a touch-a-truck exhibit.

"We are thrilled to be celebrating the fifth anniversary of Step One Automotive Group with our team members, customers, partners, family, and friends." Said Maureen Bierman, director of marketing and communications. "Being part of



this community for the last five years has been a pleasure and a privilege."

Register early at <https://conta.cc/3wlzzKb> to be entered to win any of these prizes:

2 tickets to the Boogie Wonder Band at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village on June 23; \$50 gift card to Lulu's; \$25 gift cards to Lulu's; \$100 gift cards to Pepitos; four Hancock Suite tickets for the June 17 Wa-

hoos baseball game; four box seat tickets behind home plate for the June 17 Wahoos game; two VIP experience tickets to Lee Brice at the Pensacola Bay Center on Aug. 11; two Monster Jam tickets at the Pensacola Bay Center Aug. 11; Orca 20-quart cooler; and Gulfarium Marine Park tickets for a family of four.

The company has spent its first five years partnering with charitable organizations, including Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast, Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, Saving with Soul Pet Rescue, Emerald Coast Children's Ad-

vocacy Center, The Hsu Educational Foundation, local military groups, and so many more.

You can also participate in the "Birthday Salebration." Purchase or lease a vehicle from Step One Automotive Group and select from a FREE 5-day cruise, 5 oil changes, 5 details, \$500 in accessories, or a \$500 gas credit. Terms and conditions apply* and this offer is only available while supplies last.

Step One Automotive Group owns 17 new car dealerships in Florida, Alabama, and Georgia, representing 16 brands, includ-

ing Chrysler, Dodge Jeep, Ram Fiat, Volkswagen, Subaru, Kia, Hyundai, Genesis, Ford, Buick, GMC, Cadillac, Alfa Romeo, and Maserati. Step One Automotive Group also owns two standalone pre-owned operations, three wholesale parts operations, and one rental car operation. Out of 18,000 dealerships in the United States, Step One ranks in the top 90 dealer groups in the United States and the top 10 in Florida. Step One employs 787 team members across three states and six cities.

TOP 10 REASONS

continued from page 6

School, which along with the Seaside Neighborhood School form Seaside School, Inc, Florida's longest-operating charter school and the No. 3 ranked combination school in the state, has been providing Walton County students with this unique opportunity since opening in 2013. Students begin their high school careers at Seacoast Collegiate High School on Northwest Florida State College's South Walton campus in Santa Rosa Beach. During 9th and 10th grades, students en-

joy small class sizes where their individual needs and learning styles are a priority. Upon entering 11th grade, students are dual enrolled with all classes taking place at Northwest Florida State College's main campus in Niceville.

While many students enroll at Seacoast in 9th grade, those who choose to enroll as 11th graders and have maintained a 3.0 grade point average are presented with a unique opportunity to immediately enter the dual enrollment program and begin earning college credits. As a public charter school, the entire curriculum, including college coursework, is

completely tuition free for Walton County students.

Space for the upcoming school year is still available for new students, including incoming 11th graders. Interested in learning more? Check out the information available at www.seasideschools.net, have a conversation with the school's administration and take a school visit. We will provide interested students and parents with the information needed to make a school decision that could culminate with both a high school diploma and a free associate degree in just a few short years.

JUNE 12, 2022 @ 10 AM

STEP ONE Fest

JOIN US FOR AN AFTERNOON OF FAMILY FRIENDLY FUN AS WE CELEBRATE STEP ONE AUTOMOTIVE GROUP'S 5TH ANNIVERSARY!

crosspoint
FREEPORT

Service Times

9:30 A.M. & 11 A.M.

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 Community

Four WCSO Posse Members Receive President's Volunteer Service Award



AmeriCorps presented the following members of the Walton County Sheriff's Office Posse with the President's Volunteer Service Award: Kevin Kirby, who in 2021, volunteered 2,769 hours to the residents and visitors of Walton County. Barry Ford volunteered 1,895 hours in 2021. Robert Collier volunteered 1,108 hours and David Murphy volunteered 1,064 hours. Their service saves the taxpayers and the sheriff's office thousands of dollars every year. To learn more about the posse visit: waltonso.org/community.../citizen-volunteer-program.

Gov. DeSantis Awards \$3.2 Million for Okaloosa County Manufacturing

Gov. Ron DeSantis awarded \$3.2 million to Okaloosa County through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund to expand roads, rail lines and utility infrastructure at the Shoal River Ranch, an industrial mega site, which is expected to bring more than 11,000 jobs to the region. This will more than double the current number of manufacturing jobs in the area, bringing more than 4,000 new jobs in manufacturing.

"Florida is committed to expanding our industrial base and investments like this, as well as our strong support for skilled trades and workforce education, will help us achieve this goal," said DeSantis.

"This funding will support economic development in Okaloosa County by creating available, ready-to-access sites for industrial development, which will have lasting impacts throughout the region," said said Florida



Department of Economic Opportunity Secretary Dane Eagle.

"The Shoal River Ranch Giga Site is a critical infrastructure project and the award made today is a difference maker," said Chairman of the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners, Mel Ponder. "There is nothing else this size, with this much access to a major interstate, in Florida. Opportunities at this site will create thousands of jobs in multiple sectors, an-

other great win as we diversify our local economy. This opportunity will be transformational for our area."

Shoal River Ranch Giga Site is located seven miles east of Crestview, with access to Interstate 10, Highway 90 and the Florida Gulf & Atlantic Railroad. The site is projected to make an economic impact of more than \$47.6 million after infrastructure improvements are made.

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Meet Our Hometown Hero Giselle McLaughlin

By KAY PHELAN

Meet 13-year-old Giselle McLaughlin, an eighth grade student at Liza Jackson Preparatory School in Ft. Walton Beach. Julie Porterfield, CEO of Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC), met Giselle at its Niceville Center when she presented a \$280 donation check to Julie.

Giselle is taking an in-depth look at Florida foster care for her school "Graduation By Demonstration" (GBD) project. GBD is a process in which students undertake a major project that is of personal interest to them and may have a positive impact on their future career interests and decision making. The program is designed to take students out of their comfort zone, set goals and discover their interests. GBD culminates with a major presentation at school by each student about their project.

Taking on foster care as her GBD project, Giselle wanted to find a way to give back and create awareness of what children face. As it turns out, she has had first-hand experience in this

area, coming very close to the foster care system. She was raised by her mother and step-father, both of whom were in the military. Unfortunately, in 2018, her mother took her own life. This caused a split-up of Giselle's siblings that included a younger brother and sister. In 2020, her step-father moved Giselle and her then 4-year-old sister to Northwest Florida to be closer to family. There was a brief stint in Texas and then back to Northwest Florida because of unpredictable circumstances. Last August, Giselle was taken in by their great aunt and uncle in Fort Walton Beach, passionate relatives who really understood the situation. Several weeks ago, Giselle was officially adopted by these kind relatives. Although her siblings do not live with her, they are all close and communicate frequently.

"Throughout this period of instability after the loss of my mother, in sixth and seventh



Giselle McLaughlin, age 13, Liza Jackson Prep School student, and ECCAC CEO Julie Porterfield

grade, I felt like I had no purpose in life," Giselle said. "But then once my great aunt and uncle stepped into my life, things began to normalize for me. Now I am so happy at Liza Jackson Prep School and involved with so many school activities."

With a shortage of foster parents in Walton, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Escambia counties,

one now understands this teenager's avid interest in taking on this subject. Because of Giselle's foster care research for her school's project, she became aware of ECCAC.

Giselle has been very impressed with the many child-friendly services the non-profit organization provides for kids and their families dealing with abuse and neglect situations. In a couple of years, she hopes to volunteer at the Niceville Center saying, "I would love to stay involved, and hope I can give insight to other kids. It is a really nice thing ECCAC does for kids dealing with so many problems."

"It has been our pleasure to meet Giselle and acquaint her with our operation," Julie said. "She is a passionate and caring young lady. I'm certain she will do an impressive job with her GBD presentation. Who knows, maybe one day Giselle will be an important ECCAC staff member!"

ECCAC provides services in a child-friendly environment to help identify, treat and support children in abusive situations, as well as helping to prevent child abuse through education and prevention programs. With a center in Okaloosa County and the Pierce Family Center in Walton County, it houses representatives from the Florida Department of Children and Families, Child Protection Team, State Attorney's Office, local law enforcement, licensed mental health counselors and ECCAC's staff and volunteers. In ECCAC's 23-year history, more than 15,000 children have received more than 170,000 services at no cost.

For further information about the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, visit www.eccac.org. If abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

Bay Life wants to know about YOUR Hometown Hero. Please send your recommendation to Lori@Life-Mediagrp.com.



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 Community

Storm Safety Information

Okaloosa Gas Provides Guidelines for Dealing with a Major Storm or Hurricane

Before the Storm

To begin preparing, build an emergency kit and make a family communications plan.

Consult [ready.gov/hurricanes](https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes) for methods on how to secure your home.

Know your surroundings. Learn the elevation level of your property and whether the land is flood-prone. This will help you know how your property will be affected when storm surge or tidal flooding are forecasted. Identify levees and dams in your area and determine whether they pose a hazard to you.

Learn community storm or hurricane evacuation routes and how to find higher ground.



Determine where you would go and how you would get there if you needed to evacuate.

During the Storm

In the case of an evacuation, simply turn the thermostat to

the off position before leaving.

For outdoor appliances, consider turning the shut-off valve to the off position while away.

do not attempt to disconnect your gas service or work on or around your gas meter, relight any of your gas appliances or clear flood debris from your gas meter or from any other gas appliance, including your water heater.

After the Storm

Hurricanes cause heavy rains that can cause extensive flood damage in coastal and inland areas. If your home floods and it comes in contact with natural gas appliances, call Okaloosa

Gas at (850) 729-4700.

Check natural gas appliances first. Make sure to check for the smell of natural gas which indicates a possible leak. Do not attempt to make repairs yourself or use unauthorized, unlicensed individuals to work on your natural gas appliances (Unauthorized repairs can be unsafe and may void your warranty). Call 811, Before you Dig or request line locate online with Sunshine 811 at least two full business days before digging or disturbing the ground in any way, including to uproot trees or grind tree stumps.

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Make Plans to Attend the Upcoming Lincoln Dinner

Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody will be the keynote speaker at the Okaloosa County Republican Executive Committee's annual Lincoln Dinner Friday, July 15, at the Island Resort, Fort Walton Beach. She is a fifth generation Floridian from Plant City. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting and her law degree from the Univer-

sity of Florida and later earned a masters of law in international law from Stetson University College of Law. Moody began her legal career practicing commercial litigation. Later she joined the U.S. Attorney's Office, prosecuting drug, firearm and fraud offenses. In 2006, at the age of 31, she became the youngest judge in Florida.



Since taking office, Moody has been recognized as a national leader having served as a Commissioner on the Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. She serves as Chair of Florida's Statewide Council on Human Trafficking. She will run for re-election this November alongside Gov. Ron DeSantis.

For more information on the Lincoln Dinner and to obtain tickets, visit Okaloosagop.com or contact OCREC Chair Sandra Atkinson at (850) 543-8742 or OCREC Vice Chair Cheryl Stubbs at (850) 797-3605 or Diana Gilbert at (850) 897-2592.



Niceville Center Seniors Have a Ball at Prom 2022

The Niceville Senior Center Foundation sponsored its Second Annual Senior Prom for Senior Center members (aged 55 and better) in May. "An Evening Under the Stars" offered Senior Center members and their guests light hors d'oeuvres, music, a night of dancing, commemorative photos and the crowning of Prom King and Queen, Glenn Yost and Linda Knowles!

"We strive to empower and enhance adults 55 and over through our programs and caring services that promote their wellness, social connections, continuing education, independence and, most importantly, fun, and this year's prom was no exception," said Julie Mooney, Senior Center Manager.



Prom Queen Linda Knowles and Prom King Glenn Yost.



For more information about the Senior Center in Niceville, a calendar of events and activities offered throughout the year,



call Julie at (850) 279-6436 ext. 1601, or visit cityofniceville.org/463/Senior-Center.

Please join us **OCTOBER 27, 2022** *15th Annual*
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featuring Staff Sergeant (Ret.) Johnny 'Joey' Jones, U.S. Marine Corps EOD

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 Community

Communication is Key for Local Mortgage Pros

Balenda Hetzel and Bonnie Manthey

By LORI LEATH SMITH

During one of the most important financial decisions of your life, you want to be informed and reassured every step of the way. You might encounter some roadblocks during your homebuying experience, but what's worse is not even knowing about them. It can be a scary experience.

Balenda Hetzel and Bonnie Manthey at CrossCountry Mortgage, LLC understand that. That's why they put communication first throughout the entire loan process.

As Southeast Regional VP in Destin, Balenda brings more than 20 years of experience in the mortgage industry and title field and is just as passionate about her clients and her career as she was when she first entered the industry.

Balenda assures that even after 20 years, closing day for her clients is not only a celebration for them, but for her as well as she still feels excitement every

time she watches her borrowers receive the keys to their brand new home for the very first time.

Though Balenda has spent more than two decades successfully helping many home buyers in her community navigate the ins and outs of the mortgage process, her most cherished title is "Mom" to her amazing children.

Bonnie has worked with homebuyers originating loans in the region for almost 20 years.

Originally having worked in the banking industry, she has a combined 32 years banking and lending experience, which offers her clients valuable insight.

Married with four children, she's also a proud grandmother of five. She loves her church family, too, at Destiny Worship Center and makes the most of living here by spending time with her family participating in all our Gulf Coast has to offer.

Together Balenda and

Bonnie work with a group of mortgage professionals at CrossCountry Mortgage, who work hard to make the mortgage process as smooth as possible for their clients. Providing their customers with high-quality service and an unforgettable mortgage experience is top priority and they are dedicated to ensuring their clients receive the level of service they expect and deserve, no matter their financial situation.

In fact, Bonnie and Balenda strive to be their clients' "lender for life" as they combine their local experience, along with their mortgage expertise, to offer outstanding service and genuine customer care, consistently treating their clients as family long after the loan has closed.

The CrossCountry Mortgage team offers a diverse range of mortgage loan products and will facilitate the right loan for you and your unique financial situation. Bonnie and Balenda make sure you understand each step, and when you can take the next leap in your life with a new home. They are committed to providing the advice you deserve and the most thorough communication possible throughout your experience.

If you're looking to take the leap and invest in homeownership in 2022 or beyond, contact Balenda (850.499.4759, balenda@myccmortgage.com) or Bonnie (850.585.3860, bonnie.manthey@myccmortgage.com).



Balenda Hetzel



Bonnie Manthey



The Market is HOT!

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Take advantage of low rates by contacting your CrossCountry Mortgage loan expert today! We're committed to finding the best possible loan option to achieve your second home.



Balenda Hetzel

Southeast Regional VP

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20 Questions on the Coast with Michelle Jannazo

An Interview with Sharon Vaughn, CEO and Founder of Emerald Coast Women, Inc.

How long have you lived in Florida?

I've been in Florida since 2012, and in this area since 2015. I also lived in the area briefly in 2008-2009 as well.

What do you like best about living here in the Panhandle?

I love being outdoors. The natural environment is beautiful and therapeutic. Things like the tall pines and dune lakes remind me what a spectacular place we call home!

You're a professional in the tourism and hospitality industry, right?

Yes, I'm currently the associate director of sales at Hotel Effie in Sandestin. I have been in the industry for more than 19 years.

You're also the founders of a local non-profit organization, Emerald Coast Women.

What is Emerald Coast Women?

Emerald Coast Women (EmCoWo) was founded with the mission of helping women and girls from all backgrounds and at all life stages, thrive and live fulfilling lives by cultivating connection, sharing information, and offering advocacy and resources.

That's a powerful mission. What inspired you to start EmCoWo?

It's a personal mission for me. There have been times in life when I've had to start over or rely on others to make it through. I landed here on the Emerald Coast to find peace, be with my sister and best friend, and start a new life with zero dollars in the bank. I received encouragement and support from some family and even some strangers. Through counseling and reflection, it became clear that starting fresh takes on many different forms. After my own life stabilized, I committed to helping women. Even those who appear strong on the outside often have trouble asking for it. I wanted to create a space where a woman or girl looking around not knowing what in the world to do next, or how to sur-



vive the situation she is in, could find a thread that will lead her toward a better life and know for certain that she is not alone.

How does being a single mother inform your work with EmCoWo?

Being a single mom is a huge driving force for me. It can be overwhelming when you are solely accountable for the well-being of children. Single mother households are six times more likely to live in poverty than other households. This makes them at higher risk for homelessness and domestic violence and puts children at higher risk for abuse. EmCoWo will serve as a lifeline. Many women suffer silently feeling like they cannot ask for help. Sometimes one contact or resource can change their situation for the better. Sometimes just knowing you're not alone can give you room to breathe.

ECW addresses women's health and education. Are there other areas of interest?

Workforce development and training, money and finance are also key.

How does the EmCoWo podcast connect to your mission?

The podcast was the first seedling of EmCoWo's mission. We have already received impactful feedback from women who have listened and heard stories of other women facing a multitude of life challenges. The interviews have inspired women to reach out and bravely share their own stories in hopes it will help someone.

What comes next?

We'll hold a quarterly community forum where we'll gath-

er women to share resources and knowledge and identify areas of need. EmCoWo hopes to engage high school girls to promote and instill a culture of connection over competition among women. Students can pack care kits for our partner organizations while writing personal notes of encouragement.

What's the long-term vision for the organization?

In the long term, EmCoWo will work to create a residential community to house, educate and provide workforce training and experience for single mothers in need of a supportive environment. This residence will embody the "village" mindset that is so often referenced when it comes to mothering, though it is not always visible.

How will EmCoWo reach women in Walton County?

Through social media and grassroots marketing campaigns as well as through the schools, daycare facilities, mental health and women's health centers and establishments frequented by women. We're going to lean into the businesses and organizations that share similar goals and want to make a positive impact in women's lives.

What organizations or agencies will you work with?

EmCoWo will grow relationships with strategic partners including Department of Health, Walton County Schools, Department of Corrections, social service agencies and other community groups.

Will women and girls be matched with mentors?

EmCoWo will work with women in need to match them with partners who will help them plan and reach their goals. This is not a traditional mentorship since it's not solely focused on career goals. One woman may want to write a book and we will partner her with another woman who can show her the resources needed to do that. Another woman may simply want to learn how to create a budget for her family and we will find the right partner for her too.

How can people get involved?

There are volunteer opportunities for people with any schedule availability or level of interest, including event planning, blog content creation, and podcast participation.

Sharon can be reached at sharon@emcowo.com or by

messaging the EmCoWo on Facebook or Instagram @EmeraldCoastWomen.

20 Questions on the Coast is an interview series with Michelle Jannazo showcasing leadership in communities across the Panhandle. Michelle is a local writer, educator and community volunteer.



emcowo is on a mission
to cultivate connection
among women and girls
everywhere.
because when we know
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do anything!

Learn more at www.EmCoWo.org

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 Community

17th Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction Raises More Than \$3.8 Million for Children in Need

The Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) is pleased to announce that the 17th Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction presented by the Jumonville Family raised more than \$3.8 million for children in need in Northwest Florida. The record-breaking results are a staggering \$1.8 million increase over the previous year.

Hosted April 22 and 23, the 17th Annual Auction was the first in-person auction experience produced by DCWAF since 2019 following two years of virtual auctions. With a sold-out crowd of 600 guests, the proceeds of the auction benefit DCWAF's 15 partner children's charities in Northwest Florida.

"The results of this year's auction far exceeded anything we could have ever dreamed," said John Russell, President of DCWAF. "We expected to show growth when compared to the past two virtual auctions, but we had no idea we would beat our best auction by over a million



DESTIN
CHARITY WINE AUCTION
FOUNDATION

dollars! We are so grateful to our supporters from the wine and culinary fields but also to our board of directors and the patrons that attended the auction and raised their paddles high and often. What cannot be overstated is the impact these funds will have on our supported charities. They have battled through the pandemic to continue to deliver

their services, often at great risk to themselves, so that the children of our community would know they were not forgotten. We cannot wait to present the largest checks in our history to our charity partners."

The auction weekend began Friday, April 22 with 10 patron dinners hosted along the Emerald Coast collectively raising

more than \$720,000. The live auction kicked off on Saturday, April 23 with the Magnum Force lot (50 magnums from vintners past and present) which raised a record winning bid of \$70,000. The highest single-selling lot of the afternoon was a trip with private air passage to Middleburg, VA, which sold for \$110,000. A luxurious seven-night stay in the British Virgin Islands aboard a four-bedroom Moorings 52.4 monohull captained by Chef Tim Creehan sold for \$70,000, and an immersive trip to the Kentucky Bourbon Trail complete with private air passage, courtesy of NetJets, sold for \$75,000.

The funds raised at the 17th Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction will be distributed to 15 local non-profit organizations for specific projects and programs that benefit children. DCWAF's charity partners for 2022 include AMikids Emerald Coast, Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast, Boys and Girls Clubs of

the Emerald Coast, Children in Crisis, Children's Volunteer Health Network, Emerald Coast Autism Center, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Food for Thought, Habitat for Humanity of Walton County, Mental Health Association of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Opportunity Inc., Shelter House of Northwest Florida, The Arc of the Emerald Coast, Westwood Ranch, and Youth Village.

As the top charity fundraising event in Northwest Florida, the Destin Charity Wine Auction is currently ranked fifth among the nation's top charity wine auctions by Wine Spectator Magazine. The money raised at this year's auction will be presented to DCWAF's charity partners during a special check presentation ceremony in September.

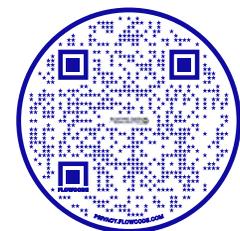
The dates for next year's Destin Charity Wine Auction weekend are April 28-29, 2023. For more information on the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, visit www.DCWAF.org.



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Market Volatility



BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

Market Volatility Continues

It has been quite a different year for investors. Investments can be classified in a few main categories: 1) Financial: stocks, bonds or cash; 2) Real: real estate, 3) Alternative: gold, bitcoin, commodities and 4) Personal: jewelry or perhaps collectibles.

War, rising interest rates and bond yields and inflation have had major impacts on asset prices. Stocks are down 10 percent YTD, bonds are down 10 percent. However, cash (based upon yields only) has climbed to approximately .25 percent from at or near zero at the start of the year. Bitcoin has had an increasing amount of volatility and commodities for the most part have rallied.

What is Driving the Volatility?

Uncertainty over the short term has traditionally added a lot to volatility for most asset classes. While a long-term perspective (in line with an investor's risk tolerance, investment objective or goal and time frame) offers the best approach, in our opinion, the volatility can lead to a lot of concern for investors.

The big three are 1) the horrific war in Ukraine and the fallout; 2) rising rates and their impact on the economy and earnings; and 3) inflation (at a four-decade high).

The war has brought uncertainty to grain supplies, specialty gasses and minerals and metals, oil and gas as well as impacts to world security. It has meant strong short-term returns for defense stocks but has added to inflation and overall uncertainty.

Rising rates have continued to affect growth-oriented stocks (technology for example) as well as the current value of bonds. Rising rates mean bond prices have fallen. Rising rates are also affecting the mortgage lending

market as long-term mortgage rates crossed 5 percent for the first time in more than a decade.

Inflation has continued to increase with the latest CPI reading of 8.5 percent. This is a rate not seen in over four decades. That impacts yields, earnings, cost of borrowing and the potential value of the dollar (although the dollar is up over 5 percent YTD).

What Might Bring Inflation Down?

In our view, housing costs could be slowing and the main reason for that is rising mortgage rates. Housing accounts for approximately 40 percent of CPI. That is not to mean the growth of housing as an investment but rather something called the Owner Equivalent Rent of an owned home. As housing values grew (over 18 percent in 2021 for example) that had a major impact on CPI.

We now consider this: Mortgage rates have climbed from the low 3s to over 5 percent in a few short months. The cost to borrow is higher and that cost is starting to squeeze out would be buyers. The Washington Times reported recently that when rates crossed 5 percent, over 10 million would-be homebuyers would be pushed out of the borrowing market. That is because the rates to borrow and or amount they can borrow worked against their ability to quality. We also consider so called demand destruction: As an asset climbs in cost, demand goes down. The cost to build (materials and labor) as well as inventory are beginning to work against housing prices and that, we believe, will have a mitigating effect on inflation. We agree with a lot of what we see and hear: Inflation is likely to move to 5 percent or lower by year's end, mainly due to housing.

The Fed Raising Rates

We learned at the start of the year that 2022 was the year of "Don't Fight the Fed," according to Global X, a provider of exchange traded funds. The action of the Federal Reserve on two main fronts are of importance to investors: 1) raising the Federal Funds rate (currently at .25 percent) in May as well as perhaps in June, July and at other intervals for the remain-

der of the year and 2) The Fed's balance sheet. That has a significant impact on the supply of money or liquidity in the economy. The Fed is yet to start reducing that (it is approaching \$9 trillion). We understand the Fed intends to start reducing that in June. Fewer dollars could also have a mitigating effect on inflation as well. We think the balance sheet has greater impact than raising rates.

Where Might Markets be Headed

Predictions we believe take a back seat to objectives, time frame and risk tolerance. While equities and real estate have historically outperformed most other assets classes as well as inflation, their returns have not been uniform. Timing the markets is not a strategy but time in the markets we think is a strategy. According to Jim Cramer of CNBC, panic is not a strategy either. Expectations and hope have not factored in to achieving investment goals or targets either. Timing, conviction, and patience have proven to serve investors well in our view.

According to Ibbotson, Morningstar (data from Raymond James) large cap stocks (which make up 70 percent of market value) have returned 10.5 percent from 1926 to 2021. That includes reinvested dividends as opposed to dividends taken in cash. Government bonds have averaged 5.5 percent, Treasury bills (close to cash) 3.3 percent and inflation 2.9 percent.

Many institutions suggest that investors might anticipate lower returns on equities (stocks) over the next decade. Vanguard (vanguard.com) recently suspected that U.S. equities might return just 3.3 percent over the next decade. They feel at this point that global (non USA) equities could fare better at 6.2 percent. See their website for greater detail.

Valuations are always important for investors to note. Most would agree that valuations (costs) of many investments, such as stocks, are high. That means for valuations to come down, stocks would have to continue to sell off or earnings would need to rise. It is important to note, at least at this writing, that U.S. companies

continue to report strong earnings and strong growth.

Headwinds and Tailwinds

Goldman Sachs recently commented on inflation's direction and pointed more toward tailwinds for decreased inflation with three main points: 1) slowing growth of energy costs 2) slowing growth of wage costs (unretirements have been reversing the great resignation with 55+ year olds and hence a greater labor pool, lowering wage pressures) and 3) rising mortgage rates slowing the cost of housing (a major component of CPI as noted earlier).

While the world and the markets are climbing a wall of uncertainty, investors and would-be investors might want to review and update their goals and strategies. We believe this should be done at least annually and that investments should be reviewed at least quarterly. When goals, time frames or risk tolerances change, a plan matching those should be developed and implemented.

The First Wealth Management is located at First Florida Bank, a division of The First Bank, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City. Phone 654.8122.

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There is an inverse relationship between interest rate movements and fixed income prices. Generally, when interest rates rise, fixed income prices fall and when interest rates fall, fixed income prices rise.

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrency issuers are not registered with the SEC, and the Bitcoin marketplace is currently unregulated. Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are a very speculative investment and involves a high degree of risk.

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Up, down or sideways: Keep your head on straight when markets move.

Some investors have learned how to ride out the most stomach-churning market cycles. Others follow the urge to jump out mid-ride. So what can you do to play it smart in a roller coaster of a market?

For starters, you can turn to us. We can help you find a clear way forward before fear or concerns take over with a strategy tailored to your situation. In our experience, perspective is the ticket to helping endure the ups and downs as you pursue your financial goals. Contact us to learn how we can help.



Maurice Stouse
Financial Advisor

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Financial Advisor

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 Community

Inflation May Be Leaving You More Underinsured



By JOE CAPERS,
INSURANCE ZONE

For the past year or so, Florida property owners have learned about the many factors that

caused our insurance premiums to increase at unprecedented levels. This is true in all lines of insurance, but primarily with insurance for residential and commercial property. There are multiple reasons for the state of the insurance marketplace, but two of the biggest driving forces are storm activity over the past few years and the overwhelming number of claims that end up in lawsuits.

A recent statistic from the

National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) showed that Florida homeowners' claims represent 8 percent of the nation's total claims; however, Florida has more than 76 percent of the lawsuits related to homeowners' claims in the entire nation. Just when we did not think things would get worse, inflation enters the arena, and puts even more pressure on rates. Inflation also must be considered when determining the adequate

amount of coverage to replace your structure and personal property.

In economics, inflation refers to a general progressive increase in prices of goods and services in an economy. When the general price level rises, each unit of currency buys fewer goods and services; consequently, inflation corresponds to a reduction in the purchasing power of money. There's no denying that inflation like we haven't seen in decades is on the rise. All you need to do is go to the local grocery or hardware store or fill up your gas tank and you will feel the pinch.

The cost of residential and commercial construction is also skyrocketing due to inflation, and this could spell trouble for homeowners and business owners. Increases in the cost of lumber and other building materials, in conjunction with continued supply chain issues and labor shortages, could leave many homeowners underinsured if they need to rebuild after a covered insurance claim.

Should disaster strike, homeowners without enough coverage could find themselves digging into their savings to cover the shortfall. Now is the time to be certain you have enough insurance to pay the cost of what it would take to rebuild your home or building, also known as replacement cost. Here's what you need to know.

Insurers use replacement cost calculators to determine how much structural coverage is needed to rebuild your home or business investment. Information about your building, such as its square footage, quality of construction materials and the year of construction or upgrades, are all factored into the estimated replacement cost.

You can also take steps to determine the replacement cost on your own. One method involves multiplying your home's square footage by the current cost of construction per square foot in your area. You can get an idea of per square foot building costs by calling the builders association in your area, a licensed appraiser, or a local contractor. Most estimates will range from \$200 to \$300 per square foot, but in our area we have had some suggested amounts around \$500 per square foot and more. We just learned that one of the

premium writers of homeowners in our state will be adopting CCI (Construction Cost Index) as replacement for the Inflation Guard Endorsement on its HO3 policies. CCI provides a more precise method for adjusting dwelling limits annually based on true changes in cost of construction vs. the straight-line increase used in the Inflation Guard endorsement.

To make sure you have the appropriate coverage, talk to an agent about your homeowners or commercial policies. They are willing to help you understand what you have and what you need based on the replacement cost. Protecting your assets and your retirement funds from losses you wouldn't otherwise be able to financially afford is what insurance is about. Making sure you have the correct amount of coverage can be the difference between rebuilding your entire structure versus a partial rebuild. You have the ultimate decision in choosing your limit for coverages, such as those for dwelling or personal property. Your insurance agent is here to assist you with making sure your coverage keeps up with the increasing cost to repair, replace or rebuild the home.

As a consumer, you may want to see if a recent evaluation of the replacement cost of your home or structure has been done. You may request that this be updated. Based on what you learn, choose a limit that provides peace of mind and can help you protect against catastrophic loss.

The bottom line, when it comes to insuring your home, is this: don't skimp on the coverages, look carefully at your renewal policy, and address any coverage deficiencies you may have, and always let your agent know about any upgrades and remodeling you've done to your home. We recommend an annual review of your property insurance program because life happens and circumstances change.

Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is a full service personal and commercial lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach. Visit their Video Library on www.ins-zone.com and watch an informative video "Market Value vs Replacement Cost" or call (850) 424-6979.

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Twin Cities Woman's Club Says Goodbye After 39 Years Serving the Community

By RHONDA DAVIS

Just one year shy of its 40th anniversary, the Twin Cities Woman's Club recently voted to dissolve. After the last official luncheon May 25 and upon conclusion of all business responsibilities for the fiscal year 2021-2022, the club will cease to exist.

"Dissolving the woman's club was not an easy decision," says Kissy Gordon, current TCWC president. "Many of the members have known each other for years and worked hard to make a difference in our community. Burnout, age, illness, death, relocations and covid paid a toll on the organization."

The Club was originally part of the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs. It met April 10, 1983, under the guidance of the Fort Walton Beach Woman's Club to compose bylaws.

The installation ceremony took place May 6, 1983. Charter officers were installed at a ceremony at the Greenhouse in Bluewater Bay. Charter officers were: president, Dot Rivers; vice president, Jane Neiner; secretary, Virginia Crisafulli, and treasurer, Sue Brown.

Members were Sue Brown, Virginia Crisafulli, Sammie Da-

vis, Helen Fritsch, Sara Harris, Evelyn Hollfelder, Gwen Jones, Charlotte Lane, Jane Neiner, Pat Olesak, Midge Reagan, Dot Rivers, Jean Schuller, Roma Shipley and Patsy Taylor. Sue Brown, Virginia Crisafulli and Sammie Davis are still members.

Since its incorporation, the community may remember these 20 women who served as president, with several serving more than one term: Dot Rivers, Carmelita Neal, Charlotte Lane, Jean Waite, Sue U. Brown, Libby Guzzetta, Lee Johnson, Roma Shipley, Glenda Hudkins, Alyce Katouch, Midge Cook, Jo Ann Dunnam, Annie Fair, Sharon Wade, Barbara Dunn, Dale Fuqua, Lillian Lewis, Lorraine Phillips, Roxanne Anthony and Kissy Gordon.

"The Twin Cities Woman's Club was such a great group of ladies to work with. We visited the Florida State Capitol and saw politics in action. We attended Woman's Club Conventions in Orlando. What fun we had," said Jo Ann Dunnam, longtime member and a former club president.

In 2010, the members chose to leave the Federation in order to devote more time and resour-



es. All this took countless hours of planning and hard work to acquire locations, set-up, door prizes and everything else that goes into creating a productive fundraiser.

"Over the years the favorite charity of the club has always been the TCWC Memorial Scholarship to honor the memory of all deceased TCWC members," said Dale Fuqua, TCWC treasurer and a former TCWC president. "The scholarship started out in 1989 as assistance to a displaced homemaker with books and tuition at Okaloosa Walton Junior College. Just as the community college grew into Northwest Florida State College, the scholarship fund grew to become the Twin Cities Woman's Club Scholarship Endowment." As of 2021, the Club has awarded more than \$215,700 to the program. This year, the club plans to contribute another \$5,000.

In a 2018 article in the Northwest Florida Daily News, charter member Roma Shipley, also a former TCWC president, reminisced, "Over the years, various interest groups were formed to concentrate on fundraising for special projects or to present

fun opportunities for members. Bridge and bunco groups were formed. We had great fun parties at Christmas. We picked up trash on our roads. We decorated and partied and sang with the residents at Twin Cities Pavilion and other care facilities in our community. We entered our arts and crafts in competitions. We participated in Christmas parades. We wrapped presents. We collected items for non-profit organizations. We made things for the girls at Hacienda Girls Ranch. We helped out wherever we were needed."

Since 2009 club members met every summer to turn and tie ditty bags, which were sewn by Dale Fuqua. Each year more than 700 ditty bags were donated to the Mental Health Association of Okaloosa and Walton Counties. The bags were filled with various personal care and other items, and distributed to clients for Christmas Project Cheer and the Veterans Stand Down.

The Twin Cities Pavilion received particular attention by the club's special projects committee. Almost every year the

Continued on next page

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 Education

Northwest Florida State College News

CHS Students Inducted as Take Stock in Children Scholars

Northwest Florida State College and the Okaloosa Public Schools Foundation recently honored Collegiate High School students during the Take Stock in Children Student Awards Ceremony.

The Take Stock in Children program serves deserving, low-income youth throughout Florida, helping them succeed in life by providing mentors, student advocates, case managers and early intervention. Students who maintain the terms of the program's contract are awarded tuition scholarships to the post-secondary institutions of

their choice.

Nyla Griffin, Grace Michelli and Ingrid Mueller were inducted as Take Stock in Children Scholars this year.

NWFSC President Appointed to the Southern Regional Education Board

Dr. Devin Stephenson was appointed as a Southern Regional Education Board member by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. The Southern Regional Education Board strives to improve education by providing policymakers with reliable data to inform sound policies, collaborating with states to share resources, and serving educators by providing the training needed



Take Stock in Children inductees

to help prepare students for their futures.

"I am grateful to Governor Ron DeSantis for the opportunity to serve on the Southern Regional Education Board," said Dr. Stephenson. "I look forward to working alongside fellow educators and lawmakers

as we continue to transform the educational opportunities in our region and provide our teachers and students with the resources they need to succeed."

Serving alongside Dr. Stephenson are newly appointed members, Florida Rep. Alex Rizo, Megan Crombie from Florida State University School, and chancellor and founder of Keiser University and Southeastern University, Arthur Keiser.

Futures Forward

Futures Forward is a camp for rising 9th – 12th grade students that develop entrepreneurship mindset, leadership skills and hands-on training in Career Technical Education

(CTE) fields. Backed by the Entrepreneurship Education and Training (EET) grant, sessions are high-impact educational experiences scheduled across six campuses and centers. Students can participate in a variety of week-long classes from welding, culinary, business strategy to nursing, aviation and emergency medical services.

Camp Dates are Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-noon. The fee is \$100 for session 1; June 6-9 and June 13 16; June 20- 23 and June 27- 30. An Entrepreneurship Fair is scheduled for June 30.

Register Online at <https://nwfstacollege.formstack.com/forms/futuresfwd2022>.

TWIN CITIES

continued from page 21

committee hosted Christmas tree decoration parties whereby members decorated the Pavilion's Christmas trees and provided refreshments for the residents. St. Patrick's Day bingo parties were held every March; and each month a variety of snacks and beverages were donated for residents to enjoy. In addition to these activities, the club made annual monetary donations.

Fuqua said, "A few years ago, I did some research in back records to see how much money the club has donated to non-profits. In looking through the records to see what needs to be kept with the archives, I found my worksheet again. The grand total on that sheet is \$406,626! And if things go as planned the amount should increase by at least \$6,000 by the end of May."

"That number only shows the funds that were recorded in our books," Fuqua continued. "It doesn't reflect the countless

hours of work, the personal funds or the in-kind/sharing cart contributions (such as supplies, food, toys, etc.) made by our members that did not flow through our bookkeeping system. The 'areas of interest' section of our yearbook tells some of the story of our contribution to our community over the last 39 years. It tells of the

\$323,955 raised by our 'Spirit Award'-winning TCWC Team for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life. That money did not flow through our books. Nor did the contributions raised for many years by our members for the American Heart Association Heart Walk. So, if you think of all that did not go through our books you know that we can

really be proud of the support that Twin Cities Woman's Club has given our community."

Since its founding, the TCWC has donated to more than 43 national, state and local charities, including A Family's Future, Alaqua Animal Shelter, American Cancer Society/Relay for Life, American Heart Association/Heart Walk, CALM House in Niceville, Camp Monarch, Canine Companions, Children in Crisis, Covenant Hospice, DVDs 4Vets, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge, Fisher House, Habitat for Humanity, Hacienda Girls Ranch, Healing Paws for Warriors, Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership, Mental Health Association of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, Niceville Children's Park, Niceville Eagle Band Uniforms, Niceville Fireworks Fund, Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce Fireworks, Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce Student, Oasis, Okaloosa County Council on Aging/Meals on Wheels, Operation Paperback for Deployed Military, Project Graduation, Rock Camp, Safe Connections, Salvation Army, Sew Much Comfort, Sharing and Caring of Niceville, Shelter House, Special Olympics, Take Stock in Children, Twin Cities Woman's Club Scholarship Endowment, Turtle Watch, Twin Cities Honor Choir, Twin Cities Pavilion Assisted Living Facility, USO, Waterfront Mission, and the Youth Symphony.



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Reuben Dunaway



Russell Merrifield



Skylar Stoffel



Tran Ho



Zach Debowsky



RBCS Lifers 2022

The graduating Class of 2022 seniors who have been RBCS students for life are (from left to right) Miriam Riches, Zachary Debowsky, Hailey Hudon, Keilana Quilit, Chesed Turner, Caleb Jordan and Haleigh Nance.



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Honeybee Ice Cream and Arcade

Owner Duke Higgs loves video games, ice cream and Niceville and wants kids to have a place like those he grew up in the 80s and 90s. So, he opened Honeybee Ice Cream and Ar-



cade which boasts 32 flavors of five-star Wisconsin ice cream and 17 ice cream roll flavors - ice cream spread out on a cold plate, chopped up and rolled up into a cup, "making it picture-worthy." It also provides 24 flavors of snow cones and a large selection of fruit sodas and, in addition to the ice cream, milkshakes with any of the flavors, as well as sundaes and pizza by the slice. The arcade is unique to the area with 50 working games and adding new ones ongoing. With an amazing ice cream selection and an affordable place where you can drop in a couple of quarters, Duke welcomes you to come by and have fun for yourself!

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Off the Hook

Off the Hook:

Record Breaking Tuna Caught Off Destin's Shores

BY CALI HVALAC,
TO DO IN DESTIN

Easter morning started off differently for one local charter boat called the "NoName," as it hooked up the largest Bluefin Tuna ever caught off the Florida shore. The team, led by Captain Jacob "Jake" Matney, set out for a weekend of Marlin fishing when they hooked into the massive fish 160 miles offshore. It took all five anglers fighting for a full 4.5 hours to land it to the boat. "Fishing has always been a way of life for my family and something that we love to do to-

gether," said Captain Jake. "I'm very fortunate to have them on the boat for this and to have this caliber of fisherman on my team."

This catch breaks the current state record of 826.5lb tuna caught by Rick Whitley in 2017. But, it might not make the record books based on a technicality. In order for a fishing record to be certified, it needs to be reeled in by one angler. As for this monster catch, the "whole team" is listed as the angler, since all five took a turn on the rod.

The 832.2 lb. tuna mea-

sured 113.5" long and 86" around the girth. Record or not, it will still be the largest fish caught offshore in our state.

On board the boat was Captain "Jake", his wife Jennifer, their two boys Jacob and Jeremiah, first mate Jett Tolbert and deck mate Devin Sarver. None of them expected to hook such a massive fish, and it is definitely the fish of a lifetime.

"To be a part of this with such an incredible team of people is truly a blessing. I will think about this as long as I'm kicking and smile from ear to ear," said Devin. "My parents had a rod in my hand fishing off the dock before I could walk, so they tell me. This is what dreams are made of. I love this way of life. GOD is great! Still seems surreal. Epic!"

Jett said, "We were Stoked to finally land one that we could bring in and hang up. It's harder than people think. Last trip we fought one for 10 hours and it broke off. So, bringing in

this one meant a lot to me. I love fishing and am thankful for an awesome boss. I plan to travel

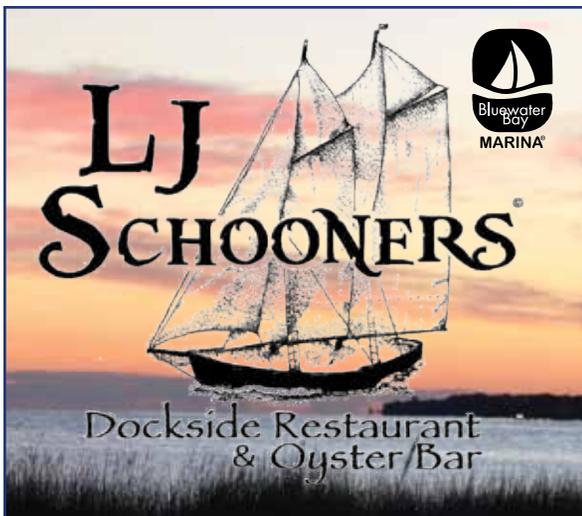
the world and fish my whole life; it's my passion."




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- June 3: Hi Tide 6pm-10pm
- June 4: Ronny Dean Garrett 6pm-10pm
- June 6: Craig Coley 4pm-8pm
- June 10: Jody Lucas 6pm-10pm
- June 11: Autumn Poultry 6pm-10pm
- June 17: The Remedy 6pm-10pm
- June 18: LA Strangers/Beach Party 6pm-10pm
- June 24: FATHOM 6pm-10pm
- June 25: John Galt Dance Band 6pm-10pm
- June 25: Casino Night/Benefiting A Bed 4 Me
- June 26: Ronny Dean Garrett 4pm-8pm
- June 26: Sunset Shrimp Boil 4pm-7pm

Oyster Bar Hours: Mon.-Thurs.3pm-10pm, Fri.-Sat. 11am to midnight, Sun. 9am to 9pm
Restaurant Hours: Mon.-Tues. Closed, Wed.-Sat. 11am to 9pm, Sun. 9am to 9pm, Sunday Brunch 9am to 1pm

Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center Releases Four Rehabilitated Sea Turtles

The Gulfarium's C.A.R.E. Center successfully released four rehabilitated sea turtles on Thursday, May 12, 2022, at Inlet Beach.

It was a beautiful morning as crowds gathered to watch the endangered turtles head back into the Gulf of Mexico. All of the rehabilitated sea turtles had fallen victim to fishing hook related injuries. One of the turtles was outfitted with a satellite tag for the release.

Jamie, a large adult female loggerhead weighing 208lbs, had been outfitted with a satellite tag by the United States Geological Survey team for a tracking research project prior to release. She was accidentally hooked at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier on Nov. 20, 2021. X-rays showed that she had a large circle hook in her proximal esophagus and a small treble hook further down. Jamie underwent a four-hour surgery on Nov. 22, to remove both hooks.

After the surgery was complete, the recovery phase was very extensive. However, after a seven-month long stay at the C.A.R.E. Center, she was finally ready to be released. The satellite tag will allow researchers to monitor Jamie's movements and track where she travels and how long she spends at each location. This equipment is part of an ongoing, long-term research project to determine the movement patterns of repeatedly hooked sea turtles at local fishing piers. This was Jamie's third time being foul hooked at the same pier - she is an excellent candidate for this project.

The other three turtles that headed back into the Gulf of Mexico included Sheldon, a sub-adult loggerhead weighing in at 79lbs, who was foul hooked with a cobia jig in the right front flipper on April 18, 2022. Following the initial intake procedure, Sheldon's X-rays showed a large hook embedded in his



tongue. After mild sedation, the hook was successfully removed. Sheldon was under observation by our veterinary team for a few weeks to ensure all was well and after being cleared for release, he was ready to head back into the Gulf of Mexico. This was Sheldon's second visit to the C.A.R.E. Center for rehabilitation.

Pluto arrived at the C.A.R.E. Center on May 10, 2022, after

being foul hooked by a fisherman at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier. This sub-adult loggerhead weighs 90lbs and had unremarkable blood work and clear radiographs upon arrival at the center, so was medically cleared for release by the veterinary team once the hook was removed. This was Pluto's third visit to the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center.

Shirley, a sub-adult Kemp's ridley sea turtle, who was hooked in the mouth with a J-hook on May 8, 2022, at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier was also released. Shirley weighed in at 56lbs and had a very quick stay at the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center. With unremarkable blood work and radiographs, she was deemed medically cleared for release by the center's veterinary team.

"Release days are always extremely rewarding," states Tabitha Siegfried, Stranding Coordinator for the Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center. "We are very

excited to be participating in a research project that includes a satellite tag as all sea turtle species are endangered so any help that we can provide to these animals is crucial."

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

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

The Gulfarium CARE Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is proud to act as a beacon for coastal conservation through marine animal rescue and rehabilitation. Donations are tax-deductible and can be made online on the C.A.R.E. Center's webpage.

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 Off the Hook

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Hosts World's Largest Lionfish Tournament

By APRIL SARVER,
OKALOOSA COUNTY PIO

Congratulations! Divers participating in the 4th Annual Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Tournament successfully removed 13,835 lionfish from local waters. The invasive species prey on native fish and have no known predators due to their venomous spines. Hosted by Destin-Fort Walton Beach, alongside Florida Fish and Wildlife at HarborWalk Village and AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar, this event is a key component in mitigating the risk of a growing lionfish threat.

"We are fortunate to have a Coastal Resources Division in our community, focused on awareness and reducing the population of this invasive species," said Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners Chairman Mel Ponder.

Divers from all over the country traveled to Destin-Fort Walton Beach for the spearfishing tournament held on May 13th and 14th. An award



tournament by Alabama Jammin. Diver Tim Shivers collected 604 lionfish during the pre-tournament which surpassed the 2019 record. Thanks

ceremony was held on Sunday announcing the winners of various categories including most lionfish removed, largest and smallest. The record for the smallest lionfish was broken at 39 millimeters during the main

to Emerald Coast Open sponsors, participants were awarded \$48,000 in cash and approximately

\$50,000 in prizes. View a list of this year's winners @EmeraldCoastOpen on Facebook.

Several events were held over the weekend in conjunction with the tournament including The Lionfish Removal & Awareness Day Festival hosted with Florida Fish and Wildlife which garnered 5,000 attendees. Over 40 vendors were in attendance with educational activities that focused on conservation efforts. Lionfish & Libations was a new event held at HarborWalk Village. These events allowed locals and visitors to learn about lionfish and even have the chance to experience tastings.

Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Restaurant Week was held the week leading up to the tournament. Each evening, a local restaurant served a unique lionfish dish on their menu. The fish caught pre-tournament were provided to the participating restaurants to serve. The lionfish dishes were scored by a host of judges including a New Yorker Magazine journalist and Chief Scientist for NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries. A scoring system was used and Chef Al

Massa took the highest marks with Brotula's Seafood House & Steamer creation. They presented a Lionfish Pan-Seared dish with Black Forbidden Rice, Melting Zucchini Ribbons, with a Chardonnay Shellfish butter.

"We couldn't be happier with the success of this year's Emerald Coast Open Tournament with 145 tournament participants and 50 volunteers donating their time. Thank you to our sponsors for their support that continues the growth of the tournament and the education of lionfish management. The removal of this many lionfish from our local water restores the ecosystem, especially as we head into a busy fishing season," said Alex Fogg, Coastal Resource Manager, Destin-Fort Walton Beach.

For more information on the Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Tournament visit emeraldcoastopen.com and for more on Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida, please visit www.destinfwb.com.

FWC Announces 2022 Lionfish Challenge

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission announces the 2022 Lionfish Challenge tournament, which

ends Sept. 6. The Lionfish Challenge is a summer-long lionfish tournament open to competitors around Florida. The goal is to remove as many lionfish as we can in just three-and-a-half months.

Participants will compete in either the commercial or the recreational division.

Prizes will be awarded in tiers as follows: Tier 1, harvest 25 lionfish (recreational category) or 25 pounds of lionfish (commercial category); tier 2, harvest 100 lionfish (recreational category) or 250 pounds of lionfish (commercial category); tier 3, harvest 300 lionfish (recreational category) or 500 pounds of lionfish (commercial category); and tier 4, harvest 600 lionfish (recreational category) or 1000 pounds of lionfish (commercial category).

To read the full tournament rules or register, visit FWCReefRangers.com/lionfish-challenge.



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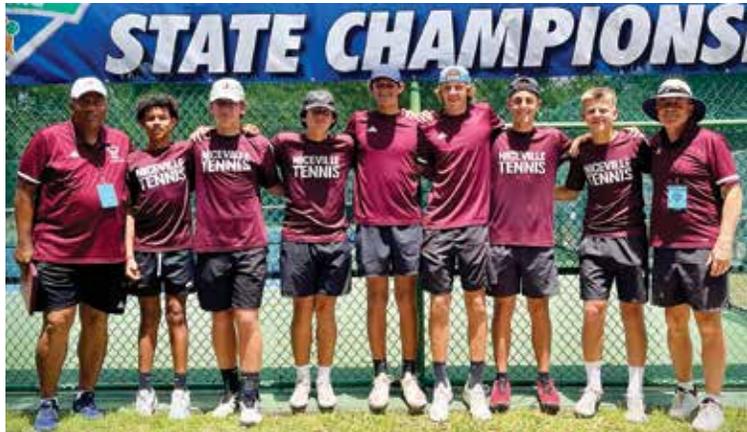
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NHS Boys Tennis



NHS Boys Varsity Tennis Team are FHSAA District 2 Champions, Region 1 Champions, and State Final Four! These amazing young men competed in the State FHSAA 3-A Tournament in Sanlando Park, Altamonte Springs on April 25-26, 2022.

No. 1 Doubles - Blake Forester & Grayson Dannelly
No. 2 Doubles - Porter Devane & Andrew Roberts

No. 1 Singles - Blake Forester
No. 2 Singles - Grayson Dannelly
No. 3 Singles - Cooper Seymour
No. 4 Singles - Zavier Barbary
No. 5 Singles - Cole Hawkins
Head coach - Chris Poate
Assistant coach - Brian Brazier

Congratulations to the players and coaches for being District Champions, Regional Champions and State Final Four!

RBCS Decision Day 2022

Twenty-six Rocky Bayou Christian School graduating seniors donned T shirts from their colleges of choice and gathered to celebrate their choices and their future. From left, and front: Brandilyn Ring, Northwest Florida State College (NWFS); Annemarie Mistretta, Samford University; Skylar Stoffel, Flagler College; Destiny Johnson, NWFS; Chesed Turner, University of Mobile; Noak Lutsko, NWFS; Caitie Barnes, Covenant College; Moriah Lynch, Samford University; Brady Bishop, NWFS; Gracie Giles-Hayes, NWFS; Megan Godwin, University of North Florida; Madison Johnson-Bielamowicz, Florida Institute of Technology; Miriam Riches, Liberty University; Evan Clymer, University of Mobile; Keilana Quilit, University of Tampa; Hailey Hudon,



Jacksonville University; Zachary Debowksy, University of West Florida; Joshua Jackson, Samford University; Rusty Merrifield, NWFS; Mackenzie Hooks, NWFS; Kerrstin Em-

bry, NWFS; Peyton Andersen, NWFS; Daniel Roebuck, NWFS; Ford Porter, NWFS; Brooke Isaac, NWFS; and Olivia Rogers, NWFS.

Kaleb Carter, NHS, Wins Class 3A 199 lb. State Weightlifting Championship

By D. BUCHANAN



Kaleb Carter, Niceville High School, was recognized as the 2022 Class 3A 199-pounds State Weightlifting Champion at the May 9 school board meeting. He bench-pressed 360 pounds and clean and jerked 305 pounds, which spearheaded a state runner-up finish for Niceville High School, the best in school history. Additionally, he excels as a student at Niceville High School with a 4.1 weighted GPA.

Kaleb plans to attend the

University of Southern Mississippi and major in biochemistry with a goal of becoming a radiologist. He is the first state champion weightlifter at Niceville High School since 2011.



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Four Rotary Clubs and Community Pull Together To Raise Funds at Inaugural Fire Truck Pull

Four Rotary Clubs and community organizations from Okaloosa County pulled together recently to raise more than \$15,000 for a major project at Twin Cities Pavilion in Niceville. The Community Fire Truck Pull attracted 16 10-person teams who paid \$250 to see who could pull a fire truck 50 feet in the fastest time. Funds raised will be used to refurbish the TCP's front entrance area used by residents for sitting and relaxing outdoors.

East Niceville Fire Rescue provided the fire truck, with local fire departments teaming up to run the competition itself. Playing host was 3rd Planet Brewing and Bay Area Awards donated the winners' trophies and team medallions. The Rotary Clubs of Mid-Bay Bridge, Niceville/Valparaiso, Destin and Fort Walton Beach, along with the Knights of Columbus from Christ Our Redeemer and Holy Name Catholic churches, supported the effort with do-



nations, planning and staffing. Crosspoint Church in Niceville donated generously to the cause and Advance Concrete Supply committed to donating the upcoming concrete work.

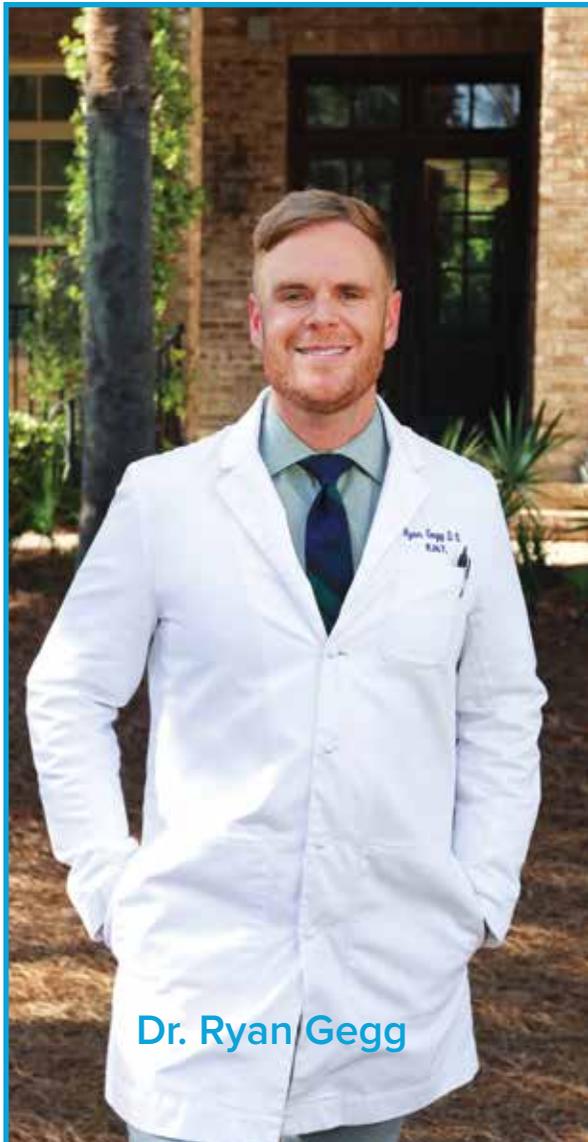
Winning teams received trophies and the "pullers" took home individual medallions. The brewery provided cash or gift cards to the top three teams.

The event came about when Mid-Bay Rotarian Bob Hoffman identified the TCP's need for porch resurfacing and contacted additional Rotaries in Okaloosa County. The idea then expanded to other service groups. A local concrete resurfacing company offered to do the concrete work at no cost. The Rotary clubs maintained

their funding pledges, because the awning over the porch needed to be repaired, sandblasted and painted. However, more money was needed, so the community groups led by Hoffman as chair agreed to sponsor the fire truck pull also.

"It was great to see how many organizations came together for the planning and execution of

the pull," said Steve Wolfrom, Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary president. "Identifying a need, rallying community support and pulling off the event is the direct result of the organizations working together. Our goal was met. But, I think the model put together to do a fun community event can be repeated in our area in the future."



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 Wellness


BY DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD

To all the moms out there reading, thank you for working to the point of exhaustion, worrying to the point of tears, supporting us through our good decisions and bad, and loving us even when we do our best to push you away. I'm sorry it takes so many years for us to understand everything you do for

us and some of us never get to understand the suffering you go through as a mom.

In honor of our moms continually, not only on Mother's Day each year, I would like to let you know how to help her feel better and live a longer and healthier life all year. As moms get older they start losing the hormones that protect them from disease.

At some point mom's estrogen levels start falling. This leads to difficulty falling asleep at night and also leads to moms waking up too early in the morning. The lack of sleep increases mom's stress levels and makes moms more irritable as well as increasing the risk for Alzheimer's and other diseases.

Falling testosterone levels in



tion, moodiness and also increases the risk for strokes, heart attacks and breast cancer, which are the top three ways moms die. Nobody wants his mom to die. Adding testosterone to moms who have hit menopause will greatly reduce their risk of getting breast cancer. Moms don't like breast cancer and giving

testosterone to moms is one of the best ways to prevent breast cancer.

Failing thyroids lead to weight gain, loss of mental clarity, coarse hair, increased cholesterol levels and increasing sugar levels. Just so you know, moms hate gaining weight and hate coarse hair. They also don't like having to take medications. Just so you know, ironically, increasing sugar levels in moms does not make them sweeter.

I know you want your mom and the other moms you know to live as long as possible and be as healthy as possible so you can get as many hugs and kisses as you want whether you deserve them or not. So, make sure you let your mom know about us and how we can help her live a lon-

ger, happier, and healthier life.

Moms, we love you more than we could ever tell you and more than we could ever show. The crazy thing is that no matter how much we love you, I'm sure you love us more.

Dr. Richard Chern, MD, provides hormone therapy to men and women from across the country. He is also on staff at BioTE Medical and teaches hormone therapy to new providers including providers in our local area. In addition, he treats doctors in the local area and from around the country. Dr. Chern is a platinum BioTE provider and runs one of the largest BioTE hormone clinics in the country in Miramar Beach. To schedule an appointment, call The Hormone Restoration Center at 850-837-1271.

IMPLANT TRUTH

continued from page 31

only were there mold spores in the liquid, but the valve had also been faulty. Upon removal, Anne's health began to significantly improve.

As a survivor and advocate, Anne wants women to know this information if they're considering getting implants: "Women get sick from the silicone shell because they have 11 heavy

metals and chemicals like formaldehyde and printer ink. I stress that all implants have the same silicone shell. Women are told saline is safe but if you're sick from silicone, there is a possibility you'll also get latex sensitivity, silicone toxicity and heavy metal toxicity. We also typically have some form of bacterial infection and/or fungal and yeast infections because saline implants can be a breeding ground. The implant manufacturers knew

this and did not tell us.

"The capsule, or the scar tissue that forms around the implant, also needs to be removed because it's touched the shell of the implant," she said. "I already had poison sitting in my body, and then put fresh poison on top of it (with a new implant). That's why I get sick quicker. I have a capsule inside of me that already has poison."

Anne and her co-founder, Paula Blades, went to the FDA

to offer their findings and were told they could fill out a form to share their "adverse event." The friends formed the TITS Committee when the FDA told them they couldn't be seen unless they were on a committee. Done.

Today, the TITS Committee is committed to sharing their personal experiences to educate men, women, medical professionals and insurance companies. They also help ladies with

their insurance to cover explants and raise money to get explants done. The organization pays the surgeon directly once a patient is approved.

If you have any additional questions about implants, you're seeking assistance in getting an explant, or you want to know about online communities, email titscommittee@gmail.com.

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

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

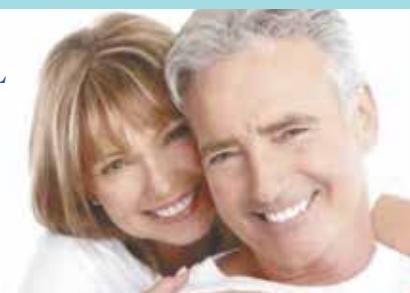


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Journey Bravely: Kindness vs. Canceling



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

You're in the middle of a conversation and suddenly it becomes apparent the person you're talking to holds a different opinion on an important topic. Maybe you start to worry if you share your thoughts, you'll be judged or canceled. Maybe you feel incensed that the other person could possibly hold that opinion or belief and you feel tempted to judge, cancel, or shame them. Maybe you want to learn to hold the tension of differing views and values but you feel confused about how to be true to your values while not judging or shaming someone else.

Cancel culture regularly sacrifices kindness in the name of being right and holding others accountable. Cancel culture says for justice and rightness to prevail, people must be publicly shamed for holding independent beliefs that deviate from some moral majority. And when you're part of the moral majority, canceling others can feel justified. The problem is cancel culture is built on the false idea that shame creates true change. In reality, current shame research (read anything by Brene Brown for more on shame) tells us shame actually breeds insecurity, self-loathing and hopelessness. Shame may create a temporary, superficial, face-saving

shift but results, long-term, in the opposite of healthy change. Ashamed people are highly likely to make poor choices that have negative, hurtful effects on themselves and others.

So, if you remove shame from your toolbox, what options do you have? Reflect on a time when you needed to learn something new. What was most effective in helping you move forward? Maybe someone said you were unintelligent and you needed to get it together. Maybe someone said you must be ignorant for not already knowing something. Was that helpful to you? Or, maybe someone lovingly and kindly said you are a valuable person, period. Maybe they directly and kindly shared a different perspective and allowed space for you to hold your value while also presenting a new possibility. Was that helpful to you? Kindness consistently moves people toward change more effectively than shame. And, kindness makes you feel better about yourself at the end of the day.

5 Ways to Practice Kindness Over Canceling:

Slow down and take a breath. Different opinions/values can be emotionally overwhelming if you feel strongly about something. You may find yourself going into fight or flight and impulsively speaking words of shame. Try taking a few breaths and reminding yourself that someone else having a different value than you does not mean attack or shame are needed. Instead, remember that both values can exist even if you disagree.



Humanize the other person.

Often when someone holds a different value, it's tempting to begin viewing them as "other" and deserving of shame. Try remembering traits you like and appreciate about the person. Remind yourself they are a whole person with strengths and weaknesses and try not to define them by the one issue about which you disagree.

Seek to validate. Validating means trying to understand how the other person might believe or feel the way they do, based on their history and experiences. You don't have to agree. Instead, try to embrace and articulate to the other person that you can understand how they might see things the way they do even if it's very different than how you see it. Validation reduc-

es defensiveness and opens avenues for seeing the other person as valuable despite differences.

Embrace humility. Try remembering that while you may hold your values to be very true and dear, you are not the absolute authority on truth. You can believe your values are right and true while also recognizing others can differ from you and

still be worthwhile humans who may help you understand something new.

Communicate directly and kindly. Share your thoughts and beliefs calmly, directly, and with a kind tone. Remember that your values/opinions can exist securely even when others don't agree.

Approaching others with kindness instead of canceling creates opportunities for growth in yourself and others. Kindness brings more conversation, connection, and increased possibilities for change without the unnecessary negativity of shame. As you practice walking in kindness, connect with us for support along your journey at journeybravely.com.



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 Wellness

Carbohydrates, Our Friend and Enemy



BY KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTH ARCHITECT

Carbs are everywhere and necessary for our health. However, the carbs we choose can affect our gut health, immune system, cholesterol levels, blood sugar and energy. So, let's learn a little about them.

Definition: (carbo-hydrate) A large group of organic compounds occurring in foods and living tissues, including sugar, starch and cellulose. They contain carbon, hydrogen and oxygen (1:2:1). This can vary depending on the type of carb. They are broken down in the body to release energy.

Carbs are an essential energy source, vital for good health.

They convert to sugar (glycogen), which supplies energy to our bodies. There are two types of carbs:

Complex: These are polysaccharides and contain at least three glucose molecules. They are found in foods high in fiber and starch. They take longer to digest and contain important vitamins, minerals, probiotics and antioxidants. Complex carbs help to maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

Simple: These carbs only contain one or two molecules and are referred to as monosaccharides and disaccharides. These contain naturally occurring or added sugars and are digested quickly. These simple carbs tend to raise blood sugar levels.

Processed carbs like crackers and chips lack essential nutrients such as fiber and vitamins. When grains are processed the bran and germ is removed (fiber) along with the vitamins and minerals leaving little to no nutritional value. What they add back is sugar, sodium and preservatives, none of which the body recognizes or needs.



Complex carbs consist of vegetables, legumes (beans), nuts and seeds, tubers (sweet potatoes and white potatoes (red is more beneficial) and whole grains (oats, quinoa, brown rice, barley, etc.). The healthiest wheat to look for is Stone Ground Whole Wheat or Sprouted Whole

Grain. Simple carbs, on the other hand, consist of fruit juices, milk, white flour, white rice, sugar and soda. Fruit is also in this category but because it is high in fiber and has natural sugars it is a beneficial option.

Fiber, both soluble and insoluble, is vital for maintaining a healthy gut. The soluble fiber (found in popular over the counter fiber supplements) binds to cholesterol and sugar mitigating its release into the

bloodstream whereas insoluble fiber is responsible for reducing incidences of constipation and protecting against colon cancer (This is usually not found in popular over-the-counter fiber supplements).

Begin substituting healthy carbs for processed carbs. Brown rice pasta vs white pasta, gluten free crackers vs regular processed crackers (in moderation), whole rolled oats vs quick oats, etc. Add barley to homemade vegetable soup, add nuts, seeds and fresh fruit to plain greek yogurt. Use mashed avocados as a spread instead of mayo on sandwiches.

Feel free to reach out if you have questions or something specific you need help with.

You're invited to an important Holistic Detox series this month. Registered Holistic Nutritionist Linda Murphy, RHN/NPP will share the importance of spring detoxing our bodies and the benefits it provides. These sessions are free. To attend these invitation-only events, email me using May Series in the subject line.

Here's to health!

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New ALDI Grocery Plans June 23 Grand Opening

BY KENNETH BOOKS

The new ALDI supermarket is nearing its grand opening and, according to ALDI Loxley Division Vice President Heather Moore, Niceville ain't seen nothing yet.

"The first U.S. ALDI store opened in 1976," Moore said, "and we've since expanded to 2,200 stores across 38 states. She said the ALDI business model is "intentionally different, from our unique business model rooted in simplicity and efficiency to our thoughtful store layouts."

Niceville, of course, has no shortage of groceries, with Walmart, Publix, Winn-Dixie and Grocery Outlet. But Moore says ALDI specializes in products that won't be found in



many other stores. "More than 90 percent of our store consists of ALDI-exclusive products," she said, adding that about one-third of them have won awards. She also promises that ALDI's prices will be affordable. "In fact, the Dunnhumby Retailer

Preference Index Report has ranked ALDI No. 1 on price for five years running," she said. "We know preferences vary across the country, which is why approximately 5 to 10 percent of the products in each store are regional items."

One unusual feature of ALDI stores is the 25-cent deposit needed to obtain a shopping cart. The idea is to encourage shoppers to return the cart to get their quarter back. It also charges for shopping bags to cut down on costs and urges shop-

pers to bring their own bags – or to purchase an ALDI bag to preserve natural resources.

Moore said ALDI selected Niceville for its newest store mainly because the location was convenient and can support a high traffic volume. The nearest other ALDI is in Navarre.

One area that may be interesting to shoppers is the "ALDI Finds" aisle, Moore said, which features limited-time, specialty items ranging from unique foods and home goods to unexpected finds like gardening essentials and pet accessories. New products are released each week and are typically tied to a theme or season, she said.

Flex Workspace

BY MELISSA FERTITTA, BEACHWORX

A new study by The Instant Group shows demand for flex workspace is up 58 percent in cities across the United States. According to the data, Miami is outpacing all other cities, with demand skyrocketing by 143 percent.

While Miami may be busier than its Panhandle counterparts, entrepreneurs, employees and tourists are enjoying the flexibility of Destin's coworking space, Beachworx.

As far as commercial office space goes, resort towns will always have fewer options than concentrated urban city centers. But what we lack in high rise real estate, we make up for with flexible affordable solutions for physical and virtual office spaces.

Destin's coworking community, Beachworx, offers a mix of private office suites, conference rooms and open coworking that can accommodate monthly and daily users. Tourists vacationing in Destin appreciate the ability to work in a quiet professional environment with day or weekly passes.

Small businesses and startups not quite ready to hang their own shingle appreciate that these private offices can be rented on a month-to-month basis, a stark difference from traditional commercial leases, which require long-term commitments and additional charges for utili-

ties, taxes and the like.

A virtual office membership at Beachworx is one way small businesses are improving their credibility, by elevating its address from a post office box to a

class A office building. Entrepreneurs who work from home appreciate the privacy protection of a virtual address while others are eager to use that address to expand their businesses into a

new market.

Perhaps the greatest value a coworking space offers its members is its community. Beachworx members do business together, seek advice from

one another and expand their networks through introductions made by other members.

Whatever your business needs, Beachworx probably has a flexible, affordable solution.

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will provide you with the basics of what you need to know to prepare for entering the federal government market by

- learning the procurement process and how to register
- discovering how to market your business to the federal government

• understanding the requirements for certification of small, disadvantaged, women, veteran, and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses

We will also briefly go over the State of Florida and local government contracting. No fee. Location: Florida State University Panama City, Holley Building, 4750 Collegiate Dr, Dean's Conference Room 2nd

floor, Panama City, FL 32405. Pre-registration required. To register, visit our website at www.sbdc.uwf.edu – under "Training & Events."

Speaker: Leslie Nguyen,



Procurement Specialist, Florida PTAC at UWF

Florida SBDC at UWF Presents "Learn the Basics of Google Ads" - Online Webinar

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To register, visit our website at www.sbdc.uwf.edu and click on "Training & Events". Presented by Matt Weber, President and CEO of ROAR! Internet Marketing and Speaker, Grow With Google at Google.

Florida SBDC at UWF Presents "Starting a Business" - Fort Walton Beach

You have an idea for a business. Now what? In this session, we will discuss the nuts and bolts of launching your new venture, including how to determine feasibility and legal structures, licensing and permitting, funding options for your business and basic marketing strategies to help you get started! Join us on June 21st from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. when we will take an in-depth view of your business concept and discuss the steps to a successful start. Fee: \$50. To register, visit our website at www.sbdc.uwf.edu and click on "Training & Events". Location: UWF Emerald Coast Campus, 1170 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Bldg. 8, Room 836, Fort Walton Beach, 32547. Presented by Ayesha Haider, Associate Director, Florida SBDC at UWF.



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Warren Averett Celebrates 50 Years



Warren Averett CPAs and Advisors, one of the largest accounting and advisory firms in the Southeast, is celebrating its 50th anniversary during 2022.

To honor 50 years, Warren Averett introduced a "50 Acts of Service" challenge, where team members will complete 50 community service projects throughout the Southeast this year. The firm also plans to celebrate team members and clients through 50th anniversary limited edition merchandise, employee Spirit Week in

the fall and numerous other client appreciation events.

"We are so proud of all that the firm has accomplished over the past 50 years," said Mary Elliott, the firm's Chief Executive Officer. "As we look forward to the firm's future and continue to provide the best service to our clients, it's been nice to look back and reflect on how far the firm has come through the work of our team members who have helped propel Warren Averett to new heights."

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Why A Focus on Weaknesses Sucks!



BY BILL MASON

When you try to accomplish things that you aren't great at, you tend to move more slowly and make more blunders. This is due to the fact that it takes more time and more effort and higher concentration on things that you are not good at. This is a major cause of unhappiness! So, when you get home, you'll be physically exhausted and emotionally drained. As a result, you won't have any emotional energy left over for what matters most to you: your family, partner, children, friends, and interests.

In addition to being less productive, focusing on your weaknesses can also be harmful to your business. For example, if you are a salesperson it is easy to focus on your weaknesses. After all, they are the things that you need to improve, right?

Wrong! Focusing on your weaknesses actually slows you down and impedes your productivity.

In this article, we will discuss

why focusing on your strengths is a better strategy for business owners and employees alike. We will also explore how a strengths-based team can help accelerate productivity in the workplace.

When it comes to business, time is money. The faster you can get things done, the more successful you will be. This is why it is important to focus on your strengths rather than your weaknesses. When you are working on tasks that you are good at, you move faster and make fewer mistakes.

In addition, when you focus on your strengths you are more engaged in your work. This increased engagement leads to higher productivity and better business outcomes.

According to Gallup, many individuals awaken and hurry to workplaces that pay well and provide benefits, yet treat them as interchangeable cogs in a machine.

These businesses lack the cultural components that tie employees to engagement and success, including:

- The greatest motivator of employee engagement is a manager who understands and inspires them – the most powerful element for employee engagement.
- A sense of purpose, which is especially appealing to millennials.
- The potential for development, which is the most common reason individuals leave

their jobs, as well as a major attraction for new positions.

A study by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman of the Gallup Organization found that teams that focus on their strengths-based teams outperform those who don't by two times.

Strengths-based teams are also more productive, have lower employee turnover rates, and are generally happier in their jobs. According to Gallup's article on how to develop a strengths-based business, 51 percent of employees say they are looking for a new job or keeping an eye out for vacancies. This dissatisfaction can be caused by toxic corporate cultures.

How can you use the strengths of your business instead of the weaknesses?

For individual clients or executives, at Rocket Fuel Coach we give you a package that includes three simple steps.

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five-session course can help you learn more about yourself in just five hours than you might learn in a lifetime through other methods. This training is usually one session a week for one hour in person or remotely via zoom. You'll find out about your greatest skills and talents, as well as auxiliary skills, Intrinsic needs, and how your top talents make you come across at times like Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll in this course.

You and I will meet one-

on-one for a monthly subscription coaching for 6-12 months, where you'll focus on maximizing your strengths while also minimizing your weaknesses. You'll set your goals, and we'll help you achieve them through follow-up, accountability, and commitment to you and your objectives.

This is a much more efficient and successful way to improve employee engagement than focusing on your weaknesses. Strengths-based teams are more productive, have lower turnover rates, and are generally happier in their jobs. When you focus on your strengths, you move faster and make fewer mistakes. You are also more engaged in your work, which leads to higher productivity and better business outcomes.

Bill Mason is CEO/Founder of Rocket Fuel Coach, ACC, CPLC, and a Birkman's Consultant, COSMO Certified Coach and WeAlign Executive Coach. You can reach him at (850) 855-3430.

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 Musing



By RICK MOORE

After traveling to the far south-east of the Caribbean, we flew to the island of Tobago to see the GOAT. Some say Michael Jordan is the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time). Some say Tom Brady is the GOAT. Some say Elvis Presley is the GOAT. However, we didn't go to see the "Greatest Of All Time" in sports or entertainment. We went to see a real goat race. I had heard of horse racing and dog racing, but I had never heard of goat racing. Several times a year, the island of Tobago features a goat racing festival. Tobago proudly calls itself, "The Goat Racing Capital of the World." When we arrived for one of these events, our host asked us if we would like to enjoy some boiled chicken feet on a stick. Oddly enough, eating chicken feet was not the weirdest part of the day. I had assumed the goats

would be pulling a cart behind them, but instead, they pulled humans behind them. The fastest young men and women on the island are selected to race with the goats. There are usually eight teams per race; one human and one goat per team. Each racer stands behind their goat holding on to a rope for dear life. The lanes on the grass track are about one-hundred yards long. When the gates open, it's off to the races.

While pedigree is part of the selection process in choosing a goat that can run fast, the secret is finding goats that can swim. Yes, the race takes place on ground, but the training takes place in the beautiful Caribbean waters surrounding the island. The goats who swim have much more strength in their legs, allowing them to run faster. Unfortunately, goats are much less tolerant of wet conditions than sheep and cattle, and goats will naturally seek shelter from the rain when it is available. Trainers select healthy goats to carry into the water one at a time. If a goat takes to the water and gets accustomed to it in a short time, it is selected to be a member of the racing team. There are many myths surrounding the advantages of swimming in the beautiful Caribbean waters

of Tobago, but it is true that the mineral rich waters have several health benefits, even for goats.

Not only are many of the goats in Tobago extremely healthy, but so are the people. I asked our host why? He said it's the chicken feet. I thought he was joking. However, like the health benefits of homemade bone broth, chicken feet have vitamins, minerals and calcium in abundance. Bone marrow carries oxygen to our cells. It is, truly, a natural super-supplement. Self-improvement often requires a willingness to try something you have never tried before. I must confess, that was the first and last time I have eaten chicken feet, but it did inspire me to eat healthier foods.

As I reflect on my life, it seems doubtful I will ever be considered the GOAT (Greatest Of All Time) at anything. But I can still become the GMOAT... the "Greatest Me Of All Time." The question is, am I willing to be thrown into the water? Will I allow myself to be placed in "sink or swim" moments that lead to the "Greatest Me Of All Time?" Getting out of our comfort zone isn't comfortable. If you ever feel like a fish out of water, or a goat in water, remember, there is a purpose to every challenge in life. You may not understand the



purpose of what you are going through, but there is a purpose. That purpose may not lead you to becoming the greatest entertainer or the greatest athlete, but

if it leads to becoming a better you, embrace it.

Rick Moore is Communications Pastor at Destiny Worship Center

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The Road to Redemption: The Story of Garland and Gretel

BY VICTORIA OSTROSKY

Swede, a character in one of my favorite books, *Peace Like a River* by Leif Enger, says this about miracles: No miracle happens without a witness. To me, that's an intriguing statement. We experience God's creation every day at sunrise and sunset. Some people like to call those miracles.

But, I think miracles occur when God does something completely out of the natural order of things. Like physical healing when doctors can't explain why the tumor is gone. Or finding a lost sheep that didn't want to be found, bringing it back to the fold, and giving it a new heart so that it never wants to wander away again. I've always said that God is in the heart changing business. He loves to restore relationships, remaking our brokenness and transforming us into something beautiful and useful for the Kingdom.

Garland and Gretel were high school sweethearts who got married, had children, worked hard and eventually grew apart. We've all experienced to some degree that slow erosion of a relationship. One day you wake up and realize, your love for them has dissipated like fog in the sunshine. Neither Garland nor Gretel knew Jesus at the time, but He certainly knew them. And He had plans.

Garland and Gretel had both reached the point where they'd contacted attorneys to start divorce proceedings, when God stepped in, and the miracle began to slowly unfurl as flower petals open to the new day.

Garland, one night when things were at their lowest, opened a Bible where it fell open to Matthew 3:8. "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." The verse, to his eyes, was highlighted, and the rest of the page was dark. At that moment, his heart responded. "Jesus you're real. I'm never looking back." He immediately went into the next room where his soon-to-be ex-wife was sleeping, shook her awake and said, "You can't love me, but you can love Christ in me." She thought he was crazy.

One day shortly after this, her daughter handed her a Gideon Bible, telling her that she felt

compelled to give it to her mother. Gretel began reading the scriptures and saw supernatural things occur. She discovered that her mom had been praying for her for many years. Gretel cried out to God telling Him she couldn't take it anymore. She says she distinctly heard Him say, "It's time for healing."

Once she had submitted to the Lord, she called her husband and told him. Garland said, "You are free, but I'm following Jesus Christ. Do you want to go with me?"

They both began praying, reading the Bible together and

leading others to Christ. Gretel says that for them, "Praying for other people healed our hearts."

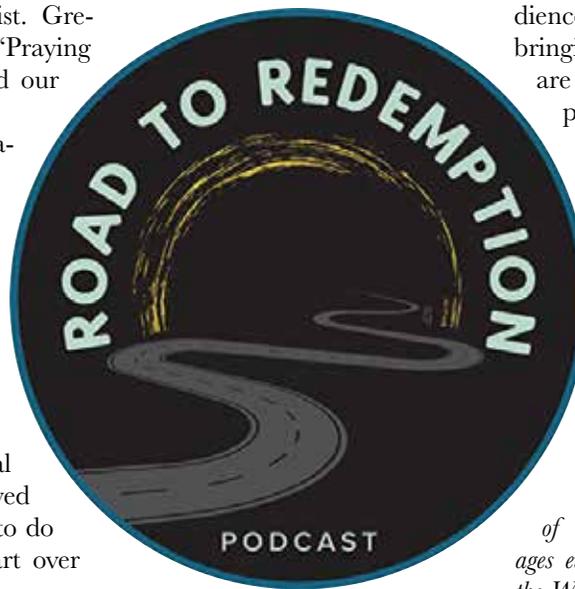
Do you see the miracle? Witnesses watched two lives completely change, and with the change, God has used them to bring in more of His lost sheep.

How many times have we come to a place where we felt it was just too much to deal with? When we believed there was nothing else to do but walk away and start over

dience puts heaven in motion, bringing about the miracles that are right there waiting to happen and to be testified to.

You can listen to Garland and Gretel's complete story of restoration and many other incredible interviews on the weekly Road to Redemption radio show and podcast at www.roadtoredemptionpodcast.com.

John Martin, the founder of Road to Redemption, encourages everyone to find a church, read the Word and get involved in a small group. Let Jesus take your impossible situation and turn it around so others can witness the miracles. He can do in and through you.



again? Before you end that relationship for good, look to God and ask Him what He wants you to do. It's amazing how our obe-

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 Musing


BY PASTOR DOUG STAUFFER

Father's Day alert: June 19. Mother's Day, in its formative years, garnered much more enthusiasm and support than the establishment of Father's Day. Understandably so! In the early 1900s, fathers felt the celebration was questionable because fathers were generally footing the bill for their sentimental holiday. Florists certainly had no reason to support a day for fathers.

Many Americans wanted to respect mothers and fathers on the same day, calling it "Parent's Day." The Great Depression and World War II derailed those efforts. So, mothers and fathers have separate days of recognition. Like most holidays, commercialization took over, with retailers now netting more than \$15 billion a year—capitalism at its best!

Society needs fathers to assume their God-given roles enthusiastically. When a man becomes a father, responsibilities

exponentially multiply. Here are some fundamentals for good fathering:

1. Function as a man – society (especially Hollywood) has been increasingly undermining manhood and manliness. Act manly without any misogynist tendencies;

2. Be a man honored to carry that Y chromosome that conspicuously differentiates between the sexes;

3. Take responsibility as a man; "I was wrong" and "I am sorry" are two precious phrases children should hear from their fathers;

4. Think like a man (the Bible says it is a sin to act effeminate – 1 Corinthians 6:9);

5. Work like a man (no reflection on how women work; some women outperform men with drive, dedication and grit). Working like a man means never shying away from breaking a sweat or getting your hands dirty.

6. Lead by example; it is never wise to teach your children, "Do as I say, and not as I do." Hypocrisy destroys credibility, and integrity forms an unbreakable bond. Children need to know that their fathers are trustworthy.

A Pastor's Ponderings: The Fundamentals of Fathers, Fathering and Fatherhood



Fathers should teach their sons simple things like opening a door for a woman. This act has nothing to do with being a male chauvinist. My parents taught me that this courtesy reflects honor and respect for the opposite sex, whom we should highly esteem.

Societal influences (and Hollywood characterizations) seem poised to undermine fatherhood. Yet, one who is not a good man can never be a good father. Thank God we have good men, yet we can always use a few more!

Happy Father's Day to every dad! An additional thank you to all the outstanding fatherly examples. Let's extend the wishes from all dads to include: granddads, great granddads, stepdads, adoptive dads, foster dads, dads-to-be, dads in heaven and all the males in our lives who care for us and unconditionally love us. Dads are priceless, and we should always love them dearly. (Remember, mothers, no exclusion intended—you had your day last month).

We were just blessed to have my father visit for a week. The day after he flew back to Pennsylvania, he fell and broke his hip. One day later, he had a partial hip replacement and was transferred to rehab. Be sure to

appreciate the time you spend with your father; time has a way of sneaking up on us. Happy Father's Day!

Dr. Doug Stauffer is pastor of Faith Independent Baptist Church. He was saved July 6, 1980, in Niceville, while stationed at the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base and has now been in the ministry for over 35 years. He has written 20 books including the best selling "One Book" trilogy ("One Book Rightly Divided, One Book Stands Alone, One Book One Authority"); along with several devotionals ("Daily Strength" series); and prophecy books ("Reviving the Blessed Hope, When the End Begins").

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Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

I hung an American flag on our house today. We just moved in. We have only been living in Birmingham for three days, but I thought it was time we flew the Stars and Stripes.

This house dates back to 1923, so this porch has probably seen its share of flags.

When Lindbergh flew across the pond, a flag whipped from these columns. When the Depression hit, and people stood in 10-mile breadlines, there was a flag here. When the kid who grew up in this old house went off to join a global war, and died in Europe, Old Glory was flying from the eaves.

So I went to the hardware store to buy a flag.

“Yeah, we got flags,” said 80-year-old hardware store employee, Steadman. “But I tell you right upfront,” he added, “flying a flag ain’t cheap.”

I thought Steadman was speaking poetically, but as it turned out, he was speaking from his wallet. Flags cost a small fortune.

First there was the oak flagpole (\$35.99), then the mounting hardware (\$29.99), the flag hooks (\$4.99 apiece), the masonry screws (\$8.99), the masonry drill bit (\$19.99), and of course, the flag itself (\$69.99). For those keeping tally, that’s a grand total of \$154.94. It would have been cheaper just to get a flag tattooed on my forehead.

But the American flag speaks to me. I wish I could give you some high-minded patriotic reason for why I spent hours hanging the Star Spangled Banner from my house, I wish I could be ultra poetic and tell you what a great citizen I am. But I’m not a poet. And my reasons are much more low-rent than that.

I just really like American flags.

I love being American. When

I was young, people my age were hellbent on traveling to Europe to become internationally conscious. I was so jealous of my friend, Justin, who studied journalism in college. He visited Spain, Portugal, and France on a student exchange program. In one year he traveled through Europe, Nepal, Thailand, India, and (Why not?) Greenland.

Me? I couldn’t afford college. And the farthest from home I’d ever been was Texarkana.

So my lack of travel made me feel bad about myself. I counted myself as a failure. I was a dropout and a roughneck who lived in a doublewide and could hardly afford a McRib sandwich, let alone a holiday in Barcelona.

But that all changed one summer when I made a decision. I told myself, hey, so what if I couldn’t see the globe, I live in a pretty great country, and I was going to see America.

So that’s what I did.

I was 18 when I drove to the Grand Canyon in my truck. I slept in a tent hammock for four weeks, hiking and eating dangerous amounts of pinto beans. I wandered isolated trails on the canyon’s North Rim.

One morning at sunrise, I strolled to Point Imperial, the highest point on the North Rim. I arrived just as the orange sun was peeking above the craggy canyon horizon.

That’s when I noticed someone had shoved a lone American flag into a crevice of rock, right on the canyon’s edge. It was a massive flag, flapping loudly, like a flock of geese getting ready to take flight. I have no idea what the flag was doing there, but it was an impressive sight.

In a brief moment, my heart



swelled with inexplicable pride. I was thinking to myself, I might never see Montreux, or Bangkok, or Bordeaux, but I am American, and that’s enough.

My ponytailed ancestors brandished Flintlock muskets and knee breeches. They tossed tea into the Boston Harbor and spit in the king’s eye. They died so I could stand right here, right now, and feel the exact way I was feeling. Proud.

Then it occurred to me that although I would probably never become a college student, or a poet, or a great thinker, or a seasoned traveler, big freaking deal. That didn’t mean I wasn’t lucky. I was. I was American, and that’s lucky enough.

There are 44 million Ukrainians right now who are ravaged by the hell of war, meanwhile I live in a jacuzzi of luxury. If that’s not lucky, I don’t care to know what is.

You and I come from a country that fosters artists, thinkers, poets, craftsmen, and saints. People who left an indelible mark on the world. Such geniuses as John Singer Sargent, Satchel Paige, Flannery O’Connor, Samuel Clemens, Fred Rogers, Fanny Crosby, Harriet Tubman, Jack London, Nor-

man Rockwell, Charles Kuralt, and of course, Gary Larson.

So today I stood on a ladder

and I honored them. I held a cordless drill and paid tribute to my forefathers and foremothers.

After I had mounted the flag I stood back to appreciate my handiwork. A few kids on bikes stopped to watch. A sudden wind gust blew in. Our nation’s colors were immediately unfurled, and in a dramatic moment, the kids stood silent in slack-jawed admiration. Finally, one of the children said reverently, “I think it’s crooked.”

Like the man said, flying a flag ain’t cheap.

Happy Father’s Day, Sean!

Happy Father’s Day to my brother. I know he’s not my father, but when my father passed away, my brother took on the role of taking care of me. He was there for me to lean on. He taught me how to drive. Walked me down the aisle when I got married. Gave me my first camera. He took the time to help me. Sean is a humble, kind heart.



He’d never speak a word of all the sacrifices he made for me. I love him so much, and he deserves a happy Father’s Day from me. He’s more than

just my brother. I’m so grateful my girls get to know him. Thank you for everything you’ve been to me

~ Sarah Lyn Schmidt, local

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Arts & Music

J.Leon Gallery + Studio Kicks Off the Summer Season With New Artists

In May, J.Leon Gallery + Studio, the area's newest fine art gallery, hosted its monthly Sip N' Stroll event, where eight new artists debuted in the gallery's Summer show from May 6, 2022, until Aug. 1, 2022. The gallery welcomed artists, Neda Raeisian, Susan Lucas, Bradley Copeland, Rachael Homack, Robert Reynolds, Barbara Suhadolnik, Meghan Schultz, and Pam Singh to the talented lineup of featured artists.

"Excitement and flair are in the air at J.Leon Gallery + Studio as we present 30 artists and over 200 individual works of art. The gallery is very proud to present an engaging variety of creativity and amazing levels of talent from the artists of the Summer Show. We would like to thank all of our guests and artists for their support and invite everyone to join us for one

of our monthly Sip-N-Stroll events. With artists from around the country and the local area, this show is not one to miss," said Jason Lindblad, Owner & Artist, J.Leon Gallery + Studio.

During the Sip N' Stroll event guests received a first look at the gallery's fresh Summer art installations featuring thirty talented local and national artists. Visitors took a tour of the art studio and gallery while enjoying wine, champagne, and light eats.

J.Leon Gallery + Studio is open from Tuesday to Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The gallery is closed on Sundays and Mondays. For additional information, class, and workshop signup, and to view upcoming events visit jleongallery.com and follow the gallery on Facebook and Instagram.



(From left to right) Jason Lindblad, Gayle Campbell, Barbara Suhadolnik, Betsy Latham, Jenna Varney, Maxine Orange, Melanie Moore, Ruta, Megan Schultz, Megan (MJ) Montgomery, Kim Eifrid, Wes Hinds, Mindy McClendon

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Creating Your Atmosphere

Meet Diane Stallings, Local Pianist

We continuously encounter music most every day of our life, whether consciously or not. But, we more consciously hone in on our music preferences when celebrating special occasions. Whether it be an anniversary celebration, an elegant wine dinner, a wedding, a festive Christmas party, a special corporate event, or having an in-home dinner party, music should be central. Whatever the occasion, helping people create the appropriate atmosphere

through music for their special occasion is the purpose of the music behind Diane Stallings.

Diane majored in piano music education for almost three years before transferring to the University of Georgia. Continuously honing her music skills, she has musically served in various keyboard capacities over the years, not to mention specializing as a beginner piano music teacher. And, little by little, Diane has found herself gravitating into a variety of arenas.

Consequently, the experience within these arenas has inspired and motivated her to expand her repertoire, gradually equipping her with an ever-widening variety of music. On top of that, technology has now afforded Diane the ability to instantly access unlimited digital songs. She can easily accommodate customers' personal song preferences for any special occasion – whether utilizing the piano, digital technology format, or an integration of both.



Are you looking to add an extra sparkle to your wedding, dinner party, corporate function or special occasion? There's nothing quite as classic and classy as hiring a pianist. Diane has her own equipment and will usually arrive about an hour prior to set up.

To book Diane for your special event or occasion, contact her at 850.714.1158 or diane.ccf@gmail.com.

Area Art Classes

Artful Things Niceville JUNE

Call the gallery at 850-729-2600 to reserve seating for the following workshops:

4—Adult One-Stroke class with Sheila Mahony. 10:30-1:30. Learn to paint oversized fuschia flowers on a 16x20 canvas in the one-stroke method with certified one-stroke instructor Sheila Mahony. \$47.50 per person, supplies included. Ages 16+. Seating is very limited, call the gallery at 850-729-2600 to reserve your spot!

11—Kids Watercolor Cards with Corina Zalace. 10:30-12:30 pm. Children will enjoy making 3-4 watercolor cards with envelopes! All materials are included and no previous experience is necessary. Ages 6 through 12. \$37.50 per child. Call the gallery at 850-729-2600 to reserve your child's spot- seating is limited!

14-18—Ken Edwards Memorial Special. Gallery

artist, friend and veteran Ken Edwards passed away in 2020; Artful Things Niceville is honoring his memory by donating proceeds from sales of his work during this week directly to his widow, Karen. We miss Ken dearly, and love sharing his talents.

15—Lino Cuts with Chris McLoone. 2-5 p.m. Instructor Chris McLoone walks the class through the fun and unique process of creating "lino cuts"- using sharp tools to carve in blocks of specialized rubber to create stamps or printing blocks! Call the gallery at 850-729-2600 for pricing and booking.

16, 17 & 18—Plein Air Painting with Jeanette Herron. International plein air artist, national award winner and Artful Things Niceville artist Jeanette Herron joins us for a 3-day plein air instruction. Thursday night there will be a demo and lecture from 4:30 to 7:30; Friday and Saturday mornings 8:30 to

12:30 will be instructed by the artist during on-site painting (locations to be determined). \$125 for all 3 days; \$95 for only 2 days. To reserve your seat, call 850-729-2600. Accepting a very limited number of students.

21, 22, 23 & 24—Kids Camp with artist Marla Armstrong. 10:30-12:30 pm. Kids age 7 and up will have a fun summer in Marla Armstrong's 4-day ART CAMP June 21, 22, 23 & 24! Classes 10:30 to 12:30. Students will be focusing on a different project every day, including a bowl made from confetti, flowers made with crepe paper or plastic bottles, animal pictures made with buttons, necklaces, bracelets or key chains and a box to keep them in. All supplies included. Limited seating. Prices: \$40 for 1 class, \$75 for 2 classes, \$105 for 3 classes and \$130 for all 4 classes. Additional kids in the same family will get a discount! To reserve a spot, call 850-729-2600- spots

are filling up quickly!

25—*Advanced* Watercolor Angel with Theresia McInnis. 10:30-2:30. Water-

colorist Theresia McInnis only teaches this class once every

Continued on page 46

Piano & Digital Music

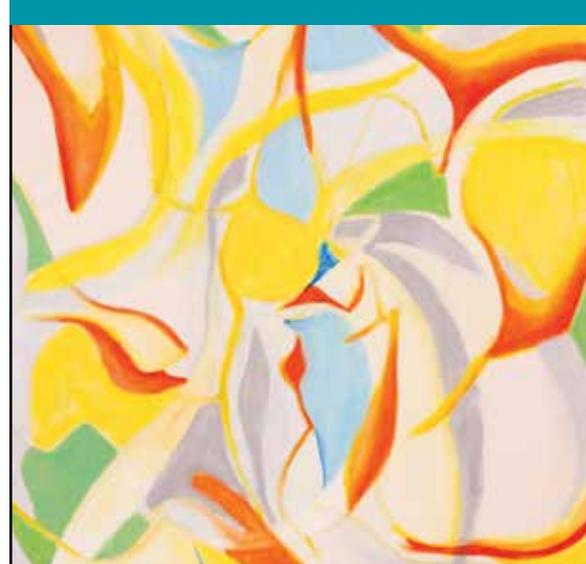
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 Arts & Music

Studio 237 Music Lessons: **Mood Music**

By LISA CYR

Perhaps you recognize that music affects your emotions. When you listen to upbeat songs, you feel good, and listening to sad songs can lower your mood. If you think about it, the notion that tunes impact feelings shouldn't come as a surprise. The word tune, after all, as well as referring to music, relates to frequency adjustment. Here's how to use tunes to modify your mood.

Music can make you see things that aren't there

A 2011 study shows that music influences you in more ways than you may imagine. In the study, researchers showed people smileys and asked them to identify sad or happy faces while music played. Sad songs made them see the smileys as

unhappy, while cheerful songs had the opposite effect. The subjects saw merry faces when they heard upbeat music. It was astonishing they saw things that weren't there. It means music changed what they perceived in the environment.

So, what are the implications of this study for you?

You might want to think about the results and how the findings play out in your life. You can use them to your advantage. If you are in a negative mood but want to improve your outlook, you can play joyful songs. When you want a balanced mindset, though, background tunes might skew your perception. Turning them off during a difficult conversation, for example, may boost clarity.



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How long you listen to music matters

Another study shows it takes thirteen minutes of slow tempo, classical music to aid focus, and nine minutes of uplifting music to increase happiness. Relaxing music eases stress, improves sleep, and boosts peacefulness in thirteen minutes. It seems that how long you listen to music matters if you want to change your state of mind and adopt its emotional frequency. So, persevere for more than a few minutes when you hope to change your mood.

Your heart follows the beats

The number of beats in a rhythm makes all the difference. According to Lyz Cooper, who collaborated with Marconi Union to create 'Weightless,' a soothing track, listeners' heartbeats fall into rhythm with the music they hear. The BPM, or beats per minute, affects you on a physical and emotional level.

To change your mood, choose music with a tempo to match the energy you want to feel. Note whether it lifts, relaxes, or saddens you. Don't discount sad music, though. Many people swear it helps them release heartache. It's possible unhappy music resonates with despairing individuals and helps them let go of emotions.

Another theory suggests it might support the production of prolactin, a hormone that aids consolation and calm. So, when you're sad, listening to music that pulls on the heartstrings may help. If it doesn't, switch to tunes with different tempos and find one that does.

Music is a powerful tool when used with care. It can alter your perception of life, making it sunnier, or help you release sadness. Notice how tunes affect you, and you can employ them to improve your wellbeing.

Studio 237 Music Lessons is in Santa Rosa Beach. Our teachers are ready to teach guitar, piano, drums, voice, ukulele and more. Call 850.231.3199 to schedule a visit or lessons. www.Studio237Music.com



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Okaloosa Arts Alliance Announces Annual School Poster Winners

Several area students were winners of the 13th annual OAA Okaloosa County School Poster Contest hosted by The Okaloosa Arts Alliance (OAA). First-place winners included students from Northwest FL Ballet Académie, Rocky Bayou Christian School and Crestview High School with the theme: “Sparking the Arts.” There were 218 entries from the following schools: Rocky Bayou Christian School, Crestview High School, Youth Village, Silver Sands School, Destin High School, Fort Walton Beach High School, Shalimar Elementary, Northwest Florida Ballet Académie, Edge Elementary,

Kenwood Elementary, Mary Esther Elementary, Elliot Point Elementary, Ruckel Middle School, Meigs Middle School, Lewis Middle School and Bob Sikes Elementary. Eglin Federal Credit Union generously donated gift cards.

Elementary School (K5-4)

First Place, Norah Hall, 3rd Grade, Northwest FL Ballet Académie

Second Place, Chandler Fife, 3rd Grade, Edge Elementary School

Third Place, Linley Chilcoat, 3rd Grade, Edge Elementary School

Third Place, Mariah

Tindall, 3rd Grade, Kenwood Elementary School

Middle School (5-8)

First Place, Sarah Hood, 8th Grade, Rocky Bayou Christian School

Second Place, Jenessa Laemmel, 7th Grade, Rocky Bayou Christian School

Third Place, Brodie Laconlac, 7th grade, Ruckel Middle School

High School (9-12)

First Place, Kayla Watson, 10th Grade, Crestview High School

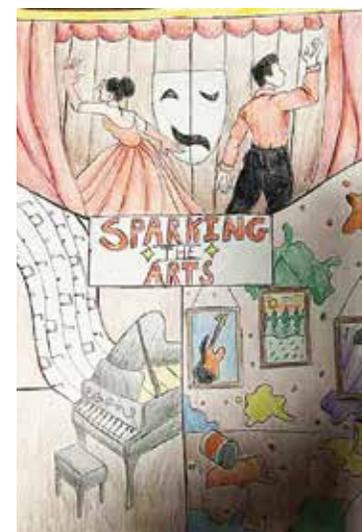
Second Place, Julia Partain, 9th Grade, Crestview

High School

Third Place, Laura Hill, 9th grade, Fort Walton Beach High School

The Okaloosa Arts Alliance (OAA) is a non-profit 501(c)3 local arts agency that strengthens Okaloosa County by supporting the arts through advocacy, education and marketing.

The OAA is supported in part by the Florida Department of State Division of Arts & Culture and from Florida Arts auto license tag revenues. However, it could not exist without its members and community support. For more information, go to www.okaloosaarts.org.



First Place, Sarah Hood, 8th Grade, Rocky Bayou Christian School. (Okaloosa Arts Alliance)

Local Author Receives Prestigious Award

Local author, Ellen Fannon of Valparaiso is the recipient of the 2022 Christian Indie Publishing Award for her second novel, *Save the Date*. *Save the Date* is the humorous story of Hannah Jensen, a widow raising a teenage daughter, who hasn't been back to her hometown in more than 20 years. When she receives an invitation to her 25th high school reunion, it triggers memories of her own teenage years. She dreams about rekindling the flame with her first love, her high school sweetheart, while at the same time, she dreads running into a clique of mean girls who made her life miserable.



Ellen's Children, is the humorous account of the life of a foster parent. Her third novel, *Don't Bite the Doctor*, is the amusing journey of a young female veterinarian.

Ellen has had several articles published in *One Christian Voice*, and she has had stories published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Life Lessons Learned from the Dog*, *Divine Moments—Remembering Christmas*, November 2019 and 2020. Ellen's devotions have appeared in *Open Windows*, the *Secret Place*, and *Guideposts All God's Creatures Daily Devotions*. She's won numerous awards for her devotions. She also has had articles published in *You and Me* and *Sasee* magazine.

All Ellen's novels are available on Amazon or from the

trunk of her car. Ellen would love for you to follow her hu-

mor-at-everyday-life blog: www.ellenfannonauthor.com.



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 Arts & Music

CAA Participated In National Arts & Economic Prosperity Study

The **Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County** will participate in Arts & Economic Prosperity 6, the most comprehensive economic impact study of the nonprofit arts and culture industry ever conducted in the United States. Administered by Americans for the Arts, AEP6 will examine the economic impact of the arts and culture in Walton County and 386 additional communities representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The Arts & Economic Prosperity series is conducted approximately every five years to gauge the economic impact of spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and the event-related spending by their

audiences. In 2017, AEP5 documented that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generated \$166.3 billion in economic activity (spending by organizations plus the event-related spending by their audiences) which supported 4.6 million jobs and generated \$27.5 billion in government revenue.

Audience-intercept surveys will be collected from attendees to arts events in Walton County through April 2023. The national sample is anticipated to surpass 250,000 surveys. A survey of nonprofit arts and culture organizations will occur from January through April 2023. The national and local findings will be made public in September 2023. At that time, the CAA



will receive a customized report on the unique economic impact results for Walton County, including the number of jobs that are supported and the amount of government revenue generated by our community's nonprofit arts industry.

For the first time, AEP6 will require that the local and state

research partners collect a portion of audience surveys from attendees at events held by arts and culture organizations that primarily serve communities of color. The AEP6 study will establish a benchmark of arts and culture organizations that primarily serve communities of color, and the audiences that attend their events.

"The CAA is proud to partner with Americans for the Arts and hundreds of other arts organizations across the country on this important study that will certainly drive home the value of the Arts to Walton County and the state of Florida," said CAA Executive Director Jennifer Steele. "We look forward to working with our fellow creative

businesses and organizations to gather information that will help us prove not just the economic impact but also the social and cultural benefits that the Arts provide to Walton County residents and visitors."

Nolen V. Bivens, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, commented, "The arts are economic catalysts – strengthening the economy by creating jobs, generating government revenue and driving tourism."

The CAA's participation in the AEP6 study is supported in part by the Florida Department of State Division of Arts & Culture. For more information, visit www.americansforthearts.org/AEP6.

ART CLASSES

continued from page 43

3-years; in this four-hour workshop, Theresia guides students through achieving the "Antique Angel" utilizing rivulets and other advanced techniques; class is suitable for adults with some experience in watercolor to those ready to learn advanced techniques. "Advanced"

expertise is not required. Cost is \$55 with own supplies, \$77 supplies included. Limited seating; register via email theresiamcinnis@gmail.com and request an invoice with your choice of supplies included/own supplies.

ONGOING CLASSES

Rosalyn O'grady – Oil or Acrylics. Tuesday mornings 10 a.m. – noon, \$20 per session



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Theresia Mcinnis-Watercolor Techniques. Tuesday afternoons 12:45-3:45 p.m. \$27.50 plus supplies. www.TheresiaMcInnis.com. Sign up: 850-729-2600.

Chris Mcloone-Anime & Drawing Basics. Wednesday afternoons 3:30-4:30 p.m., \$15, bring a sketchbook and pencil. Sign up: 850-729-2600

Charlotte Arnold-Open Studio with Live Model, Wednesday mornings 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Uninstructed-\$15, limited to 6 seats. Bring your own supplies, your medium and an easel. Sign up: 850-729-2600

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Call for Art!

The Mattie Kelly Art Center at Northwest Florida State College welcomes visual, performing, and sound artists of all styles and media to apply for the 30th Annual Emerald Coast National Juried Show. This is an open call without a set theme.

This year's guest judge is Viet Le, Ph.D., MFA, an accomplished international artist and scholar based at the California College of Arts. Selected artists will exhibit in



the 1500-square-foot McIlroy Gallery, with an opening reception at 6 p.m. Aug. 26. The best-in-show artist will win \$1,000 and a solo exhibition in the Holzhauser Gallery during the 31st annual Emerald Coast National show in 2023. The

second-place artist will win \$500 and the third-place artist will win \$250. Deadline to apply: July 1. To apply: mattiekellyartscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ecn30_call_to_artists.pdf.



Destin-Fort Walton Beach Implements New Beach Safety Measures

Okaloosa County has launched new beach safety measures in partnership with Okaloosa County Beach Safety and Destin Fire Control District. The initiatives include a synchronized beach warning flag selection across all guarded beaches in Destin-Fort Walton Beach, a text alert system and GPS-mapped signage to help first responders reach emergencies most efficiently.

“The safety of our residents and guests is paramount. The new measures will increase awareness of the beach flag warning system and will make emergency response even more efficient,” said Okaloosa Board

of County Commissioners Chairman, Mel Ponder.

A universal Beach Flag Warning Program was adopted by communities across the state of Florida in 2005. Destin-Fort Walton Beach is no exception to this universal system. Differences in flag colors, sizes and symbols can confuse beachgoers so beach safety teams across the state post a beach warning flag, based on trained observations.

In the past, observations may have prompted a different warning flag to be posted at beaches within Destin city limits than the flag selection for unincorporated Okaloosa County. To further improve the effectiveness of



Beach Safety; Okaloosa County, City of Destin and Henderson Beach State Park will now post a synchronized beach warning flag based on conditions observed.

Because of the consistent flag selection across all of Destin-Fort Walton Beach, a daily

text messaging system has been made possible. Locals and visitors are encouraged to text “BEACH” to 44144 for a consolidated, daily beach warning flag update for Okaloosa Island, Henderson Beach State Park and City of Destin public beaches guarded by Destin Fire Control District.

In addition to the beach flag messaging system, individually numbered R-Signs were installed near the dunes as part of the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Wayfinder Network. The signs act as reference points for beach-goers who call 911, to notify first responders of their location during an emergency.

The first signs were installed every 500 feet, along a three-mile stretch of Okaloosa Island beaches, with plans to expand throughout Okaloosa County. The GPS coordinates of each sign are registered with first responders so they can effectively locate those calling 911.

“These safety measures are invaluable and a key to keeping those visiting our beaches safe. It has been five years in the making and we hope these efforts will assist our local dispatch in quickly responding to emergency situations and keep our residents and guests safe,” said Jennifer Adams, Director, Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism.

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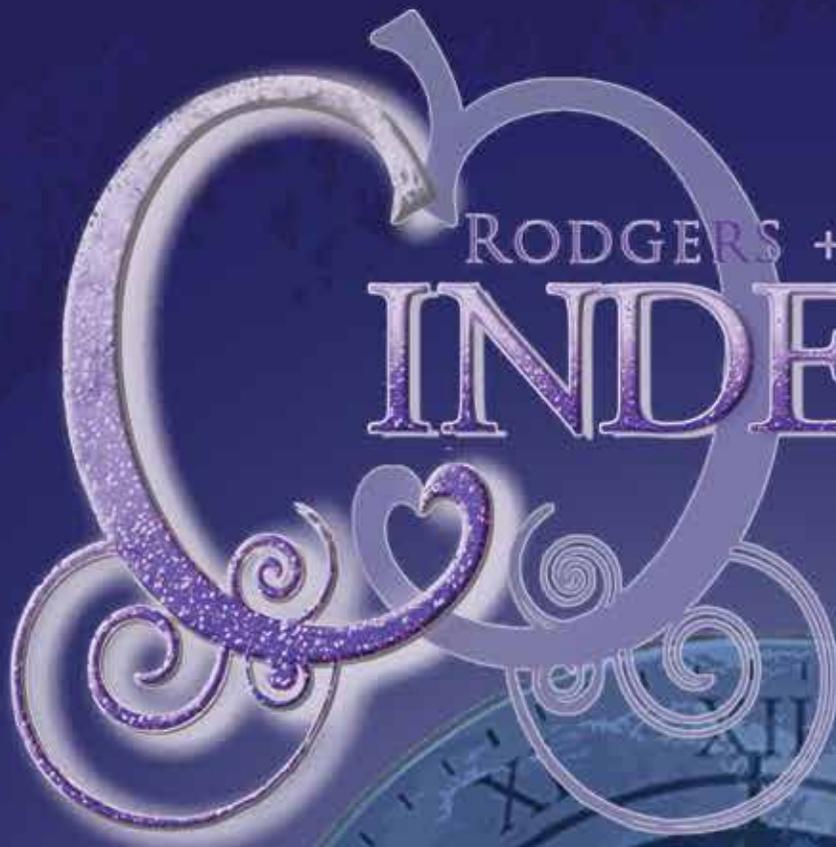
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