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## **Moving Kids from Hunger to Hope**

By Lori Leath Smith

In April, local business F45 hosted a "Playoff" event to raise money for the 4th Annual Hope for the Hungry Emerald Coast packing event taking place August 6. No small feat, on this day, community volunteers are planning to pack 300,000 meals at the Emerald Coast Convention Center in Fort Walton Beach.

Though local, the August 6th event has global impact; packed meals will go directly to Haiti to feed hungry children. Hope for the Hungry Emerald Coast partners with an organization called Mission of Hope to make it happen. Mission of Hope partners with several meal-packing organizations, which procure the bulk food, transport food to the event, provide all packing equipment and secure shipping to Haiti. Donations of any amount are donated to the Mission of Hope founda-

The reality is that millions of kids in Haiti do not know where they will get their next meal.

Mission of Hope is current-



ly feeding more than 100,000 kids a day through a network of schools and orphanages, but have about 73,000 more children on a wait list.

Last June, local volunteers packed 250,000 meals that ended up in Haiti right around the time of the August earthquake. The meals provided some relief for those

impacted by the earthquake. "Our relatively small community also holds the record for the most meals packed on a single day in a single location in the U.S. (through Mission of Hope)," said Kim Bauman, a volunteer. On Saturday, August 6th, there will be over 800 volunteers at the Emerald Coast Convention Center

who will pack a goal of over 300,000 meals for kids in Haiti. "Our community donated \$100,000 over the past year to make this happen," said Kim.

Mhari Turner and her son, Bryson, are the heartbeats behind this cause and head up

**HOPE** continued on page 2



# Orchestra Conductor Todd Craven Promises Fantastic Season

By Kenneth Books

The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra (NFSO) is about to launch its 2022-23 season, offering a full slate of great concerts.

Todd Craven begins his second season as Music Director of the NFSO. He brings a lengthy and impressive background to his position, as well as a love of the Emerald Coast. The Michigan native had previously worked in Sarasota and Buffalo.

"I have been a musician all of my life, developing a love for the trum-

**CRAVEN** continued on page 2





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### Community

#### HOPE

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the efforts in our community.

On January 12, 2010, a devastating earthquake hit Portau-Prince Haiti. At just 3 years old at the time, Bryson spent the next year praying for Haiti daily. In 2014 and 2015, Bryson and his family were able to go on a mission trip with Mission of Hope to visit the country that had been on his heart for so many years. "It was amazing

watching him with the kids in Haiti," said Mhari. "We had no idea what God was planting in his heart and how it would turn into literally leading a community into packing hundreds of thousands of meals."

The Hope for the Hungry event got started after young Bryson's two trips. Only age 8 after the second trip, he and Mhari knew they had to do something about it. "Seeing Haiti, the poverty and everything about it, there's just no



way to not do anything about what you see," said Bryson.

After that second trip, Bryson began continually asking about raising money to host a food packing event to help Mission of Hope to feed kids in Haiti. By 2019, through many fundraising efforts, Bryson raised \$6,000 and packed 22,000 meals. In the fall of 2020, they packed another 40,000. In June of 2021, Bryson, his family, several local churches, and the greater Destin community came together

to pack a full container of food which was 250,000 meals!

This August, volunteers will pack 300,000 meals with the help of the community and businesses such as F45. "This really is a local event that has a global effect," said Bryson.

You can volunteer on August 6th to help pack meals: missionofhope.com/Hope-for-thehungry. For more information, visit the Facebook page: www. facebook.com/hopeforthehun-

#### **CRAVEN**

continued from page 1

pet at age 10," Todd said. "I was fortunate to have great teachers and mentors in my hometown in Michigan and went on to pursue music at the University of Michigan, where I studied with the renowned former Principal Trumpet of the Boston Symphony and Boston Pops, Armando Ghitalla."

After he completed his master's degree at Indiana University, Todd won an audition for Principal Trumpet of the Sarasota Orchestra, where he and his wife Laurie, an accomplished trombonist, played for several years. Todd's trumpet-playing career ended in 2008 when he developed a non-life-threatening neurological condition. It was then that he developed an interest - and eventually a love for conducting.

That required going back to school. He went back to his alma mater to study orchestral conducting and was later accepted into the prestigious class of Marin Alsop at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

After the year in Baltimore, which he describes as "quite the culture shock moving from Sarasota," he won auditions for two assistant conductor positions: Edmonton Symphony in Canada and the Buffalo Philharmonic.

"I knew that JoAnn Falletta



and the Buffalo Philharmonic would be a great training ground, so I accepted that position," he said. During the covid pandemic, he took a one-year teaching position at the University of Illinois, and auditioned for the Northwest Florida Symphony that year as a finalist. "I was so thrilled that I was awarded the position and my wife and I and our small cat moved immediately to Niceville to settle in before the start of the season," he said. "We love being back in Florida and have enjoyed this area so much. We were thrilled to find that the area parks and beaches are even better, in our opinion, than South Florida! I certainly do not miss snow and driving in blizzard conditions! Our families are all based in Michigan still, so we visit the old stomping grounds over holidays and in the summer."

Todd and his wife have settled into the small-town atmosphere of Niceville, he said, and have enjoyed football games and Niceville High School band concerts. "We have also made new friends with our wonderful Northwest Florida Symphony Guild members and others in the community," said Todd. "Also, I try to attend the local Niceville

Chamber of Commerce breakfasts and am a member of the Mid-Bay Rotary Club."

The NFSO was founded by John Leatherwood in 1987, which started as a community/student orchestra and then eventually evolved into a fully professional ensemble. "We draw from outstanding musicians as far away as Birmingham, Alabama, but most of our players come from this area of Northwest Florida," Todd said. "They are all auditioned musicians, who have multiple degrees and are experts on their instruments."

Todd is chomping at the bit for the 2022-23 NFSO season. "As Music Director, I am responsible for planning all of the music for the season, and it is something I very much love

to do," he said. "I like to work around themes for each concert and think of each one as an event. Our season opener, for instance, is entitled "Ravish and Mayhem" and features internationally acclaimed cellist, Amit Peled.

The first half of the kickoff concert, Todd said, features two beautiful contemporary works by living composers, Stephanie Berg and Anna Clyne. Each work has a connection to sounds of the ancient Middle East. Clyne's "Dance for Cello and Orchestra" is a piece inspired by the poems of the ancient Sufi poet Rumi. The ever popular 'Scheherazade" is the featured work on the second half, by 19th-century Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov and is based on the famous tale from 1001 Arabian nights.

"It is my sincere hope that everyone enjoys our concerts this season and further understands what a wonderful cultural jewel that we have in the Mattie Kelly Arts Center! We have a state-ofthe-art hall, an amazing art gallery and an exceptional orchestra that will knock your socks off," said Todd. "Even if you are new to classical or orchestral music, there is something for everyone at the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra!"

For a copy 2021-2022 MKAC 25th Anniversary Brochure or to purchase tickets, visit MattieKellyArtsCenter.org.

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## **Living Hope**

By Michelle Ruschman

Cindy Smith has taught child abuse prevention in schools since the 1990s. This earlier work led her to become an advocate, author, speaker and founder of Living Hope for Today, whose mission is twofold: to teach our kids, even as young as age 3, how to deter a potential sex offender through the X Zone Body Safety Program and to remove the shame of abuse. Cindy knows firsthand the damage generational abuse can have on a family and is now working to be part of the solution.

"I married the wrong man," she said. "He was physically abusive, and we were only married for three and a half years. When I left him, my children were 18 months and my eldest daughter just turned 3. When she was 3-and-a-half, I found out through things she was saying and doing that he had sexually abused her.

"My daughter, who's now 40, doesn't remember the details of what happened and has left my granddaughter alone with my ex-husband. He's charismatic and manipulative. So, although she knows something happened to her, she says it couldn't have been him. I have told her, 'But I'm the one who lived it with you and chose to believe you. I'm the one who was with you through the daily nightmares and acting out. I'm the one that was there when you spoke to the counselor.' We knew what happened to her.

"When I found out my 4-year-old granddaughter was being left alone with my ex-husband, I decided I needed to get a book to teach my granddaughter body safety rules."

When Cindy looked, however, she was unable to find a resource that would make sense to young children, and she desperately wanted to give her grand-daughter a tool she could use.

With a counselor's guidance, Cindy wrote her children's book, "Isabella's Treasure," which teaches specific words and actions to deter a potential perpetrator, especially when the potential victim is prompted to keep the abuse a secret. One of the strategies in the book encourages the child not to keep these "sad secrets." The significance of this comes from studies that reflect that an abuser is deterred when they know a child will tell.

Now including a music video, the book has become part of the "X Zone Body Safety Program."

Just as important, Cindy wants to support those who, like herself, live with their history of being sexually abused. In her novel for adults, "Whispered Truth," Cindy shares her abuse through the characters and storytelling. She understands first-hand how important it is for victims to have an outlet for their stories

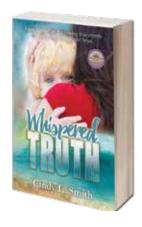
"For me, it was very freeing," she said. "When I first started dealing with my repressed mem-



ories from childhood, the first people I told were my husband and my pastor. It was freeing to know I could talk about it and people weren't going to reject me. I felt like I'd done something wrong, and I was full of shame, that something was wrong with me. When you talk about it, and people respond by sharing their own stories, or by offering you support and encouragement, those chains break off. That's why we need to talk about it."

Because child sexual abuse prevention isn't being taught in most schools, Cindy is passionate about training parents,

guardians and professionals how to recognize signs of abuse. If a community decided to make an impact on prevention, the fruit of those efforts would grow exponentially. The results would include better mental health, less addiction, fewer kids in foster care and fewer adults in jail. Cindy Smith will be a guest speaker at the Back to Homeschool Convention at the Crestview Community Center Aug. 13 and 14 from 9 a.m. To 4 p.m. Visit the event's Facebook page for details. Cindy can also be booked for "Stewards of Children: Darkness to Light" train-



ing or other presentations with your school, company, church or organization by calling (513) 505-3690 or emailing clsmith@ livinghopefortoday.org. Visit www.livinghopefortoday.org to purchase "Isabella's Treasure" and "Whispered Truth" and to find additional resources. The best way to support Cindy and her efforts is by connecting her to those who can help children through the education she offers

Statistics reflect that many reading this article know a victim or, perhaps, are one. The most common perpetrator is someone who is known by the victim, not a stranger. Cindy's efforts show that we are not helpless and, together, we can equip our children.

For additional resources, go to www.livinghopefortoday.org.





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## From the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office

## **Brian Muhlbach Appointed to Serve** as Community Resource Deputy

One of Okaloosa County Sheriff Eric Aden's top goals is enhancing communication to build even stronger relationships between the citizens of Okaloosa County and our Deputies. One way of accomplishing this is through promoting the concept of community policing and

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establishing Community Resource Deputies throughout the county.

Community policing is a strategy of policing which focuses on strengthening bonds or partnerships with community members. In the OCSO Central District, which en-

Vote • Aug. 23rd

compasses the southwestern portion of Okaloosa County including Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Shalimar, Cinco Bayou and Hurlburt Field, Brian Muhlbach was recently appointed to serve as the Community Resource Deputy. Deputy Muhlbach began serving in law enforcement in 2004 and joined the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in 2018. He has served in several roles throughout his career, giving him the ability to explain the ins and outs of how the public, and serving as a liai-

One way of promoting communication and transparency is with routine town hall style forums and Neighborhood Watch meetings. Through collaboration with the Crime Prevention Unit, Deputy Muhlbach meets with groups to inform them on issues facing our community and to discuss ways to prevent criminal activity. Undoubtedly, one of these issues involves vehicle burglaries. Approximately 95% of the vehicle burglaries reported to the Sheriff's Office involve unlocked vehicles. Cit-



ongoing basis. Neighborhoods or groups interested in hosting a community meeting, or those interested in the programs mentioned in this article are encouraged to contact Deputy Muhlbach at (850) 651-7410 ext. 2539 or by email at bmuhlbach@sheriff-okaloosa.org.





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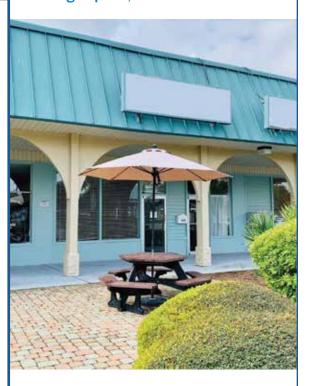
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## Grin and Bear it: Coexisting With the Other Locals

By Jamie Zimchek

It's nearly midnight. Suddenly, there's the sort of crash outside that gives a person heart palpitations. Prowling cautiously around the corner, you spot the furry culprit lumbering leisurely down the back road with a trash bag in tow: it's your friendly neighborhood Florida black bear, and he's just found dinner. Yes, by tomorrow morning it will probably be a shredded mess in the woods to clean up, but no, there's no cause for panic, according to Dave Telesco, Bear Management Program Coordinator for the state of Florida. "I just hate hearing someone was afraid to go outside," he says. "Hollywood films are not reality. Florida black bears are not interested in people, and most are easily scared away."

If you have a ring doorbell or some other security camera system, it's quite likely that you've already captured a shot of one of these large mammals (or know someone who has). Telesco notes that their population is, in fact, slowly increasing (fe-

males normally only have two cubs every other year), and this is bear country. But the fact that we're seeing more of them has to do in part with the fact that more homes have security cams, and more people spent time at home during the pandemic. Additionally, area development has in some areas reduced their habitat, forcing them into increasingly populated areas.

"In the fall, with the cooler mornings and evenings, the bears are starting to get ready for winter," said Telesco. "Pregnant females do hibernate, because their cubs are born during February. So, they have to stay put for a good three months before they're mobile." Males don't have to den up, but are still working to build up fat. That way, if there's a cold snap, they can hunker down for a couple of weeks without having to eat or drink.

Bears need as much as 20,000 calories a day and normally, 73 percent of their diet is plants. This means when weighing the advantages of eating many, many acorns at four-calories



each versus a few bags of trash, some bears are going to go for trash every time. "They're smart enough to be lazy," said Telesco with a laugh. This translates into long daily active periods of up to 18 hours, though they try to stay nocturnal for neighborhood raids to avoid human contact. In the wild, he said, they'd be more active at dawn and dusk.

Black bears aren't territorial either. So, if you get repeat sightings, it may or may not be the same bear. Depending on the population, a male may roam more than 100 square

miles, while females tend to stay within a 20-square-mile area. How many miles can they cover in a day?

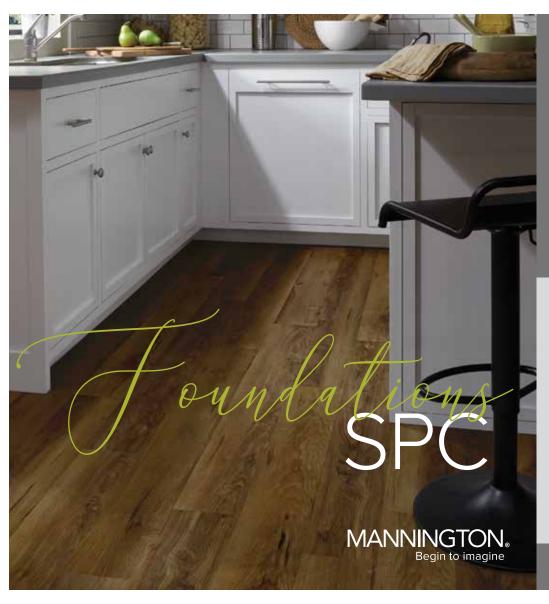
"That depends on the time of year," said Telesco. "The most they're moving is now. They're so plant-oriented, they know when the galberries are going to be ripe and where. It just depends on what food source they're trying to get to." One bear study documented bears moving anywhere from 0.6 to 1.2 miles a day in the fall.

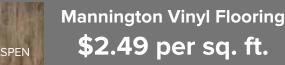
Right now, our area is traversed by two growing bear populations: Eglin from the east and Apalachicola from the west, which makes this region busy for bear activity. However, that is not a cause for alarm. According to statistics available on the myfwc.com website, only 1 percent of all calls in northwest Florida between 2010 and 2020 were for reasons of bear-related public safety; even fewer were related to bears entering a structure. A recent Facebook post stated the Niceville Police Department has received several reports of a black bear in residential areas. Officers are continuing to attempt to monitor movement.

Usually they are easily scared away by beeping a car alarm, or hand clapping.

"They're really uncomfortable around us," says Telesco. And with a sense of smell 2,100 times more powerful than a human sniffer, they can detect scents over a mile away, which means they're usually quick to smell humans and beat a hasty retreat. Bears have been known to get aggressive around dogs.

Continued on page 28







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## Ryan Messer for Walton Co. Supervisor of Elections

By Ron Kelley

After nearly 20 years serving as Supervisor of Elections for Walton County, Bobby Beasley has decided to retire. His retirement will be much deserved, and all of us are grateful for his many years of service.

Assistant Supervisor of Elections Ryan Messer has worked in that office for over 15 of those years and is seeking the opportunity to become your next Supervisor of Elections. Ryan is a Master Florida Certified Election Professional as designated by the Florida Institute of Government at FSU and has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

In addition to these credentials, Ryan Messer has an unmatched level of experience in the election office and already has nearly 50 elections and 7 recounts under his belt. More importantly, each recount demonstrated flawless accuracy, without a single error. With regard to voter integrity, there is no greater confirmation of skill level and competency than a perfect score year after year.

During his 15 years working in the office, Ryan has seen the election process evolve significantly and played an important role in keeping Walton County elections secure and accurate by using the most advanced tools and techniques in the industry.

Ryan helped make the VoteWalton.gov website a valuable resource for voters, adding many online tools, statistics, and data. He helped implement a new state-of-the-art voting system and electronic poll registers to increase security, efficiency, and accuracy. He helped establish two new early-voting locations, in Freeport and Miramar Beach, to provide more options for voters and manage growth.

Ryan also initiated digitizing paper records. He established an online training platform and curriculum for election workers, and even manages a kid's voting platform to assist teachers with conducting elections in the classroom. Ryan is especially honored to have played a part in growing the Vote-In-Honor of a Veteran program at the Walton County Courthouse. Visitors to the Courthouse have seen the inspiring veteran's wall of fame, which continues to grow.

The development of Ryan's skill and insight was not a random event. His desire to serve and help others began at an early age. During high school, Ryan was fortunate enough to work for then Supervisor of Elections Melissa Beasley, helping set-up polling places for elections. After her untimely passing, Ryan continued to help with elections under Supervisor Bobby Beasley, serving as a roving technician on Election Day, while also working other jobs and attending college.

While finishing college, Ryan began working at the Elections Office, becoming Systems Coordinator, and later, Assistant Supervisor, being primarily responsible for ensuring a successful election from start to finish, including databases, ballot creation, machine prep and testing, polling places, canvassing, results, recounts, audits, and reconciliation.

Throughout his career, Ryan has continuously taken the steps needed to keep our elections secure and up to date and has been a speaker at state-wide election conferences and meetings to share his ideas and best practices with colleagues.

Ryan is a lifelong resident of Walton County with family roots running back to the 1840s. His great-great-greatgreat grandfather was a Walton County voting precinct clerk for the first Florida election in 1845. Ryan credits his success due to coming from a family of



hard-working public servants who taught him to always do his best, to love God, and to love his country. Growing up, he spent much of his time helping his dad do odd jobs to provide for the family. Those days instilled in Ryan the values of integrity, hard work, know-how, and common sense, which he wisely employed by marrying wife Cathlynn. Together, they have a beautiful daughter, Hannah.

When not working, Ryan enjoys spending time with his family, gardening, camping and cheering for the 'Noles. Ryan is also a deacon, teacher, and Information Technology/Audio Visual technician at his church. He loves working with his hands and helping those in need.

When elected, Ryan plans to keep raising the bar for election integrity, by focusing on ways to educate and demonstrate the efforts taken to secure our elections. Ryan believes that it will take knowledge, experience and common sense to spend tax dollars wisely, maintain friendly and fair customer service, develop a training program for candidates and create how-to and educational videos. He will continue to promote civics and government education and use state-of-the-art auditing tools to ensure the accuracy of our elections

To assist the campaign, donate or to simply show your support, visit VoteMesser.com. To maintain secure, accurate elections, on August 23rd, please vote for Ryan Messer for Walton County Supervisor of Elections.





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## Bay Buzz



Jojo's Coffee and Goodness recently hosted the First Lady of Florida, Casey DeSantis, to launch the **Mamas for Desantis** campaign. Mamas for DeSantis is a grassroots effort bringing together a million mamas from across our state to mobilize for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

The Okaloosa County 2022 communications survey is available now as a brief online poll. The 18-question survey takes about five minutes to fill out and can be found at myokaloosa.com/cc/survey or direct at www.surveymonkey. com/r/WYBZLGX. Your responses will be used by the county "to continuously improve the way we communicate with our community, help us to make adaptations in our messaging and supply informed data in our Annual Report," said April Sarver, Okaloosa County Public Information Officer. The survey ends on Aug. 31.

On Saturday Aug. 6, the resents Florida's 1st Congressio-

Heritage Museum have an Ice cream social with Chef Marcus Hencinski. \$12 non-members & \$10 for members. A maximum of 20 kids will learn how to make ice cream from scratch as well as a brief history on the frozen treat. The class is from 1-3 p.m. and, of course, the kids will get to taste test what they've made. The museum also offers a Kids Watercolor class with Corina Zalace on Aug. 20 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at \$35 a person. All supplies are included, and kids will get to take home their own watercolor art piece. Limited to 15 students. Call (850) 678-2615to register and pay. 115 Westview Ave. Valparaiso FL, 32580. Heritage-museum.org.

The **Freeport Republi- cans** will meet Tuesday, Aug.
9 at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse, 1830 Great Hammock
Bend, Freeport. Registration
begins at 5:30 p.m.; meeting
6-7 p.m. August's speaker is
U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, who represents Elorida's let Congression



nal DIstrict. The club meets the second Tuesday of each month at the same location and time. Future meeting is Sept. 13.

The Walton County Republican Executive Committee (REC) will meet Monday, Aug. 15 at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse, 1830 Great Hammock Bend, Freeport. Registration begins at 5:30 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.

Eucheeanna Chapter National Society Daughters of the American Colonists (DAC) will hold its next meeting Sept. 7; guests are welcome. DAC is a lineage society whose objective is patriotic, historical and educational; to make research as to the history and deeds of the American colonists. Women 18 and older who can document their lineage to the American colonies, 1607 to

July 4, 1776, may join. For more information, contact Margaret Nichols at (850) 897-1278.

Costa Enterprises Mc-Donald's Freeport location raised \$3,765 in round up donations in 2021 for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northwest Florida. These funds were raised throughout the year by customers who rounded up their totals to the nearest dollar. Out of 60 McDonald's restaurant locations in Northwest Florida, the Freeport location raised the highest amount for the year. It celebrated this accomplishment with a surprise party for the employees and general manager, Christina, who encouraged their customers and community to round up their purchases.

Jessica Landry, Okaloosa County's 2021 Teacher of the Year, has been named assistant principal of Bluewater Elementary School. Jessica attended Ruckel Middle School and graduated from

Niceville High School. She also served as an adjunct professor in the teacher education program at NWFSC and is a member of the Florida Teacher Lead Network. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from NWFSC.

Melissa Kearley, a Niceville native, has been named principal of Edge Elementary School in Niceville. She grew up attending Okaloosa County schools, then attended the University of West Florida where she earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in educational leadership.

CALM will have a groundbreaking ceremony for CALM Village on Monday, Sept. 12, 4:30 p.m., on its campus, 201 Redwood Ave, Niceville. "We have recognized the lack of affordable housing in our community and, because of this, we have decided to take a leap of faith and are pursuing building up to seven cottages on our property. CALM Village will assist residents to help them successfully achieve self-sufficiency and independent living. This will allow us to serve more people in different ways," said Wanda Siefke, CALM public relations. For more information, visit nicevillecalm.com/ calm-village.

Continued on page 12

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# Happenings Around the Bay

### **AUGUST**

04 | Wine Tasting 5:30pm | Toast Wine Bar | Niceville

Sip N' Stroll 05 5pm | J.Leon Gallery and Studio | Miramar Beach The L.A. Strangers 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

06 Rockers 4 Life at 3rd Planet 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville "Kitchen People" Oil Painting with Jeanette Herron 10:30am | Artful Things | Niceville

Women's Climbing Circle 9 am | Rockout Climbing Gym | Niceville **Mechanical Lincoln Live** 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

> **Encaustic Scenes with Corina Zalace** 1pm | Artful Things | Niceville

18 Wine Tasting 5:30pm | Toast Wine Bar | Niceville

**Brewmaster** 19 5:30pm | Bayou Brewing Company | Niceville

Red Dot Sight Class 20

> Luke Langford Band at 3rd Planet 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville Pinecone Wall Decor with Marla Armstrong 10:30 am | Artful Things | Niceville

30th Annual Emerald Coast National Call for Art Reception 6pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

10am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting and Sport | Valparaiso

Hammers and Hotrods Car Show 27 10am | Okaloosa Technical College | Fort Walton Beach **Shades of Blue Live** 6pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

28 | Sunset Shrimp Boil 4pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

#### **FARMER'S MARKETS**

Niceville Community - Saturdays August 6, 13, 20, 27 9am-1pm | Palm Plaza | Niceville

Freeport Farmers Market - 1st & 3rd Sundays **August 7, 21** 8am | Victory Blvd | Freeport

**Grand Boulevard Farmers Market - Saturdays** August 6, 13, 20, 27 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach



July 1st marks the 6th year of Frances Roy Agency and we're making this year all about our team. On the Hello Frances Podcast, host Shantelle Dedicke is joined by some of our team members to discuss goals and inspirations for year 6 and more. Make sure to follow along with us over the next year as we celebrate the Year of the Team and all the great things to come.

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## Elections: Vote!

#### Okaloosa County 2022 Primary Election

**Election Day:** August 23, 2022

**Early Voting:** Aug 13-20,

Visit voteokaloosa.gov for information and links for the below:

- Register to Vote
- Early Voting
- My Voter Status
- Where Do I Vote?
- Vote by Mail
- Military & Overseas Voters
- Who are the candidates?

You can also download a Voters Guide.

## Walton County 2022 Primary Election

**Election Day:** August 23, 2022 (7:00am-7:00pm)

**Early Voting:** Aug 13-20,

Saturday, Aug 13th (8:30am–4:30pm)

Sunday, Aug 14th (1:00pm-9:00pm)

Mon–Sat, Aug 15th–20th (8:30am–4:30pm)

Registration Deadline: July 25, 2022

Visit votewalton.com for information and links for the below:

- Sample Ballot and Info
- Register to vote
- Update your registration
- Check your registration status and voting info
- Request a mail ballot
- Check your mail ballot status
- Offices up for election
- Who are the candidates?

# WRWF Candidate Forum Offers an Opportunity to Hear Candidates

On Wednesday, August 3rd, you will have the opportunity to hear from all the candidates for both Walton County Commissioner and Republicans for District 2 State Senate on the same night.

You are invited to this double forum to be held at Defuniak Springs Community Center, 361 N. 10th Street in DeFuniak Springs, hosted by Walton Republican Women Federated (WRWF). Arrive early and enjoy the delicious Rudy's Barbecue buffet dinner with all the

sides and trimmings, plus iced tea and dessert.

The primary elections will be held on August 23rd. The hotly contested District 4 Walton County Commissioner race will be decided that day between candidates David Buchanan, Chas Galloway and Donna Johns. Incumbent Walton County District 2 Commissioner, Danny Glidewell, is running unopposed. He will be presenting his platform at this August 3rd forum. Republican candidates for District 2 Florida Senate are Regina Piazza and Representative Jay Trumbull. The winner of their primary Senate race will face their democratic opponent in November.

Both August 3rd forums will be covered by regional media. The forums will provide the voters an opportunity to hear from all the Republican candidates, as WRWF has a reputation of conducting fair and balanced forums, in a professional and secure environment.

WRWF is a premiere political club of more than 130 members who work tirelessly on



David Buchanan



Donna Johns



Charles Galloway



Incumbent Danny Glid



Regina Piazza



Jay Trumbull

behalf of the entire county, with a commitment to be the "boots on the ground" supporting Republican candidates. WRWF is known for upholding conservative, constitutional values. Men are welcome to join as associate members, too. Members have recently enjoyed hearing from high profile speakers including Senator Rand Paul, Congressman Matt Gaetz, Senator Marco Rubio and Attorney General Ashley Moody.

Advance registration is re-

quired and attendees are encouraged to register early as the WRWF events regularly sell out. Guest registration is available at:

www.waltonrepublicanwomenfederated.org/eventlist/#!event-list or just Google search "Walton Republican Women Federated" website and look for the "events" option on the drop-down menu. Questions, registration assistance, and forum topic requests may be sent to: WRWFederated@ gmail.com.





# Eglin Test Pilot Returns to Take Command

The 96th Test Wing welcomed its new commander during a change of command ceremony on June 30. Brig. Gen. Scott Cain passed the guidon to the wing's new leader, Brig. Gen. Jeff Geraghty. The wing also bid farewell to Cain, who leaves for Ohio and Air Force Materiel Command.

The presiding officer and former 96th TW commander, Maj. Gen. Evan Dertien, Air Force Test Center commander, spoke about the diversity and complexity of the wing's missions before speaking about its new leader. "You are ready, and I have full confidence you will continue the legacy of the 96th TW," said Dertien. "The test wing's motto is 'it's always the hour.' Today that remains truer than ever as we continue to sharpen our nation's sword and shield and prepare for its future endeavors."

A senior pilot with more than 1,750 flight hours, Ger-



PHOTO BY SAMUEL KING JR.

will look to empower and learn from you, as well as work and thrive with you."

Geraghty received his com-

mission from the Air Force Academy in 1997. His career accomplishments include becoming a Secretary of Defense Corporate Fellow at Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) and piloting an F-15 during Operations Northern Watch, Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

The new general, frocked to the new rank just before the change of command ceremony, comes to Eglin after serving as the Arnold Engineering Development Complex commander.

TW's mission. The 24-year veteran was both an F-15 Eagle and F-16 Fighting Falcon test pilot as well as a flight commander within the 40th Flight Test Squadron here. "This is a dream job," said Geraghty. "It's a great honor to return to Eglin Air Force Base, 15 years after our first assignment here. I look forward to serving you in the various missions you perform. I

aghty is no stranger to the 96th

# Wealth Building Strategy #1 Buying Your Car Dream Car



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What if: you thought ahead and purchased your car with money you have saved that has grown TAX FREE! The savings are tremendous and let me explain. First, you don't have a car financing payment with high interest rates (which are not tax deductible). Second, your car insurance can be for liability only saving you \$1,000's per year. Third, you have an investment in the car that you can sell. Fourth, you have a savings account to manage repairs. Fifth, you have an investment that will grow for your next car purchase. And lastly six, you have an emergency fund for other possible investment opportunities.

If this sounds like something you are interested in, please call us and we can begin your program right away. By the way, many of our tax clients use their tax refund to start their first Wealth Building Strategy with us.

So again, if you are in the mood to buy that new car, Call Us First!

Sincerely yours,

Harry Holmes. (909) 238-3359



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# Are You Prepared for a Hurricane?



Okaloosa County has produced a limited supply of Okaloosa County Hurricane Guides. For convenience, the hurricane guides have been distributed to various pickup locations across the county. As hurricane season began June 1 and ends November 30, the county has also published an online version which will remain available year-round at myokaloosa.com.

Preparedness is key to successfully weathering the storm. Residents are encouraged to download the online resource to their device or print one to use as a guide before, during and after the storm. Find the publication at myokaloosa.com/ps/ emergency-management.

While supplies last, physical copies of the publication will be available at all six area libraries in the Okaloosa County Public Library Cooperative and in our area at the Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce and the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners office at 1250 Eglin Parkway, Suite 100, in Shalimar.



#### **BAY BUZZ**

continued from page 8

After 39 years of active service in the community, the Twin Cities Women's Club is officially dissolved. A contribution of \$5,519.32 was recently presented to Chris Stowers of the Northwest Florida State College Foundation for the Twin Cities Woman's Club Scholarship Endowment. The scholarship, which began in 1989, was originally known as the "Evelyn Hollfelder Displaced Homemakers Scholarship to benefit the Okaloosa Walton Community College Single Parent/Displaced Homemakers Program." The program provided "career assessment, occupational counseling, as well as, social and

emotional support, and other skills necessary for participants to become self-sufficient." Club members may continue to support the TCWC scholarship endowment with private donations. From left: Rhonda Davis, TCWC Education Committee member and publicity chairman, Mary Corbett, TCWC Education Committee co-chairman, Chris Stowers, NWFSC Foundation executive director, and Kissy Gordon, TCWC Additionally, the president. Club gave a \$600 gift certificate to Twin Cities Pavilion for Grocery Outlet.

Our Better Business Bureau® Serving Northwest Florida Foundation recently announced the graduating senior recipients of the 2022 BBB Student Ethics Scholarships in District II (Okaloosa and Walton counties): Tiana Iordan Leal Fontejon, Niceville High School, Payden Wayne Ealum, Walton High School and Stella Kathryn Hurley, Baker High School. The program recognizes high school seniors in the Florida Panhandle who personify personal character, integrity and moral compass. An independent panel of judges selected the recipients based on leadership, community service, overall personal integrity and academic history. Each student receives a \$1,000 scholarship to the college/trade/university or vocational school of their choice. Visit www.bbb.org.

Registration for the **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast 2022-2023 After School Program** began July 11. Registration will take place in person at your local Club (not online). Okaloosa County After School Program begins Aug. 10, and ends May 25, 2 - 6:30 p.m.. Have questions? Call at (850) 862-1616.

Walton County is seeking public input as it begins the creation of a new strategic plan, which will help guide the direction of county efforts based on strategic priority areas established by the Board of County Commissioners through two public workshops this May. County residents can fill out a short online survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/PJ79TRR by Sept. 30. The feedback collected through the survey will be provided to the County's senior management team and the County Commissioners for use in defining actions for the next three to five years. For more information, contact Rachel Jenkins, Public Information Officer, at (850) 892-8155 or jenrachel@ co.walton.fl.us.

The Building Industry Association of Okaloosa and Walton Counties will host an inaugural **BIA Hammers & Hotrods Car Show Aug. 27.** Open to the public, the first-time event will be held at the Okaloosa Technical College at 10 a.m. and is made possible by Platinum Sponsor, TRU Plumbing and Gas. Visit https://fb.me/e/4JzQy6iTa for more information. For more information, call the BIA at (850) 863-5107 or visit www.biaow.org.

Brian Haugen, Senior Vice President at Emerald Coast Wealth Advisors of Raymond James, Destin, received honorable mention in the 16th Annual Invest in Others Awards for his philanthropic contributions to the Taylor Haugen Foundation. The Invest in Others Awards recognizes the charitable work of financial advisors in communities across the country and around the world. Through collaboration with vendors, the foundation's YESS® Program (Youth Equipment for Sports Safety) provides interested secondary schools and leagues with state-of-the-art abdominal safety equipment.

Eglin Federal Credit **Union** was recognized by the League of Southeastern Credit Unions and Affiliates as **Credit** Union of the Year in Florida for 2021 in the category of more than \$500 million in assets. LSCU & Affiliates selected Eglin FCU for its outstanding service to members and the communities served. Some of the Credit Union's most recent impactful giving projects were helping launch an Okaloosa County Schools suicide-prevention program with the Hope Squad as a title sponsor, and working to expand financial literacy in the classroom, EFCU continues to work closely with the United Way to give back during their Annual Day of Caring, having sponsored and participated in this event for over 17 years. Employees have painted, cleaned, organized, gardened and more to help fill the needs of our community. Follow EFCU on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn or visit www.eglinfcu.org.

This will be the 12th Year of services for **Food For Thought Outreach.** For the past eight years, FFT has kicked off its backpack program with the Annual Stock the Pantry Party. This friendly team competition provides funds and food to start FFT's programs each year. Food Drive and Fundraising Teams will have eight weeks to collect food or funds in support of FFT's programs and results will be shared during its **Stock the Pantry Party Aug. 25.** 

Visit fftfl.org/pages/stock-the-pantry-2022. Or to register your team email support@fftfl. org.

The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce will host "The Next BIG Thing" Tuesday, Sept. 6, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa and is seeking speakers for this year's event. Are you an expert in topics such as leadership, entrepreneurship, women in business and women empowerment?. Fill out an application by Monday, Aug. 1. Visit https:// bit.ly/2022WACCSpeakerApp to view and submit an application. Area businesses interested in sponsoring should contact Gabrielle Kilgore at (850) 892-3191 or Gabrielle@WaltonAreaChamber.com.



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## Meet Our Hometown Hero Stephanie Wedel

## One Woman's Mission to Destroy Niceville's Drug and Alcohol Problems

By Christopher Saul, Midbaynews.com

Freedom Life Compass serves as a bridge between active rehabilitation like you see when someone decides to get clean from drugs or alcohol and when they are able to live fully independent lives. The organization's leadership hopes to open its Freedom House - a transitional halfway house on County Line Road just inside Walton County soon – the plan is to help recovering addicts all women – make the transition from recovering drug user to empowered community members.

#### Stephanie's Story

Stephanie Wedel wasn't always the woman she is now. Her father was a drug dealer. Her brother was in and out of jail. He battled IV drug use for 17 years. Now, she takes her child-hood pain and channels it into something beautiful: recovery for people who grew up like her. "Every time I talk about this – about women who are



homeless or who are struggling with addiction – I feel like everybody brushes it off," Stephanie said, "a lot of times; it's not our choices, it's our circumstances that end up making those choices. And once given the opportunity to choose the next right step, a lot of us will take it. But the stigma and the culture is that 'oh, they got themselves in that boat.' I didn't ask to be raised in a home with a drug dealer for a father. A lot of these women are in situations like that."

Stephanie serves as the recovery pastor at Crosspoint Church. She helps people get out of the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction. She also serves as the leader of Freedom Life Compass. Freedom Life Com-



pass exists as a non-profit centered around moving people from recovery to independent living after breaking from their drug use.

The ministry serves as a transitional phase from rehab to reintegration with the rest of the world. As an example – think of a drug user as someone who tears a ligament playing a sport. They undergo surgery for the tear, that's a rehab program. But they also need to engage in physical therapy to strengthen the muscles around the tendon to their former strength. That's the portion of recovery Freedom Life Compass serves.

Freedom Life Compass is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring secure transitional housing for recovering drug users and alcoholics.

#### Empowering Women to Change Their Lives by Setting Them Up for Success

Stephanie says the need for a program like this is huge in this area, because it permanently severs the cycle of drug use by eliminating the return to a bad environment for people in recovery. "One of the saddest stories and ways to put this into perspective is a girl that graduated from a rehab facility in Baker," Stephanie remembers. "Not two weeks after she went home, she was back on the street, using again. Because she went back to the same situation she came out of, nothing changed, except, she was held accountable for a year. If she were able to come here and work on getting a solid career plan set up and getting her into her own place, instead of going back to her mother's house - we're not solving the

problem.'

Stephanie's own struggle with alcohol, as well as her family's issues with illegal drugs, motivated her to start Freedom Life Compass. The group plans to open the freedom house on County Line Road to provide a stepping stone that lasts between six to 18 months for women who want to leave behind drugs, crime and other vices – to make a go at a better future.

The house will require women to have at least six months of sobriety, which they can achieve in their rehab programs before they can move in.

The program teaches job skills and allows employment, so women have alternatives to the life they left behind.

They'll pay rent, which will go toward the \$4,000 per month expenses to run the center. While they are there, some of their earnings will go toward a savings account which will be turned over to them when they

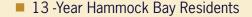
Continued on page 27



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## Niceville Children's Advocacy Center Damaged

By Kay Phelan

It was a good news, bad news scenario when a fire occurred at the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center's (ECCAC) 23-year-old location in Niceville that provides healing and protection to area children experiencing abuse and neglect.

ECCAC's CEO, Julie Porterfield commented, "We are just incredibly sad and devastated that our Niceville Center suffered significant damage Saturday, July 16th. Although there was much water damage from the fire sprinkler system, it prevented what could have been a devastating fire. As heartbroken as I feel and fighting back the tears, I am thanking God for His saving grace - it could have been so much worse. We may be down, but will rise above the water. We know the days ahead will be long. We will need the community's help to restore the joy, the cheeriness, the hope the Center once held."

Recently, ECCAC announced an upcoming expansion to the Niceville Center. Now they are looking at achieving that, as well as a complete renovation of the existing building that was so severely damaged. The building may be temporarily closed, but ECCAC operations are not, the kids



ECCAC's Niceville Center was severely damaged when their building's sprinkler system put out a fire that caused significant subsequent water damage.

will still be served. The Center doesn't house children, but is set up with a multidisciplinary team of child protection personnel, prosecutors, law enforcement, DCF, therapists, as well as EC-CAC staff and volunteers to provide services to the children in a child-friendly environment.

The community support to date has been substantial. As an example, Mike Kay, owner of Ocean Views, has already been to the Center to save the fish located in an aquarium in the lobby. He will temporarily house the fish. Architect Allen McGinnis, who has provided



ECCAC's Julie Porterfield, Solange Arnett and Jamie Rickert staff their temporary "Command Center."

all architectural services for ECCAC both in Niceville and DeFuniak Springs, and now the new addition, has also offered to provide plans for the restoration of the existing Niceville building. The City of Niceville has stepped to the plate to help, as well as Cross Point Methodist Church in Niceville that has offered office space to ECCAC's therapists so they can continue offering their counseling to area children in need.

Solange Arnett, ECCAC's Director of Operations, added, "We would also like to give great thanks to the Niceville and Valparaiso Fire Departments. They were on scene quickly and went above and beyond by securing electrical equipment with tarps they cut and provided. They also retrieved planners and precious keepsakes from offices that were reachable, They even went

into windows on the first floor to secure valuable equipment used in the forensics done by the Child Protection Team. The damage to our electrical equipment could have been so much worse if not for their quick actions."

ECCAC is also asking that people not make any physical donations of clothing, toys, etc. as they are unable to accommodate these items until the restoration is complete. Monetary donations would be greatly appreciated.

With the concept of no child left behind, Porterfield and her dedicated staff have launched a 3-phase campaign. Phase One, Heads Above Water, has a goal of raising \$100,000 to face their mounting expenses that will navigate the costs of water remediation, relocation of staff and replacing all the items that

made the Center so special and child-friendly.

Being unsure of what the insurance claim will reimburse at this time, Phase Two, Silver Lining, prepares ECCAC to be able to fund 100% of the restoration in advance. The community's generosity is the children's silver lining.

Phase Three, Over the Horizon, has a goal of raising \$1.5 million to focus on what's ahead for the Niceville Center. This will cover the already planned expansion project, as well as the finishing touches on the main building's restoration.

ECCAC's mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect, protect children in Okaloosa and Walton Counties, and restore the lives and futures of these impacted children. In ECCAC's 23-year history, over 15,000 children have received more than 170,000 services at no cost.

Updates will be posted to ECCAC's Facebook page. To make a donation, visit www.donorbox.org/eccac-restore. 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.





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# 20 Questions on the Coast: **Diane Freeman Executive Director of A Bed 4 Me Foundation**

By Michelle Jannazo

#### Good morning, Diane! Let me first ask, are you originally from Florida?

Yes, I'm a Florida girl! I was born and raised in Florida. I lived in the Midwest for a brief time but have spent most of my life here.

## What is your professional background?

My background is nonprofit and volunteer management.

#### You also founded a local nonprofit called A Bed 4 Me Foundation. What is A Bed 4 Me?

A Bed 4 Me is a 501c3 organization that provides beds to children and teens who would otherwise be sleeping on the floor or other inadequate spaces. We understand the critical role of sleep in a child's development, health, academic performance and self-esteem. A Bed 4 Me provides a full bedding kit at no cost to the families we serve. Our foundation addresses this essential need because we believe every child deserves to have a bed.

## This is an amazing initiative. When did it start?

We started delivering beds in 2016 under a different organization. At the beginning of 2018, we incorporated A Bed 4 Me and



began working independently.

## What was the inspiration to start A Bed 4 Me?

I read an article about a young lady who started a non-profit with the same mission in a different area. I was impressed and intrigued with her drive and vision; she was only 18 years old. I couldn't stop thinking about the story and the need. I talked with a small group of friends about the need in our area and the number of children who were without beds. Soon after we set out to help families in our neighborhoods.

# A genuine grassroots initiative. What are the ages of the children you serve?

A Bed 4 Me serves children between the ages of 2 to 18.

How many children have

## you served since you start-

Since we started serving beds in 2016, A Bed 4 Me has served more than 1,800 beds to children

# Incredible! How many staff members does A Bed 4 Me have to do this work?

A Bed 4 Me has two staff members, a full-time executive director, and a part-time program director.

# And I know you have volunteers. Can anyone volunteer?

Absolutely! A Bed 4 Me has volunteer opportunities to include bed delivery assistance, fundraising event support, and we're always looking for individuals or groups that are willing to host bedding drives.

# volunteering? Anyone interested in volunteering for A Bed 4 Me can email diane@abed4me.org or

What is the process for

#### Where are you located?

website abed4me.org.

send us a message through our

A Bed 4 Me has storage space in the Okaloosa County School District building in Niceville, where we house bed frames, mattresses and pillows. We also have office space in Niceville where we distribute bedding. We're also fortunate to have both office and storage space in Freeport on Hwy. 20. The key to our operation is our delivery van which you can spot all over both Okaloosa and Walton counties.

Do you serve children

## and families in Walton County?

Yes, we made our first delivery in Walton County in the fall of 2021.

# Do you have partner organizations or agencies that you work with in the area?

A Bed 4 Me is proud to partner with many service agencies in Okaloosa and Walton counties. We have an established partnership with both school districts, many local churches, and police/sheriff departments. One of our continuous goals is to introduce (and reintroduce) our program to these agencies to ensure we're reaching as many families in need as possible.

## What is your operating budget?

The annual operating budget for A Bed 4 Me is approximately \$88,000.

# Who are some of your business and community sponsors?

This community has been so wonderful and supportive of our mission and program. It would take a long while to recognize everyone. Some of our largest sponsors have been the Okaloosa County School

Continued on page 39







## Is this Contraction or Capitulation?



By Maurice Stouse, Financial Advisor and Branch Manager

The financial media are replete with reports that the markets in 2022 are off to one of their worst halves in recorded history. The stock market - the worst since 1970. The bond market, the worst ever. That begs the question, is the worst over or is the worst yet to come? We think that a lot if not all of this is in response to what the current environment is and is also part of the journey for long term investors. We encourage investors and clients to not try and predict where things (or the markets) might be going in the short run and instead to focus on what strategies and allocations meet their objectives, time frame and risk tolerance. Nonetheless, some of the media leave people wondering if things are contracting or if the sky is finally falling. We think it is a contraction and that the sky is not falling. It's not different this time and the past keeps happening in the present.

#### What then is driving the contraction?

The current drivers are inflation (caused by very expansive monetary policy and the pandemic), the fall for housing from rising rates (more than 2.5 times higher to borrow now than in January), the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and stubborn supply chain issues. Wages have risen (although up over 5% they still are not matching inflation) and that adds to production costs. What is all adding up to the markets - traditionally a forward predictor of the economy - is that stocks and bonds were overvalued relative to where we were headed, and the sell offs began. What accelerated that was the Federal Reserve raising its short term rate and, we

think most importantly stopping the buying of bonds and hence shrinking the amount of money or liquidity that was out there.

Elevated risk and or speculative investments (like cryptocurrency) have been significantly impacted on the negative side. Add to that many technology stocks (over 25% of the market's value is in technology stocks) may have little to no earnings and investors bought those stocks in hopes for future growth vs current earnings. The fallout has been brutal for the tech heavy NASDAQ.

#### **The Business Cycle Considerations**

So, while this may help explain a lot, what else might be important to consider? We suggest that investors look at the business cycle. In a recent issue of Utility Forecaster, they point out that there are four phases: early, mid, late and recession. They suggest that the current environment of rising rates, inflation, higher energy prices all point to late or recession. That makes a lot of sense to us and therefore we think the current environment (while the inputs may look different) is no different from past environments and that the past keeps happening. We think investors should take that into consideration at times like these.

#### Lastly, the energy scenario

Raymond James projects that a barrel of oil will be selling around \$90 a year from now and \$80 two years from now. In either scenario that is well above the approximate cost of less than \$40 a barrel for most domestic producers. With world demand restored and growing, the legacy energy sector has continued to show strong revenues and earnings. That is for exploration and production companies. Also consider that refineries have less capacity (and little to none planned) and therefore the competition for a gallon of gas remains high and keeps gas prices high. Despite that, inflation, ex food and energy, has declined to approximately 6% from 6.2% as recently reported.

These are the times that test investors' will, confidence and patience. We urge investors to reflect on the past, think about the present and continue to prepare for the future. There is a book out on the life of former Secretary of the Treasury and of State James Baker, (The Man Who Ran Washington by Peter Baker and Susan Glasser) and we reflect on a quote on something he learned early in life which he applied throughout his career in law and government (the five Ps): Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.

The First Wealth Management is located at First Florida Bank, a division of The First Bank, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, FL 32541. Branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport, and Panama City. Phone 850.654.8122.

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Investing involves risk and you may incur a profit or loss regardless of strategy selected, including diversification and asset allocation. Investors should consult their investment professional prior to making an investment

Investing in oil involves special risks, including the potential adverse effects of state and federal regulation and may not be suitable for all inves-

There is an inverse relationship between interest rate movements and fixed income prices. 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 involve a high degree of risk.

Investors should consider the investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses of an exchange traded fund carefully before investing. The prospectus contains this and other information and should be read carefully before investing. The prospectus is available from your investment professional. The companies engaged in the communications and technology industries are subject to fierce competition and their products and services may be subject to rapid obsolescence. Investing in the energy sector involves special risks, including the potential adverse effects of state and federal regulation and may not be suitable for all investors.



#### Your usual?

eans sticking with what you know – but there may be a lot that you don't. miliarity might be playing a role in some of your decisions.

#### Think Before You Act

- To help you keep familiarity from overly influencing your financial plan:

   Don't confuse awareness with understanding or expertise. Rely on objective research.

   Take the time to consider your motivations for selecting certain investments or strategies.

   Don't rule out an investment or financial strategy because it's foreign to you.



The First Wealth Management A Division of The First Bank, NA

2000 Ninety Eight Palms Blvd. Destin, FL 32541

850.654.8122





## Florida Insurance Market Conditions Deteriorate



By Joe Capers, Insurance Zone

The unpopular, but familiar topics and headlines continue. Florida now has the highest premiums in the nation. It has been two and a half years since we started to feel the impact of the changing (hardening) insurance marketplace in our state. Because we are nearly surrounded by water with the possibility of storms and other natural disasters so evident, the market cycles here are much more pronounced.

Florida's hard insurance market is tougher than any other market cycle in most other states. The challenges are exacerbated by other "unique" market conditions such as natural disasters, litigation, fraud and increase in claims frequency and severity. In this hard market, premiums increase while capacity, or the ability to write more premiums is diminished. These past two years for the Florida insurance market have certainly

been one for the records. Higher premiums, more stringent underwriting and less competition is playing into the advantage of insurance carriers, and make it difficult on consumers.

Just in this past week alone, another Florida property insurance company went into receivership, a roofing industry lawsuit was dismissed, Citizens Property and Casualty had its rate hikes trimmed and it's official, Florida now has the highest homeowner premiums in the country. Southern Fidelity was ordered into receivership and this makes the fourth insolvency this year. Efforts failed to find other carriers to take some of the 78,000 homeowners' policies in Florida, and another 69,000 in Los Angeles, Mississippi and South Carolina. Some of these policies will be picked up by Citizens Property Insurance, our state backed insurer of last resort, and the Florida Insurance Guarantee Fund is now having to pay their outstanding claims.

Citizens, who continues to lose about \$100 million a year, has its policy count driven up to 900,000 due to the recent insolvencies. This is up from slightly over 400,000 in late 2019. Although Citizens asked for a 15% rate increase, the Office of Insurance Regulation has approved an increase of 6.4% to be effective September 1.

The biggest loser in all are the approximately 7.5 million property insurance policyholders. The average policy is \$4,231, almost three times the national average, and up from \$2,505 just two years ago, for reasons other than the exposure to hurricanes and named storms. Most of the cost can be attributed to a lot of needless litigation and many fraudulent schemes.

In many cases, frivolous claims are creating unnecessary litigation. One recent study shows that 8% of all homeowners' claims nationwide are in the State of Florida, but 76% of all homeowners' claims lawsuits are in the State of Florida!

Fortunately, one of the lawsuits filed by the roofing industry was dismissed. They were claiming that SB 76 infringed on First Amendment free speech rights. The legislature last month passed SB 2-D which gives clarity to the law, so the case is now moot.

COVID and inflation have definitely impacted the insurance industry as well. The pandemic has certainly highlighted coverages that are included in contracts. Insurers have seen an increase in insurance claims while suffering investment losses.

Many carriers are still working through their losses from the natural disasters, and the major storms of Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Michael in 2018. These two events had a major impact on the rising reinsurance costs. When reinsurance costs go up, your insurance premiums go up. However, reinsurance is an essential product, purchased by insurance carriers to mitigate catastrophic exposures

Whether you are seeking personal or business insurance, navigating the market can be challenging. The bottom line for the Florida insurance market right now is that the industry is on life support and consumers are still facing double digit rate increases. Policyholders are paying more money for less coverage. Regardless of what you're after, it's important to find an insurance professional who can help you manage your insurance program during the market cycles. This is a good time to have a comprehensive insurance review.



Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is a full service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach (30A), Niceville, Valparaiso, Fort Walton Beach, Freeport and Inlet Beach. Visit their Video Library on www. ins-zone.com and watch several informative videos on 'Homeowners, Condo, Business and Umbrella' or call 850,424,6979.









# **Understanding Your Notice of Proposed Property Taxes**



WALTON COUNTY TAXING AUTHORITIES PO BOX 691 DEFUNIAK SPRINGS, FL 32435

2022 REAL ESTATE PROPERTY

E 101 NTA GA 30328-5584

Notice of Proposed Property Taxes and Proposed or Adopted

#### DO NOT PAY THIS IS NOT A BILL

Taxing District 001  Taxing Authority		Tax Rate	Your Property Taxes 2021	Tax Rate IF NO Budget Change is Adopted	Your Property Taxes IF NO Budget Change is Adopted	TaxRate PROPOSED	Your Property Tases IF PROPOSED Budget is Adopted			oroposed taxes
BOARD COUNTY COMMISSION		3.6363	165.39	33860	2022	3.6363	2022 259.03	DES COL	URTHOUSE 571	US HWY 90 F
SCHOOL-REQ LOCAL EFFORT		2.4340	171.56	2,2695	218.40	2.3400		DFS SEPT 14 5:01 PM (850)892-8470 145 PARK ST STE 3 DEFUNIAK SPGS		
SCHOOL-DISCRETIONARY		2.6410	186.15	25173	242.05	2.6410		SEPT 16 5:05 PM (850)892-1108 145 PARK ST STE 3 DEFUNIAK SPGS		
		2.0		2.7	242.25		204.10	SEPT 16 5:05 PM (850)892-1108		
DEFUNIAK		5.0000	227.42	4.7702	339.80	5.0000	356.17	DFS COMMUNITY CENTER 361 N 10TH ST DEFUNIAK 9/08 5:30PM (850/892-8500		
NWPWMD		.0311	1,41	.0311	222	.0311	2.22	VIA TELECONF 1-888-585-9008 ACCESS CODE 778-688-267 09/10 5:05 PM CST		
		5	A							
TOTAL PROPE	RTYTAXES	13.7424	751.93 Prop	12.9741 osed or Adopt	1,043.87 ed Non-AD Val	13.7424 orem Assessme	1,105.80 nts			
Levy	ing Authority		Purpose of Assessment					ts	Rate	Assessment
Taxing N		farket Value		Assessed Value		Exemptions		Taxable Value		
Districts 2021		2022		2021 2022		2021		2022 2021		2022
County School	98,451 98,451		6,352	90,484	121,234 121,234	50,0 25,0		0,000 5.000	45,484 70,484	71,234 96,234
Municipality	98,451	14	6,352 6,352	90,484	121,234	50.0	00 5	0,000	45,484	71,234
Other	98,451		6,352	90,484	121,234	50,0		0,000	45,484	71,234
Assessment Reduction		s Applicable Taxes						Applicable to:		Value 25.000
Save Our Homes		All Taxes							All Taxes Non-School Taxes	

Questions regarding **Tax Rates** and/or **Property Taxes** should be directed towards the <u>Taxing Authorities</u>. Contact information provided in section 6 of TRIM.

Questions regarding your Assessed Value and/or Property **Exemptions** should be directed towards the **Property** Appraiser's Office.

Our offices are open Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Call or Visit for more information or questions.

**South County Annex DeFuniak Springs** 571 US HWY 90 E 31 Coastal Centre Blvd., Suite 600 Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459 **DeFuniak Springs, FL 32433** 850-267-4500 850-892-8123 waltonpa.com

The Walton County Property Appraiser's Office will be mailing the TRIM (Truth in Millage) Notices to all property owners in the county on behalf of the taxing authorities in this jurisdiction in the month of August.

Gary J. Gregor, Walton County Property Appraiser, asks property owners to review their TRIM Notices carefully. While the Notice of Proposed Property Taxes is not a bill, it does contain essential information about your property and should be examined for accuracy.

The Property Appraiser's Office recently upgraded the mass appraisal system used to appraise all property in Walton County. Staff has been working diligently to ensure all information in our system is correct. Please contact our office if you have any questions regarding your assessment. The adoption of this new technology will allow the Property Appraiser's Office to efficiently produce a fair and equitable assessment.

We are here to serve you and consider it a privilege to do so.

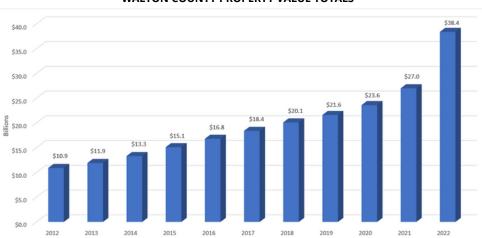
Yours truly,

Gory D. Gregor

Gary J. Gregor

Walton County Property Appraiser

#### **WALTON COUNTY PROPERTY VALUE TOTALS**



The 2022 property value for Walton County is \$38,464,644,884\* The capped County Commission value total increased to \$31,272,213,897 New construction completed in 2022 totaled \$1,290,394,309. The 2021 figure for new construction was \$991,377,540.
\*School Taxable Value



## Paddle at the Park!

The 10th Annual Paddle at the Park, a standup paddle board race event, is returning Saturday, Aug. 20, in our amazing, emerald-green Gulf waters at Henderson Beach State Park in Destin. Sponsored by HCA Florida Destin Emergency, it offers races for all ages and skill levels, with its Kids' Fun Paddle, 1-Mile Beginner Ride, 3-Mile Recreational Race and 6-Mile Elite Race. Kayaks and inflatables are welcome, too.

The weekend fun begins Friday, Aug. 19, with a Racer Welcome Party at BOTE, located at 383 Harbor Blvd. Catch up with racers old and new, and enjoy food and cold BOTE beer from Destin Brewery. One lucky racer, participant or sponsor will win a \$100 BOTE gift card.

The giveaway will take place at the end of the event, and you must be present to win.

It continues on Saturday morning with the races, which begin at 9 a.m. The event will conclude with awards.

The Destin Chamber's race partners are BOTE and Henderson Beach State Park; title sponsor HCA Florida Destin Emergency; platinum sponsor Destin -- Fort Walton Beach; accommodations sponsor Vacasa; and media sponsor Destin Life.

Open to the public, Paddle at the Park is held for locals and visitors interested in the rapidly growing standup paddle board sport.

#### **Race Start Times**

9 a.m. - 3/6-mile race

10:30 a.m. - 1-mile race 11 a.m. - kids' fun race (for ages 12 & under only)

#### **Awards**

Awards will be presented directly following the last race to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place overall winners, as well as the 1st place winner for 50+ in the following categories:

1-Mile Beginner - Men's, Women's, Men's Inflatable, Women's Inflatable

3-Mile Recreational - Men's Displacement, Women's Displacement, Men's Surfstyle, Women's Surfstyle, Men's Kayak, Women's Kayak

6-Mile Elite - Men's Elite, Women's Elite

The names of the top male and top female in the 6-Mile

Race will be placed on the Destin SUP Cup. The overall top male and female in the 1-Mile, 3-Mile, and 6-Mile races will also win some awesome BOTE lifestyle products! The top boy and girl in the Kids Fun Paddle will win a BOTE Youth t-shirt and hat.

#### Registration

Registration is now open at paddleguru.com/races/10th-AnnualPaddleatthePark. Find all race details at PaddleAt-ThePark.com or follow Facebook.com/PaddleAtThePark.

Pricing is as follows:

1-Mile Beginner - \$45 until Aug. 19 / \$55 on Aug. 20

3-Mile Recreational - \$50 until Aug. 19 / \$60 on Aug. 20 6-Mile Elite - \$65 until Aug.

19 / \$75 on Aug. 20

Kids' Fun Race - \$12 (This price does not include a race shirt.)

#### **Race Packet Pickup**

Packets are available for pick up at the Destin Chamber, located at 4484 Legendary Drive, Suite A, in Destin, Friday, Aug. 19, from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. They may be picked up the day of the race beginning at 7 a.m., at Henderson Beach State Park.

Have out-of-town friends that want to participate? Check out Vacasa.com for pricing and availability. If you'd like to become a sponsor, email dana@ DestinChamber.com.

Follow Facebook.com/Pad-dleAtThePark for event details.

## Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary's Second Annual Cornhole Tournament a Success

Mid-Bay Bridge Rotary held its Second Annual Charity Cornhole Tournament Saturday, July 16, at 3rd Planet Brewing, with net proceeds topping

More than 30 teams signed up, but the first date was rained out, so a few teams were not able to make the new day. Most teams who could not attend generously donated their entry fee back to Rotary. Funds from entry fees, sponsors, raffles and silent auction will raise nearly \$2,000.

A special "side game" called Air Mail kept players and spectators entertained between matches while raising additional funds for the club. The double-elimination partner tournament lasted more than 4 hours.

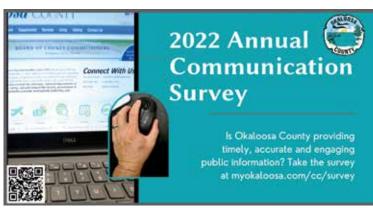
Winners were Melissa Hoke and Shelly Butler, first; Sam Spangle and Eric Vanheteren, second; and Lauren Perren and Noah Riley, third. The final four matches were moved to a center stage court so that all could enjoyed the outstanding shot making by the players.

Mid-Bay Rotarians and their Rotary Partners all pitched in with the multiple jobs needed to put on this successful tournament. These included set up and tear down, registration, tournament administration, observers, scoring, announcer, raffle sales, silent auctions and selling non-alcoholic drinks. Prizes sponsored by 3rd Planet Brewing, totaling \$300 in gift cards,



were awarded for first, second and third place. Mid-Bay thanks Heather Julseth, 3rd Planet events manager, for her help. Net profits will be earmarked for local and international charities.







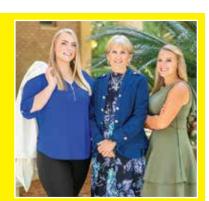
# Welcome Our Children Back to School! DRIVE CAREFULLY

From the Cathy Alley Team: Corin, Cathy & Tiffany C: 850.585.2303 | eracj@cox.net



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**Community** 



## Mold and What to Do About It



By Mark Wichern

Publisher's Note: Mark Wichern,

the owner of Veritas Restoration, is also the owner of Restoration Coach, the Parent company of Veritas Restoration. He's an expert in mold.

His background is vast. He's been an Instructor for the IICRC since 2004 and has taught thousands of students throughout the U.S., including many Insurance Adjusters, Attorneys, consultants, property managers, maintenance crews and builders. He also taught and worked at the Hydro Lab in Noblesville, Indiana, taking it upon himself to learn from the best of the best. Mark has seized every oppor-



tunity to learn about the restoration industry and all drying aspects of the business, from commercial large loss, emergency planning, hurricane preparedness, high heat drying, etc. He's worked with top industry professionals in every arena of the restoration field at the Hydro Lab, including being present for lab testing of the Dr. Michael Berry Study with the EPA to discover how long it takes for mold to grow on different materials. You might say he is one of the Pioneers of the industry.

**So, what is mold?** Mold is a microscopic fungi that plays a major role in causing decomposition of organic material, enabling the recycling of nutrients throughout the ecosystem. A question I hear a lot is 'how big is a mold spore'? A mold spore is 2-10 Microns in size.

Mold can become present, when water enters our home or business from many sources, including a leaking roof, ground water through the foundation, condensation, plumbing and appliance leaks, cooking and cleaning. Molds are ubiquitous in nature, and mold spores are a common component of household and workplace dust.

The question is, "Should I be concerned?" When mold spores are present in large quantities, they can present a health hazard to humans, potentially causing allergic reactions and respiratory problems.

Research on the health effects of mold has not been conclusive. The term "toxic mold" refers to molds that produce mycotoxins, such as Stachybotrys and Chartarum and not to all molds in general. Some studies claim that exposure to high levels of mycotoxins can lead to neurological problems. Prolonged exposure, e.g., daily workplace exposure, may be particularly harmful.

Why do some molds have mycotoxins? Mycotoxins are mold's defense against other molds and bacteria. The real concerns with toxic molds can be opportunistic pathogens that look for a compromised immune system, such as a person over age 65, under age 2, recent surgery or an infection.

# What should I do if I discover mold and how do I get rid of it?

Disinfectants: Can I just put bleach on it? Unfortunately, bleach is a hyper chlorite which is inactivated by organic matter, i.e. mold. Does killing a mold spore make them safe? No, actually killing a mold spore may release the mycotoxins which may pass directly through HEPA Filtration (High Efficient Particulate Air Filter). Dead mold spores are still allergenic. Unfortunately, mold spores must be completely removed from

the built environment. If not removed, mold spores go dormant until excessive moisture is reintroduced, and they begin growing again.

How does a disinfectant work? Think of a mold spore as a balloon. If the spore is toxigenic, the mycotoxin is stored inside the spore or in this case the balloon. The mycotoxin is the spore's natural defense system and is released when it is attacked. The spore's outer membrane is ruptured by the disinfectant (bleach) and this allows the mycotoxin to be released into the air. Even when mycotoxins are not present, this rupturing makes them smaller and easier to breathe deeper into our lungs.

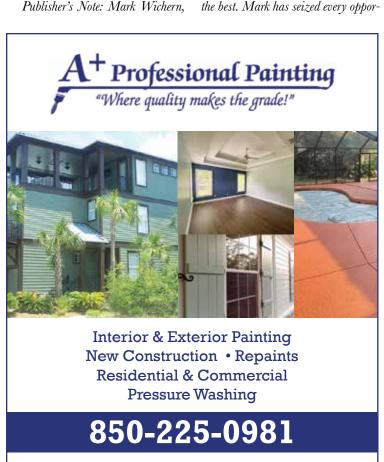
Is killing a mold spore really what we want to do? Thankfully, there is another alternative. Remove the mold spores through proper disposal, cleaning and filtration and then correct the moisture problem!

What are the factors needed for excessive mold growth? An organic food source, moisture, stagnant air, an acceptable temperature range, IE.68-86 deg. F. for most mold growth and the big one TIME!

What is an ORGANIC FOOD SOURCE? Building Materials such as Drywall Paper –Trees, 2 x 4 Studs – Trees, Boxes – Trees, Natural Carpet Fibers – Wool, Bathroom Tile – Bacteria, Dead Skin, and Adhesives –Animal Glue (OSB Subfloors).

**So, how can we prevent excessive mold growth?** It's Simple... Eliminate the factors for growth, respond quickly to water losses and stop the water intrusion.

- Dry wet materials as fast as possible, using higher temperatures with special Low Vapor Pressure Dehumidification.
- Evaluate psychrometric conditions, moisture map and document progress until all wet materials have been dried back to their normal equilibrium moisture content.
- Call Veritas Restoration for a Moisture Inspection – 850-835-5677. Call Restoration Coach for Mold Testing – 800-560-7903.



Serving Niceville, Fort Walton Beach,

Destin and Santa Rosa Beach







## Stan Hall Makes Car Buying Fun!

Usually, the car buying experience is ranked right up there with getting a tooth pulled; necessary, but filled with trepidation and anxiety. Stan Hall, however, takes pride in emphasizing two qualities every time a customer walks in or contacts the dealership looking for a car. "First, is the Golden Rule - treat people the way you want to be treated, and second, make car buying fun," he said. And he is serious! After nearly 54 years in the car business, Stan knows the ins and outs of the business pretty well, and what becomes evident fairly quickly; he's more interested in a customer's happiness than he is in making a sale.

Stan is a Christ-centered man who will go out of his way to anticipate and fulfill his customer's needs. "To me, the Golden Rule in the car business is to concentrate on the customer's needs and God will take care of the rest," he said.

Emerald Coast Motor Cars operates as a car buying "concierge" service. Customers specify the kind of car they want, then Stan and his team track it down and bring it right to their doorstep. "No haggling, no deception, just great service and honest pricing.'

A quick look on the ECMotorcars.com website and the testimonies and reviews are glowing. There are pages of positive testimonies confirming the success of Stan's concierge business model.

A key component to the overall success and growth of ECMC is the addition of Devon Kiss, a young, 36 year-old from Tennessee who is quickly adapting to the car business, and he especially enjoys the Stan Hall concierge model. "Devon displays the same qualities of an honest car man in this new generation," Stan says. "And his background as a computer programmer and website designer helps the company locate the best car for our customers by searching and negotiating coast to coast. Devon is learning the car business faster than anyone I have ever known."

Stan and his wife, Bunny, moved to the Destin Area from Georgia 25 years ago. And, while Stan takes pride in his business accomplishments, surviving cancer ranks even higher. In 2012, Stan beat throat can-



cer and is now nine years free of that terrible disease. The experience left him with a renewed faith in the Lord who greatly helped his healing process.

Stan and his team try to be very active in their community. A few of the organizations they support are: Sinfonia Gulf Coast, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation, Destin United Methodist Church and the Destin Chamber of Commerce.

Stan is also extremely proud of Bunny, "the most important and inspiring person in my life." Bunny has 35 years of experience as an interior designer, and recently opened her own business, "The Perfect Plan Destin, LLC." You can reach Bunny at 850-830-3995 or bunny@perfectplandestin.com.

So, the next time you're in the market for a new car, give Stan Hall a call. I think you'll be refreshingly surprised.



### Car of the Month:

### 2019 Mercedes-Benz E350 Cabriolet

PRICE: \$69,900 PLUS

Just arrived! Beautiful Mercedes-Benz E350 Cabriolet in black with cashmere leather interior, clean CarFax, non-smoker, pristine condition, only 14K miles for only \$69,900 plus.

Call Stan Hall 850 830 3083 or Devon Kiss 901 275 1487 to purchase this vehicle today, or visit us online at ecmotorcars.com for our full inventory.



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**ECMotorcars.com** 



Superintendent Marcus Chambers

Statewide assessment scores were released recently for Florida's public-school students in English Language Arts (ELA)

# From the Okaloosa County Superintendent Okaloosa is an A+ District Once Again

Grades 4-10, Mathematics Grades 3-8, Science Grades 5 and 8, and End-of-Course exams in Algebra, Geometry, Biology, U.S. History and middle school Civics.

School and district grades were released by the Florida Department of Education. Statewide assessment results are a major component in the calculation of school grades. Middle and high schools also have an academic acceleration component for students who are successful in advanced classes or who earn industry certifications. High schools have a graduation rate component as well.

Okaloosa received an overall grade of A, one of 14 districts in the state to earn the highest rating. Superintendent Marcus Chambers was pleased with the results overall, considering the challenges experienced over the

last two years. "Okaloosa joins St. Johns and Sarasota as the only three counties in the state to earn an A rating every year since the baseline year for the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) in 2014-2015. That's something of which we can all be very proud!"

Individual school grade results are as follows:

- 17 schools maintained their grade from the last time it was reported for the 2018-2019 school year
- 11 schools fell one letter grade from either A to B or B to C
- ullet 5 schools fell two letter grades from A to C
- 3 schools, Fort Walton Beach High School, Choctawhatchee High School, and Crestview High School, received an "I" for incomplete. District staff are working with the Department of Education to resolve that issue.

• No schools received a D or F Chambers noted that the last two years have been unprecedented in public education. "We felt that coming through the last two years of COVID could definitely have an impact on student performance and school grades, particularly in the elementary level where 3rd grade students have only known going to school in an abnormal environment. Four of the five schools that fell two letter grades were elementary schools. We are excited to see how quickly these schools rebound to their former performance levels."

While it is expected that high ranking districts such as Okaloosa outperform state averages, which it did in every tested category released, Superintendent Chambers highlighted a few areas in which he was particularly proud of student performance. "We continue to do very well in Algebra I with 65% of our students proficient compared to the state average of 54% and in Geometry with 65% proficient compared to the state average of 50%. In middle school Civics, 74% of students were proficient compared to the state average of 69%, and in US History, 73% were proficient compared to the state average of 65%. US History and Civics are a very important part of our curriculum, and we want to continue to excel in this area."

Secondary science was also a strongpoint with Grade 8 sci-

ence results showing 60% of students proficient compared to the state average of 45%. In Biology, which is tested in Grade 9, 69% of students were proficient compared to the state average of 61%.

Grade 7 and 8 Mathematics results showed 62% and 54% of students proficient, compared to state averages of 46% and 42%, respectively.

"While celebrating the success achieved by our students as a whole, we will re-focus efforts in certain areas such as early elementary ELA and in schools where we did not see the results we anticipated." The district earlier reported that Grade 3 proficiency had dropped from 63% to 58%. Grade 4 ELA had a 58% proficiency rate, one point above the state average of 57%.

Those efforts began with an expanded Summer Intensive Studies program this year that served not only retained elementary students who were working to earn promotion to the next grade level but also any student having academic need. At the middle and high school levels, students used the summer program to retake coursework that was not passed during the year and completed 2,345 semester courses in total which helped keep them on track for graduation.

This is the last year that the FSA will be given. New legislation authorizes the replacement of the year-end FSA with the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), a progress monitoring approach that will provide teachers and parents with statewide assessment information throughout the school year rather than only during the summer.

The 2022-23 school year will begin for students on Wednesday, August 10. Parents enrolling their students and are NEW (K-12) to the Okaloosa County School District should enroll by creating an account in the FOCUS Parent Portal at https://okaloosa.focusschoolsoftware.com/focus/auth/.

For questions, visit www.okaloosaschools.com/focus. You can also email FOCUSHELP@ okaloosaschools.com or call the enrolling school with your questions. School contact numbers can be found at www.okaloosaschools.com in the Schools link.



NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS Rocky Bayou Christian School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.





# Walton County School District Increases Student Achievement, Now Ranks 3rd in the State



Superintendent A. Russell Hughes

The Florida Department of Education has released results from all state testing for the 2021-2022 school year. These results are based on Florida Standards Assessments (FSA), Florida Comprehensive Assessment Tests (FCAT), and End of Course exams (EOC). FSA tests are the subjects of English/Language Arts (grades 3-10) and Math (grades 3-8). FCAT tests are the subjects of Science

(grade 5 and 8), and EOC tests are in the subjects of Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, Civics, and U.S. History.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Walton County ranked 6th of 67 Florida counties in overall proficiency levels on state tests. With test results released, Walton County now ranks 3rd of 67 counties in overall proficiency levels for the 2021-2022 school year. The only two counties scoring higher than Walton are St. Johns and Nassau, which are located on the east coast of Florida.

In an unprecedented year, Walton scored in the top 10 in 20 of the 21 tested items. The results are as follows:

- 10th in 3rd and 6th grade ELA
- 9th in Civics and 7th and 8th grade ELA
  - 8th in 8th grade Science
  - 7th in 3rd grade Math and

5th grade Science

- 6th in 5th grade ELA and 4th, 5th, 6th, and 8th grade Math
- 5th in 4th and 9th grade ELA
- 3rd in Geometry, US History, and 10th grade ELA
- 2nd in Algebra I and Biology

The one component below the top 10 in ranking was 7th grade Math, however in that specific area, Walton showed the greatest improvement from a 24th ranking in 2020-2021 to a 14th ranking in 2021-2022.

Walton County Schools scored above the state average in all areas of testing. The state average in ELA is 52% proficient; Walton is 60%, 8% higher. The state average in Math is 55%, with Algebra I and Geometry at 49%. Walton is at 64% proficient in Math, 9% higher; 73% in Algebra I, 24% higher; and 69% in

Geometry, 20% higher. The state average in 5th and 8th grade Science is 48%; Walton is 58% (10% higher) in 5th grade and 57% (9% higher) in 8th grade. In Biology, the state average is 61%; Walton is 78%, 17% higher. In Civics, the state average is 69%; Walton is 76%, 7% higher. In US History, the state average is 65%; Walton is 78%, 13% higher.

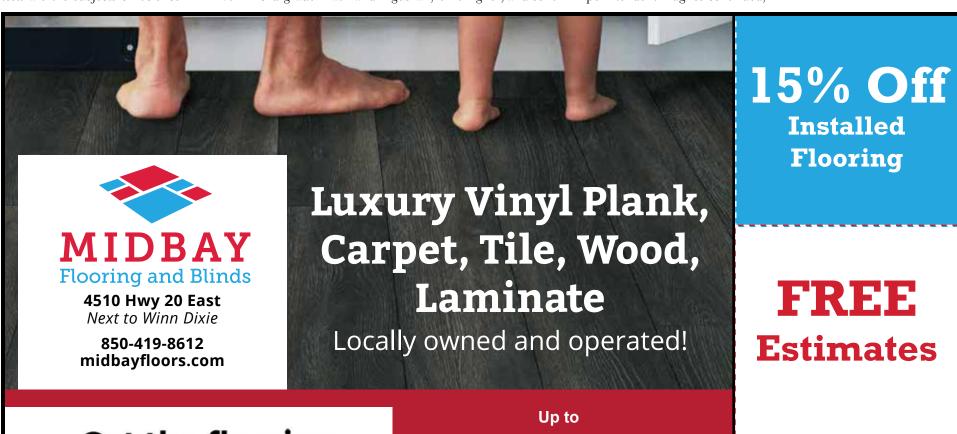
Superintendent A. Russell Hughes was left speechless by the test results. With his voice full of emotion, he finally states, "We have a vision to be #1 - tobe the best school district in the state of Florida, and I'm sure some thought we were crazy or would never get to that goal. But every year, we continue moving forward. It really is awe inspiring! I am amazed over and over again by our faculty and staff and their love of students and the value they have for education." Superintendent Hughes continued,

"But, in that same voice, let me also say this — results don't just happen by chance! In Walton County, we are intentional, we are purposeful, and we never give up — not on students, not on ourselves, and not on our goals — no matter the circumstances. We are EPIC, and we are moving 4wRd; I am overjoyed!"

Walton County School District will enter state test scores into their district data system, FOCUS. Once that is complete, parents will be able to see student scores by logging into their child's FOCUS account. Schools will be receiving the scores as well, as well as school grades in the coming months.

For more information on the Walton County School District, please visit https://www.walton.k12.fl.us.





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# Local Diving, Drinks and Coffee



#### **Austons on 98**

Offering a raw bar, happy hour and live music, Austons is home of the 102-foot bar including 32 beers on draft. Some of the specialties include little neck clams, freshly shucked raw oysters, New England-style clam chowder and jumbo shrimp cocktail. With big screen TVs all around, there's no bad seat in the house. Enjoy Specials, including \$5 pints, \$16 buckets and more. Auston's on 98, of Nashville roots, open seven days from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., also features its own "Real Deal Nashville Hot Sauce!" And don't miss the endless Mimosa and Bloody Mary Brunch featuring amazing chicken and waffles every Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m.-3 p.m., with live music every Wednesday and Friday night. See full menu at austonson98.com.

(850) 842-3200 125 Poinciana Blvd., Miramar Beach Austonson 98. com



#### **Brozinni Pizzeria**

Brozinni Pizzeria is a family-friendly pizza place where you can get a taste of New York right here in Niceville. Now featuring the Big Apple's signa- ture crust, their famous buttery garlic knuckles will leave you wanting more, and, wow, appetizers such bread sticks, homemade stuffed pep- peroni or sausage sticks, cheese bread, meatball sticks, pizza, Cocoons Famous smoked tuna dip, and crackers/pita chips. There's also salads, build your own pizza, specialty pizzas, pas- ta/ spaghetti, calzones, drinks and desserts. Every ingredient used has been hand-selected to provide an amazing experience for each recipe. Whether you're just in for a slice of New York style pizza or one of their incredible salads, you're in for a treat. Call to order or order Online at bronzinnis.revelup.online have delivered!

Open Mon. – Sat., 11am – 9pm Dine-In – Pickup – Delivery 850-678-7778 144 Palm Blvd. N., Niceville



#### **Chapala Mexican Restaurant**

Back in 2014 Chapala Authentic Restaurant and Grill opened its doors with the vision of bringing authentic Mexican cuisine to the people of Fort Walton Beach and surrounding areas with traditional flavors from Chapala, Mexico. In a world where promises are often made but seldom delivered, Chapala wants to be the exception! The food and service are equally as important to achieve this dining experience that is why they offer over 76 entrée choices and 11 specialty margaritas'. Along with daily lunch specials and 2 for 1 small draft beers and small margarita's every day! Every one of the Chapala staff is committed to our shared vision. Whether it's a quick business lunch, a quiet dinner for two, or a fiesta for the family, we are ready to make it special.

1027 E John Sims Pkwy. Niceville (850) 460-7945 chapalafl.com



## 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 Arcade 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, 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 your-self!

703 John Sims Pkwy E Niceville honeybeeicecreamandarcade.com (619) 565-0365

## JoJo's Coffee and Goodness

Owner and operator Angela "JoJo" Stevenson invites you to enter a cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere for a daily dose of "goodness." Feel free to work on site (free WiFi) or meet up with friends or family. Stop in for cinnamon rolls; scones: cranberry orange, chocolate caramel and cheddar thyme; strawberry coffee cake; cranberry orange muffins; red velvet cookies; brownies with espresso ganache or caramelitas! Try a Breakfast Special with a piece of quiche or kolache-hashbrown

Continued on next page





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# Local Diving, Prinks and Coffee

#### **LOCAL DINING**

continued from previous page

casserole. Breakfast burritos are rolled and ready daily! Choose from andouille, bacon, chorizo or veggie. Or tantalize your taste buds with a made-to-order breakfast sandwich on croissants or bagel with two eggs and cheese and then choose if you want to add Jojo's homemade smoked jalapeño beef bologna, bacon, house smoked barbecue or ham! Cinnamon rolls and kaloches still hold the top spot for sell outs! Stop in for featured muffins, coffee cake or pound cake, which go great with maple cinnamon latte or caramel macchiato!

Summertime means Jojo's most popular coffees are COLD! Nitro, Cold Brew, fruit smoothies and frozen affogatos are the WAY TO GO! Of course, there's always freshly Roasted Coffee and GREAT DOSES OF GOODNESS! Order ahead and pick up some for the office, a gathering or your next meeting! Book online at bigorangehousedesigns.com.

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

## LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant

Welcome to LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant located at the spectacular Bluewater Bay Marina Complex. The restaurant is named after "LJ Schooner" (the LJ is for Lazy Jack) who was a cherished four-legged icon on Bluewater Bay Marina docks. The open air Oyster Bar and restaurant is open to serve you! Almost all seats offer a magnificent view of the water, marina and unparalleled sunset with, of course, oysters and a delicious varied menu with din-

ner specials such as Blackened Mahi and grilled shrimp with hollandaise, served over cheese grits! Join L.J. Schooners for Sunday Brunch, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. and drink your bottomless Mimosas for \$10! Adults \$13.95; Children 7-12 \$4.50; Children under age 6 free.

Join us for our spectacular Sunset Shrimp Boil, last Sunday of the month, NOW through October and enjoy the most delicious local wild caught shrimp you've ever tasted. It includes Shrimp, Sausage, Corn on the Cob, Potatoes and Bread (Market Price). Call Ahead for To Go Orders. Don't miss all the fun in June: Wednesday Sailboat races at 6 p.m.; Thursday Karaoke/Open Mic 6-10 p.m.; Thursday Throwdown SUP Races 6 p.m. Live music all month long. (See ad for dates and times.)

Call to order take-out and pick-up in the L.J. Schooners Oyster Bar or call when you ar-

rive for curbside pick-up. Dinein, pick-up, to-go.

Oyster Bar hours: Mon-Thurs. 3pm-10pm, Fri.-Sat. 11am to Midnight, Sun. 9am-9pm. Happy Hour Daily 3pm -6pm. Restaurant hours: Mon.-Tues, Closed. Wed.-Sat. 11am-9pm. Sun. 9am-9pm. Sunday Brunch: 9am-1pm.

(850) 897-6400

bluewaterbaymarina.com/schooners 290 Yacht Club Dr., Unit 200, Niceville in Bluewater Bay

## HERO

continued from page 13

graduate from the program. That money can then be used to make them independent of their past by allowing them to rent a place to call their home and start their careers.

In the near term, the freedom house will exist out of the small building already on the campus. The goal of a fundraiser coming up at the end July is to provide funding to build micro homes for the women so that they can have privacy and independence while they transition into their new lifestyle.

The initial facility should be up and running by October. The tiny home's component depends on funding. But, Stephanie and the Freedom Life Compass organization hope to have that portion up and ready to help people by June of 2023.

If you are looking to escape addiction to drugs or alcohol in Niceville, Valparaiso, Eglin Air Force Base or anywhere else in Okaloosa County, you can contact Freedom Life Compass at www.freedomlifecompass.org. They provide help at every step of the process – from getting clean to empowering people to stay sober.

Christopher Saul is the founder of Mid Bay News online. You can sign up for the newsletter at midbaynews. com.

## **Summer Soiree' Benefiting the Freedom House**

Friday, July 29th at 6:30 p.m. at Bayou Oaks, the historic Spence family home in Niceville, 935 John Sims Pkwy W.

Silent auction, handcrafted hors-d'oeuvres and deserts, mocktails, live music and more!

RSVP is required (limited seats available).

Visit www.freedomlifecompass.org/events.html.





### MOff the Hook

#### **BEAR IT**

continued from page 6

So, it's wise to avoid that kind of interaction by keeping your dog close on a non-retractable leash. But, their relationship with cats is more complicated: there are many documented cases of cats treeing black bears. (Do a search for "cats chasing bear videos" if you want to see this for yourself.) Still, if you leave food out for local cats, it's better to pull that every evening to avoid appetizing smells bringing in bears and other wildlife for their midnight

Wondering about the age of your local bear? Telesco ex-

plains that it's possible to get a good gauge on a bear's age by checking its ear size in relation to its body - a bear's ear size doesn't change after it's a year old, so younger bears tend to have more "Mickey-mouse" ears, as well as lankier, puppy-like limbs. When a female gets ready to breed every other year, she kicks any male offspring out as an incoming adult male will kill the younger males; female cubs aren't seen as the same kind of threat, so they tend to set up a home range near their mothers. This means that in any given autumn, there may be a higher percentage of juvenile males trying to get their "bearings." You might never spot one, but dumped bird feeders, tipped trash cans (and claw marks down the front of your can) are fairly good indicators that there's a bear presence in your neighborhood.

Bears will return to a spot if they've found it to be a good food source in the past, so to avoid repeat visits, there are some things to try. For one, a bird feeder needs to be suspended at least 10 feet up, between two trees (far enough away from the trunks that the bear can't reach it by climbing). Trash is usually the biggest concern however, and though there are plenty of bear-proofing tips out there, they're not a one-size fits all solution. Many local trash companies will allow customers to retrofit their trash receptacles with latches, clamps, or other tie-downs (but have to be left unlatched on pick-up day). You can find directions for these at the websites listed below.

Others advise freezing leftover food and tossing it last minute, or doing double-duty with the garbage disposal rather than throwing it away (much to the dismay of plumbers everywhere). Keeping trash in a garage or secure shed is another option until the morning or pick up instead of the night before so bears don't treat your yard as the best drive-through around. Some even recommend putting ammonia in the trash, although Telesco notes that this might work for some bears but not others. "We had a father and son peeing every night on their garbage can - I'm not going to recommend that," he said.

For more information on fostering healthy human-bear relations, visit bearwise.org, a website used by all 15 states in the Southeast, and MyFWC. com/Bear. Black bear sightings can be reported to the Fish and Wildlife Commission online by visiting https://app.myfwc. com/fwri/blackbear/ or by phone at (888) 404-3922.

## Be BearWise: Follow FWC's Bear Necessities This Fall

means Florida black bears are traveling and searching for food. The Florida Fish and Wildlife

Fall is approaching and that Conservation Commission reminds you to help protect both people and bears by securing garbage and other items that could attract these animals to your yard or neighborhood.

Each fall, bears begin eating a lot more calories to pack on fat they will need during the winter. Throughout the fall, bears require around 20,000 calories per day and will eat anything that's convenient, including items in your garbage. Food scraps found in the garbage are convenient and provide a bear more calories in less time than foraging in the woods. Reduce conflicts with these animals by securing your trash and other food attractants, such as bird feeders and pet food.

To keep bears wild and away from your home, follow these Bear Wise tips:

- Secure household garbage in a sturdy shed, garage or a wildlife-resistant container.
- Put household garbage out on the morning of pickup rather than the night before.
- Secure commercial garbage in bear-resistant dumpsters.

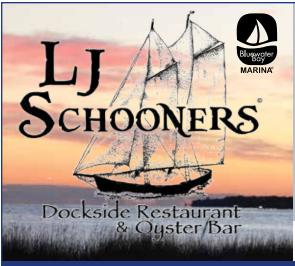
- Protect gardens, bee yards, compost and livestock with electric fencing.
- Encourage your homeowner's association or local government to institute ordinances to require trash be secured from bears.
- Feed pets indoors or bring the dishes in after feeding.
- · Be aware when walking your dog and use a non-retractable leash.
- Clean grills and store them in a secure place.
- Pick ripe fruit from trees and remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Remove wildlife and bird feeders or make them bear-resistant.

See how-to videos and information on securing attractants in the "Brochures and Videos" section at MyFWC.com/Bear.

It is illegal in Florida to intentionally feed bears or to leave out food or garbage that will attract bears and cause human-bear conflicts. If you see or suspect that someone is feeding or attracting bears, please call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at (888) 404-3922.

You can also help people and bears stay safe by remembering to watch for bears while driving. This time of year, bears are traveling across more roads in search of food, which results in more vehicle-bear collisions. The FWC advises drivers to be aware of their surroundings as they drive in bear country, especially around dusk and dawn, and when there is forest on both sides of the road. If you see a bear crossing sign, pay particular attention as this area has had frequent vehicle-bear collisions. To learn more about how to keep people and bears safe on Florida roadways, see the "Vehicle Collisions with Bears" video at the "Brochures and Videos' section of MyFWC.com/Bear.







### **Kids Eat FREE**

Thursdays 5pm to 9pm

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## **Open Mic & Karaoke Night**

**Every Thursday Starting at 6pm** All are welcome!



### **Events and Live Entertainment:**

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August 6 • Purple Monkey 6-10pm

August 12 • Ronny Dean Garrett 6-10pm

August 13 · Hi Tide 6-10pm

August 19 · Jody Lucas 6-9pm

August 20 • Dancing Bears 6-10pm

August 27 • John Galt Dance Band 6-10pm

August 28 • Gilleran's Island 4-8pm

August 28 • Sunset Shrimp Boil 4-7pm

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



# Off the Hook:

## A Work of Art Takes First Place at EC Blue Marlin Classic

By Cali Hvalac, To Do In Destin

The Emerald Coast Blue Marlin Classic at Sandestin (ECBC) is a multi-day event that happens at Baytowne Marina at Sandestin during the peak of blue marlin season. The 20th annual tournament June 22-26 welcomed 84 boats with a total of \$1,987,100 in cash awards.

If you've never been to the Baytowne Marina at Sandestin for the blue marlin weigh-ins, put this on your list for next year. Watching these charter boats roll in with monster fish being wheeled to the weigh station is a sight like nothing else. The all-time record marlin weighed in at 1,402 pounds, although most caught will average in the 500-800 lb. range.

This year's top three blue marlin winners were: Raise 'Em Up, weighing in a 513.30-pound blue marlin for third place; Benedetta, weighing in a 547.90-pound blue marlin for second place; and A Work of Art with a 638.70-pound first-place blue marlin.

Other categories include heaviest dolphin, heaviest tuna, heaviest wahoo, as well as top angler, top release angler, top lady angler and top junior angler. There is also a release division for those boats that release the blue marlin back into the water.

Blue marlin have brilliant colors on their skin, with bright cobalt blue on top and a white silver belly. They are a beautiful fish that primarily stays offshore, but will move closer to shore from July to September.

Once caught, it's common at ECBC to paint the fish and take an imprint of it on canvas, to be painted in full as a memory of the catch. ECBC welcomes children to paint the fish, a unique experience for kids of all ages.

Also available during the





event is a golf scramble, sponsor booths and a fireworks show. Guests also have access to all recreational activities at the Village of Baytowne Wharf.

Mark your calendars for the third weekend in June 2023 to be at the Baytowne Marina at Sandestin to experience the weigh-ins.

\*\*Information sourced from www. fishecbc.com





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## Fishing Techniques: Give Kayaking a Try - Part 1

Kayaking has become one of the fastest-growing industries in the sporting world. These craft are versatile, economical, and just plain fun. In addition to providing a sport in and of itself, the kayak can be an incredible tool for better angling. Check the tips below if you have been thinking of taking the plunge.

#### Cost

There's never been a better time to buy. Kayaks have become very popular in recent years, meaning that more manufacturers are making them and prices for an entry-level kayak are even lower than they used to be. Standard kayak models start at a low of about \$250, but you'll want to spend more for a fishing kayak that comes complete with rod holders and other angling amenities – expect to pay from \$300 to more than \$1,000, depending on features. You'll also be buying a double-bladed kayak paddle, which will run you \$50-100 or more. Most kayaks don't include a padded seat, and you'll probably want one; add another \$50-75. Yes, the tab is adding up pretty quickly, but for an entry-level rig you're still well under what the cheapest jon boat and trolling motor will cost you. Smaller accessories, such as a light anchor and – of course! – a life vest, you may already own

A kayak is a very personal purchase, and you should buy from a vendor that will allow an exchange if you don't like the way the craft fits you or how it performs in the water. Some kayak shops are near water and will let you try before you buy. Keep in mind that you'll need a way to transport your kayak, if you can't just throw your new purchase in the pickup and head for the lake. A good roof rack setup or trailer may cost



you more than your kayak, but a kayak is still one of the most economical boating options out

#### Sit-on-top versus sit-inside

There are two basic kayak types. A sit-on-top kayak is a sealed hollow shell with molded seating on top to accommodate the paddler. It's easy to get in or out of, a major plus if you plan to kayak-and-wade. The kayaker sits above the waterline, which increases visibility and casting distance, but leaves the kayaker exposed to waves and splashing. Storage space is mostly open to the elements, but is easily accessible. However, there will probably also be one or two watertight hatches that allow dry storage inside the kayak shell. Note the size and location of the hatch openings, as these will

limit what you'll be able to fit inside and whether you'll be able to reach them from the kayak seat. Water that splashes into the kayak drains out through scupper holes, which can be plugged to prevent water ingress, if you'll be on calm water.

A sit-inside kayak is self-descriptive: the paddler sits inside a cutout in the open hull. Add a waterproof apron, and the paddler is pretty well protected below the waist from waves and water. The angler is sitting at the waterline, and the lower center of gravity may provide a more stable ride but slightly limited visibility and casting distance. The open hull provides plenty of fairly dry inside storage in front of and behind the kayaker. However, this internal storage is not as easily accessible, and entering and exiting the kayak is not nearly as easy. Generally, the sit-inside design is a good choice for river or ocean kayaking. However, most stillwater anglers prefer the inand-out convenience offered by the sit-on-top design.

#### **Fishing Kayaks**

The simplest thing that defines a "fishing kayak" is the presence of rod holders. A fishing kayak will also usually be wider than standard kayaks - around 30 inches or so - and therefore more stable. It may have extra storage features, like molded in tackle trays or even a baitwell. Note that you can add after-market rod holders to most kayaks, but you're better off starting with a fishing kayak, mainly for the added stability. A wider kayak won't cut through the water as quickly as a standard model, but you'll be able to cast, set the hook and land frisky fish without feeling like you're about to take a spill at any moment.

#### **Length & Weight**

Length is important. A longer kayak will travel faster and more efficiently (and have more storage space), but weigh more to load and carry - especially important if you're car-topping or portaging. Twelve to 13 feet





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Off the Hook

## Nation's First Underwater Museum Of Art Expands

Nine new sculptures and a Super Reef Anchor Point were added recently to the nation's first permanent Underwater Museum of Art (UMA) in the Gulf, off the coast of Grayton Beach State Park in South Walton.

Named by Time Magazine as one of 100 "World's Greatest Places," the UMA is the first presentation of the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA)'s Art In Public Spaces Program and is produced in collaboration with the South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA). The purpose of the UMA is to create art that becomes marine habitat, expanding fishery populations and providing enhanced creative, cultural, economic and educational opportunities for the benefit, education and enjoyment of residents, students and visitors in South Walton.

The 2022 installation includes the following pieces of sculpture: Currents and Tafoni by Joe Adams (Ventura, CA), Pirate Shipwreck by Sean Coffey (Pittsburgh, PA), Bloom Baby Bloom by Brit Deslonde (Santa Rosa Beach), The Seed and The Sea by Davide Galbiati (Valreas, France), Fibonacci Conchousness by Anthony Heinz May (Eugene, OR), New Homes by Janetta Napp (Honolulu, HI), Arc of Nexus by Tina Piracci (Richmond, CA), We All Live Here by Marisol Rendón (San

**KAYAKING** 

continued from previous page

is a popular range for saltwater anglers, and will provide a roomy and stable freshwater fishing platform too. However, if portability is important, look hard at kayaks 10 feet or less in length. My 10-footer is a lightweight at exactly 50 pounds, but I'd still swear it's half full of water when I hoist it back onto my roof racks at the end of the day. The weight is much easier to handle if you're securing your craft to something below shoulder level, like a pickup bed or trailer. A kayak cart can also be a big help moving your boat from car to water (more on that later). Long story short, consider weight a critical factor based on how you're transporting your kayak.

Diego, CA), and Common Chord by Vince Tatum (Santa Rosa Beach).

More than 60 onlookers, including several of the artists and project partners, were on site June 21 to view the historic deployment.

With support from Visit South Walton, Walter Marine/ The Reefmaker, and the Florida Department of State; Division of Arts and Culture, the sculptures were deployed with SWARA's existing USACOA and FDEP permitted artificial reef project that includes nine nearshore reefs located within one nautical mile of the shore in 58 feet of water. This installation joins the 25 sculptures previously deployed on a oneacre permit patch of seabed off Grayton Beach State Park, expanding the nation's first permanent underwater museum to a total of 34 sculptures. The UMA patch will continue to be filled with several new sculptures annually.

Individual sculptures are sponsored by Beachy Blooms, Buddy's Seafood Market, the 2021-22 CAA Staff, the Ellis Family, Hilton Sandestin Golf Beach Resort & Spa, the St. Joe Community Foundation, SWARA, and Walter Marine/Reefmaker.



PHOTO CREDIT: SPRING RUN MEDIA

"The CAA is grateful for the dedication of the artists, fabricators, deployment team and partners," said CAA Executive Director Jennifer Steele. "We could not be prouder to work alongside project co-founders Allison Wickey and SWARA to

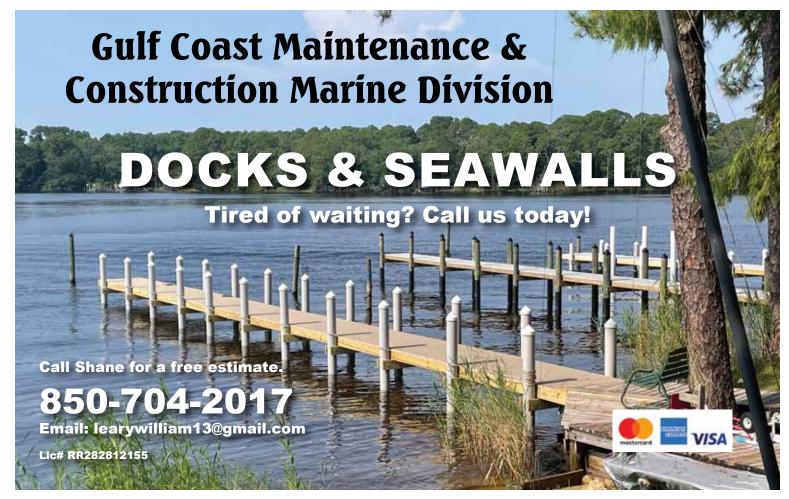
build this unique environment for creativity and education."

"With 34 total sculptures now, you can really start to see and feel the vision and future of the Underwater Museum of Art – 58 feet down, you are literally surrounded by these fan-

tastic art pieces and the colorful reef life that calls the museum home," said SWARA President Walt Hartley. "More sculptures will be added each year, growing the dive site and providing valuable new habitat to our precious marine life. We owe the continued success of the UMA project to the amazing support from our community and our sponsors, the creativity, expertise, and professionalism of the Reefmaker Crew / WalterMarine, and the hard work of our most favorite partners in the whole world - the CAA Team!"

Admission to the UMA is free, however, the site is only accessible in person as a dive location. Divers who wish to visit the site can take a dive boat .93 miles off the coast of Grayton Beach State Park. The coordinates for the new Super Reef UMA entrance are N 30°18.754/W 86°09.521. Out of respect for the art, boaters are asked to anchor on or near the Super Reef Anchor Point to protect the sculptures from unintended contact or damage.

Visit UMAFL.org for more information. Artists interested in submitting artwork for consideration to the 2023 UMA installation can visit UMAFL.org to complete a pre-application.





## Asher's Hope is Leaving a Legacy

By Lori Leath Smith

In 2018, Kristyn Szala's youngest son, Asher, was given a life-limiting diagnosis. Kristyn was only halfway through her pregnancy. "We were told that he would either pass away before birth or shortly thereafter," she said. "You imagine you're going to have a lifetime with your child and to have that taken away is absolutely crushing."

Once Kristyn, a Niceville local, reoriented her thoughts and let a few close friends and family know, they initiated a fundraiser to purchase a CuddleCot for the family. A CuddleCot is a small cooling unit fitted inside a bassinet. In situations like these, there is a short window of time for a family to create memories, say hello and goodbye to their child. Cooling the baby is absolutely essential. The CuddleCot cools to an ideal temperature for

preserving the baby without being too cold for the parents.

This marvel of technology allows families the choice to spend more time with their baby. "A CuddleCot allows grieving parents to bond with their babies and make memories that they wouldn't otherwise have been able to do – an essential step to the grieving process for hurting parents," she said.

Asher was stillborn Aug. 3, 2018, at Ascension Sacred Heart Pensacola at 36 weeks. "During our stay in the hospital, we were blessed with two and half days with Asher when we would likely have only had a few hours," said Kristyn.

In reality, no amount of time is ever going to be enough. But their precious gift of time was extended because of the availability of their CuddleCot. Kristyn had the option to hold



her baby, to bathe him, to dress him in an outfit of her choosing and just "be" with him for those moments, which she truly needed. She says one of the most peaceful times was having him at her bedside at night.

After the emotional experience, Kristyn realized the importance of having that Cuddle-Cot. Before they left Ascension Sacred Heart in Pensacola, they

made a decision to donate Asher's CuddleCot to help future parents in need. "At the time, ours was the only CuddleCot in the area," said Kristyn. But, in May 2021, she was able to donate a second CuddleCot to Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Family Birth Place through additional community fundraising. "Since then, we have raised a third for Eglin Air

Force Base hospital, a fourth for HCA Destin Fort Walton Beach, and a fifth for North Okaloosa Medical Center in Crestview," she said. "I'm very proud of our community effort."

Kristyn is in the process of getting the sixth Cuddle Cot into the Nellis Air Force Base hospital in Las Vegas. "After that, we will have 50 percent of the Air Force hospitals with an L&D unit covered," she said. "My goal through this effort is to continue Asher's legacy by making sure our local hospitals are equipped with a CuddleCot; if parents are faced with the unimaginable, they can have the choice of more time. It really helps them in dealing with their loss and I feel like it's really an important tool and should be an option to all families.

According to Kristyn, each CuddleCot costs approximately \$2,800. She accepts donations through her Go Fund Me page and various community events. She is also in the planning stages of an Asher's Hope benefit concert involving the Principal Harpist with the Mobile Symphony Orchestra & Opera, Pensacola Symphony Orchestra & Opera, the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra and the Panama City Symphony Orchestra. Stay tuned.

While raising awareness about CuddleCots, fundraising and educating the public on pregnancy and infant loss, Kristyn says she created Asher's Hope to not only give families the gift of time and beautiful memories, but also to allow her son's legacy to live on. "It just fills my heart that Asher is helping people through this and that other people are inspired to do the same," she said.

To learn more about Asher's Hope visit facebook.com/ AshersHope. To donate, visit https://gofund.me/8693bf90.











By Lisa Leath Turpin, Health & Fitness Coach/Consultant

Happy to introduce the second in a series of tips to effectively and safely exercise various areas of the body (Check out June edition: "Core/Abs").

There is a lot going on in the lower body. That old song (hip bone's connected to the thigh bone...) is true; everything is connected and can affect the entire chain of movement. To stay healthy, you must look at balancing your muscle groups to avoid imbalance that leads to weakness and injuries. Importantly, acknowledge that some muscles are meant to be stronger due to their function, so weight load for your exercises should reflect that.

The lower body muscles work synergistically and only a couple can be isolated. The gluteals (butt), quadriceps (front thigh), hamstrings (back thigh), calves

## Do It Right! Hips & Thighs

(back lower leg), abductors (outer thigh) and adductors (inner thigh) all comprise the lower body.

A squat is a prime example where all the muscles are incorporated, and a very functional movement for everyday life. Squat safety - bend at the knees (knees must bend for proper ROM: Range-of-Motion), sit back on heels, lower butt down, chest and head up, drive your heels into the floor to push up to standing. The toes are for balance so, to protect the knees, use them lightly. Work on getting deeper to get stronger through the entire ROM.

To address knee issues, start light, assist your weight by holding on to something if you haven't been training. Track your knees in the direction your toes are pointed to keep them aligned. Butt is always way lower than your chest! Knees never move forward past the toes. Squats help you remain self-sufficient for getting yourself up and down.

Your knees will get stronger if you progress through consistency with ROM & safety. Babying them will make them weaker. Plus, bending and weight bearing the knees will produce syno-



vial fluid to lubricate the joint.

Variations — Basic squat, heels are shoulder width apart, toes and knees slightly turned out to 11 and 1 o'clock. Focus on gluteus maximus and quadriceps, some hamstrings. Wide squat, heels are outside of shoulder width, toes and knees are pointed roughly 10 and 2 o'clock (key, start your turnout at the hip joint so that thigh, knee, shin and toes are all pointed outwardly the same). Focus on gluteus medius, quadriceps, adductors, some abductors.

Close Stance squat, (i.e. back

squat), toes face forward, feet close together, sit back almost like you are going to fall back. In yoga, some go all the way to the floor (Malasana). Focus mainly on center quads and glutes.

Protecting our knees is very important because they are vulnerable in all lower body exercises. Imbalanced muscles, where a muscle is strong but the opposite muscle is weak, can be detrimental to any joint. For a balanced lower body workout, think of working around the whole circumference of the leg.

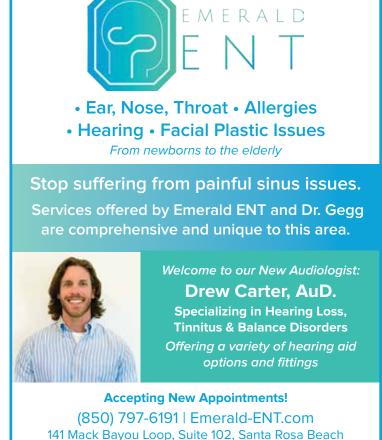
Quads and Hamstrings should be equally conditioned, which doesn't

mean they have to lift the same weight. Hamstrings perform more isolated movements. They can move independently of the rest of the lower body. Named the biceps femoris, it flexes the knee joint the same as the biceps in the arm. But quad exercises, such as the squat, are assisted by the glutes, making them a true powerhouse. But the key is to give them equal workout attention. Don't forget the leg extension. Also an isolated move targeting one of the quad muscles, done properly it will make a huge difference in knee stability and thigh shape. Abductors and Adductors are knee and hip stabilizers. Exercises that move the legs out or in (leg lifts or band work) are what you do to strengthen those. Throw in your calf raises on your bottom stair and you will be complete from hip to toe!!

Have questions? Email Lisa at BeActive850@gmail.com.

Lisa Leath Turpin is a degreed and certified health and fitness lifestyle coach and consultant who has devoted her life to motivating and strengthening the body and mind of others. With over 20 years' experience, Lisa has a B.S. degree in Sports & Fitness Management from the University of Alabama, developed and managed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Health & Wellness Facility and programs in Huntsville, Ala., is board certified by the National Board of Fitness Examiners and possesses certifications from AFAA, Polestar/Balanced Body, Reebok U, SCW Fitness and American Heart Association. She is currently a group exercise leader at Destin Health & Fitness and an independent personal trainer in the Destin area, diversely and extensively trained in classical and modern Pilates, lifestyle management, personal training, group exercise and post-rehabilitation. Have a fitness question for Lisa? Email BeActive850@gmail.com.







## Hormones Aren't For Me



By Dr. Richard Chern, MD

Have you or a friend tried hormone therapy in the past and had no results or minimal results? Worse are the patients who have tried hormone therapy and had bad results. It's not uncommon for us to hear this from patients who have tried hormone therapy with other providers in the past.

Fortunately, in medicine there is an enormous amount of training involved to become a provider. Unfortunately, once you are a provider, it can be easy to add treatments and procedures to your clinic with minimal or no training. I know some doctors who have learned how to do pellet therapy from watching videos on the internet. The same is true for Botox and fillers. Just because someone can perform a procedure does not always mean they are capable or should be performing that procedure.

Hormone pellet therapy is more than just an algorithm and more than just a procedure. There are a lot of seemingly minor details that are vitally important to proper dosing. Many clinics have a dosage based on



weight only or a standard dosing that just doesn't work for a good portion of patients. Some patients may want something their insurance will pay for, something closer to their home or perhaps something cheaper. Some providers incorrectly counsel against hormone therapy, because of decades old, dis-proven and incorrect information. I wish we could get patients to our clinic first, but this is an impossible task. Thankfully, most patients who get their hormones from someone else will eventually find us.

Whatever your previous ex-

perience, don't give up on hormone therapy. I'm certain we can help you feel better than you are feeling now. Come see us and give us a chance to give you the symptom relief you deserve.

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 right here in our local area. Dr. Chern might even be treating your doctor or nurse practitioner since he treats many of the doctors and nurse practitioners in the area and their staff as well. He is a platinum BioTE provider and runs one of the largest BioTE hormone clinics in the country in Miramar Beach. Call Dr. Chern today for an appointment at The Hormone Restoration Center at 850-837-1271.

## Okaloosa County EMS Receives National Recognition for its Commitment to Quality Care for Severe Heart Attacks

For the seventh year in a row, Okaloosa County Department of Public Safety – EMS Division has received the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline® EMS Gold Plus achievement award for its commitment to offering rapid, research-based care to people experiencing the most severe form of heart attack, ultimately saving lives.

Each year, more than 250,000 people experience a type of heart attack known as an ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), caused by a blockage

of blood flow to the heart that requires timely treatment. To prevent death, it is critical to restore blood flow as quickly as possible by either mechanically opening the blocked vessel or using clot-busting medication.

Lifeline is the American

Heart Association's national initiative to advance the system of care for patients with highrisk, time-sensitive disease states, such as severe heart attacks. The program helps reduce barriers to prompt treatment for heart

attacks, starting from when 911 is called to EMS transport and continuing through hospital treatment and discharge.







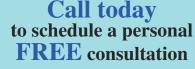
## Smile with Confidence Again

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

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



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#### By Stephenie Craig

Our 10-year-old son, Will, suggested our monthly article should be an interview with him about ADHD to help other kids who might be struggling. We decided to turn it into a two-part series addressing the perspective of both kids and parents. The following interview took place while Will was dancing, throwing a ball, playing with the dog and generally wiggling, all while actively engaging in the conversation.

## What is it like to have ADHD?

ADHD makes it hard for me to focus and stay still and sit in my chair at school.

## What are the positives of having ADHD?

I am very musical, artistic, funny and have a lot of ideas to invent things.

## What are the negatives of having ADHD?

I work really hard to sit still and focus. When I'm supposed to be focusing on one thing, my mind drifts and gets interested in something different and I completely forget I was supposed to be focused on the first thing. School is especially hard because there often isn't a time to move around when I need to let out energy. Sometimes I take bathroom breaks to move and pace around so I can try to be more still in class.

## How has ADHD challenged you at school?

I have so much energy and have trouble sitting still and sometimes teachers get on to me a lot. Kids noticed I was getting negative reports on my communication card and started saying I was a bad kid. Every day I started thinking I didn't want to go to school because it's going to be another bad day. I'd go to the nurse most days, thinking I was sick, but really I was stressed because I got in trouble a lot. This turned into a loop until I found a medication that worked for me.

## Life with ADHD Part 1: In the Words of a 10 Year Old

## How has ADHD challenged you at home?

I'd be asked to do homework, chores or take a shower several times and I would get distracted. It would take an hour to finish things that could take 15 minutes because I would forget what I was doing and would start playing. My parents would get frustrated from asking me over and over to do things. I felt stressed because I was in trouble at home and school a lot. It felt like there wasn't a place where I wouldn't get in trouble or people weren't annoyed with me.

# What does NOT feel supportive to you in managing ADHD?

When kids are mean to me because of my struggles, that doesn't help. When teachers made my behavior charts public in the classroom, that felt bad. I felt like I could never get ahead in behavior points and the whole class could see that I didn't have as many points. Some people don't really know or understand what ADHD is and they end up thinking I'm just a kid who doesn't behave right and judge me. When my parents get frustrated, raise their voices, or get firm, that doesn't help.

# What DOES feel supportive to you in managing ADHD?

My parents apologizing for getting frustrated and helping me calm down with deep breathing and restarting my day. Taking medication before school helps me focus, sit still and I started getting good reports on my school communication card. I forgot to go see the nurse and didn't feel stressed and sick every day. Medicine didn't eliminate all the effects of ADHD, but it made them much less noticeable to me and others. My teachers told me how much better I was focusing and sitting still. We do daily lists at home that remind me what I'm supposed to do each morning, afternoon and evening. Now I check off what I have done, which keeps my parents from having to repeat themselves and keeps me on track. Instead of taking an hour to do my jobs, I can sometimes get them done in less than 15 minutes. I talked to adult family members or



family friends who struggle with ADHD. They helped me know I'm not alone and other people think like me and are figuring out ways to manage ADHD. It helps when my teachers understand ADHD and encourage me.

# What's one thing you want people to know about having ADHD?

ADHD is a problem with focusing, sitting still and managing impulses. It doesn't make someone a bad kid. And kids that struggle with ADHD mostly aren't trying to be disrespectful when they are moving around and having trouble following directions.

Stay tuned next month for Life with ADHD Part 2: In the

Words of Parents. As you're navigating life's twists and turns, connect with us at journey-bravely.com.







## Plastics, from Storage Ware to Water Bottles



By Kay Leaman, Health Architect

Do you know what the two most toxic plastics are that can be found in most kitchens today? Wait for it... plastic wrap and silverware

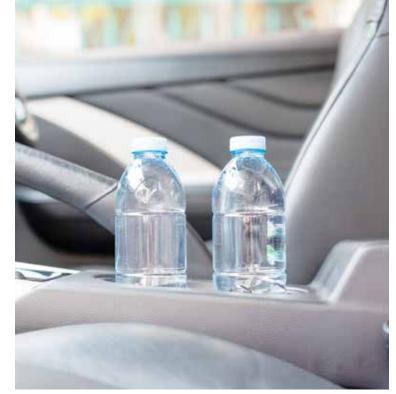
How many plastic storage containers do you have and how many of them come from restaurant leftovers, the deli or the 24 container box deals?

One of the most toxic products we come in contact with is styrofoam. In one study, eggs that were stored in a styrofoam container were tested. After several hours they found that the chemicals from the styrofoam had leached through the shell into the egg.

Now, back to plastic.

Many of us are familiar with the term BPA-free and even though this is a good thing it does not mean that it is healthy or safe. Here are some lingering dangers of plastics:

Dioxin production: Direct exposure to the sun. Such heating



(including microwave) releases a toxin called dioxin, which, when consumed, can accelerate breast cancer.

BPA generation: Biphenyl A is an oestrogen-mimicking chemical that can lead to a lot of health problems like diabetes, obesity, fertility problems, behavioural problems and early puberty in girls. It's better not to store and drink water from a plastic bottle.

Impact immune system: Our immune system is immensely affected when we drink water in plastic bottles. The chemicals from plastic bottles are ingested and tend to disturb our body's immune system.

Liver cancer and reduced sperm count: Because of the presence of a chemical called phthalates in plastic, drinking water from plastic bottles can also lead to liver cancer and a reduction in sperm count.

A recent study done by the State University of New York in Fredonia shows that there are excessive levels of microplastics in bottled water, especially in popular brands. Microplastics are small plastic debris pieces measuring 5 millimetres or smaller. Microplastic is found in over 93 percent of bottled water and while The World Health Organization says that there is no evidence consumption of microplastics affects your health, it is still an area of concern.

Here is a mini guide to plastic bottles and other plastics. The numbers refer to the number in the triangle on the bottom of the container.

- 1 PETE or PET (polyethylene terephthalate)
- 2 HDPE (high density polyethylene)
  - 3 V (vinyl) or PVC
- 4 LDPE (low density polyethylene)
  - 5 PP (polypropylene)
  - 6 PS (polystyrene)
  - 7 Other or miscellaneous

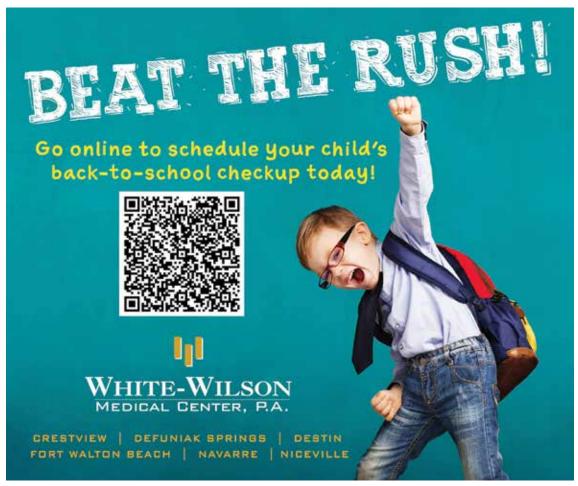
The safest numbers are 1, 2, 4, or 5. Number 3 is the worst followed by 7. As a rule of thumb, the softer the plastic the more likely than leaching will occur.

So, what can we do? Begin by replacing water bottles with a stainless steel water bottle. When plastic bottles are a necessity (a long road trip or a day on the boat) ensure the bottles stay cool and out of the sun. If you're on a trip, bring the water into your hotel room for the night and never leave a water bottle in your vehicle.

For the kitchen, begin replacing food storage containers with glass. When using plastic wrap, either place parchment paper under the plastic wrap or ensure the wrap does not touch any food. Finally, NEVER heat food in the microwave in a plastic container or plastic wrap.

Here's to health.

Kay Leaman Health Architect HealthyDay HealthyLife succeed.hdhl@gmail.com







# Florida's Great Northwest Part of U.S. Secretary of Commerce Roundtable

Florida's Great Northwest, the regional economic development organization for the Panhandle, was one of only 14 areas in the country selected to participate in this year's SelectUSA Investment Summit, the highest-profile event in the United States dedicated to promoting foreign direct investment. SelectUSA is a government program led by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

FGNW President and CEO Jennifer Conoley was asked to serve as a participant in a closed door, invitation-only meeting with Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and Deputy Secretary Don Graves. The small-group roundtable focused on the unique challenges and opportunities associated with attracting foreign investment into underserved communities. Conoley represented Northwest Florida, one of only 14 areas invited to attend the session.

"This was a unique opportunity to join in on candid conversations between companies,



economic development organizations and federal partners about the challenges facing underserved communities to attract jobs and capital investment," said Conoley. "Other parts of the country, such as Detroit, Los Angeles, Puerto Rico and Virginia, were represented and I was proud to see Northwest Florida, the only region in Florida, was included in this crucial discussion."

Through her participation, Conoley brought awareness to the needs of urban and rural underserved communities in Northwest Florida, explored synergies between federal agencies and discussed strategies on how the federal government can best support economic development organizations and communities in the future.

While there are many definitions of under-

served communities, SelectUSA uses assesses if a U.S. community is underserved through three criteria: more than 20 percent of the population falls under the poverty line; the unemployment rate is greater than 8.1 percent or more than one standard deviation from the median of 3.2 percent; and 50 percent of households have an income below \$50,000.

Conoley was also selected to speak on a panel during one of the information sessions about investment attraction in NWFL.

Florida was one of only four US states to be invited to present to a group of 20 Singaporean companies attending the summit

and Conoley spoke about the region during the presentation.

Enterprise Florida was an exhibitor at the event and hosted a Sunshine State Soiree Reception. FGNW participated and

gave a few remarks at the event.

In addition, FGNW made numerous direct company contacts and is working on several potential project opportunities for Northwest Florida.



# **Leadership Classes**

Leadership Okaloosa applications are now available. This nine-month experience is designed to enhance the participant's leadership skills and provide community awareness. Participants receive classroom training by certified instructors and are given opportunities to interact with various key community leaders. Visit www.nwfsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2022-2023-

LO\_Application\_FF.pdf.

The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce is taking applications for the 2022-2023 Leadership Walton Class online until Sept. 1. Leadership Walton is for those who have achieved leadership positions in their fields and are likely to be tapped for greater community responsibility. The cost is \$1,500 for employees of Walton Area Chamber member businesses or \$1,775 for future Chamber member businesses. Tuition includes all course materials, assessments, supplies and refreshments. To enroll or learn more about the program, visit www.waltonareachamber.com/leadership-walton.

# BOOTH SPACE AVAILABLE NOW



Saturday & Sunday, September 24th and 25th at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

The largest, best and only combined **free admission** to the public Home & Boat Show in the State of Florida – the 23rd Annual Emerald Coast Home and Boat Show will be held on Saturday and Sunday, September 24 and 25, at the beautiful Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center.

This year's Post-Covid event will be the biggest and best ever, featuring over 100 vendors in many different categories offering Home Show Specials, Mortgage Info, Realtors, AC, Plumbing, Electrical, Windows and Doors, Remodelers, Roofers, Insurance, Kitchens and Baths, Blinds and Shades, Painting, Foundations, Security, Outdoor Buildings, Restoration and other Service Industries. Plus, Retail and Home-Based Business Vendors, Health Care Evaluations, Non-Profit Organizations - and an end of the season Boat Show and sale sponsored by Captain's Choice Boats, Bluewater Bay Yachts, Florida Airboat Partners and Blue Coral Sport Fishing Towers.

The vendors will also give away over \$20,000 in door prizes and Free Swag. Home Show Sponsors include Floridian Brand, Ecoview Windows & Doors, Defined Interiors, Horizon Improvements, 1st Choice Painting, The Final Touch Design Studio, Scentsy, Freeman Roofing, Life Media, Cumulus Radio and Omni Broadcasting.

More info at the website www.paradisepromotionsfl.com/home-show



# **Beachworx Offers Flexible, Professional Solutions**

By Melissa Fertitta

Beachworx, Destin's premiere coworking space, announced last week it is expanding in its current location. The coworking space fills the entire third floor of the Destin Commerce Center, located at the southwest corner of Hwy 98

with Google My Business.

able (additional fees apply).

No contract agreements.

address.

with members who need your service.

exclusive to Beachworx members

and Crystal Beach Dr. Its current layout includes a conference room, 13 executive suites and a hub of shared hot desks and collaborative seating. The expansion offers members five additional executive suites located on the second floor. Each office features large exterior

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Enjoy tax benefits of registering a business in Florida.

windows, filling the furnished office spaces with natural light.

Steven Franco, owner of Beachand worx Destin Commerce Center, was excited to announce Beachworx's pansion, noting that while offices are available to rent now, the space will be getting a facelift in the next quarter. New carpet, fresh

paint and updated decor from a European artist's collective are among the improvements planned for the second floor. The building has recently been painted and the parking lot will be resurfaced and striped, along with updates to the landscaping. "Beachworx has always offered a flexible, affordable solution for professional workspace," Steven said. "Month-to-month memberships are a much more flexible option than traditional commercial leases, which is why our private offices are always full, with a waitlist. We're excited to add more executive suites that will welcome new businesses to our community," he added.

And "community" is really what defines and differentiates



Beachworx from other executive suite solutions. "We've had members in our community network and collaborate with other members on some really big business deals. Some of these collaborations are high six- and seven-figure deals. It makes me really proud to share that because I believe what Beachworx is selling, more than anything, is success," Steven said.

Interested in mirroring Beachworx's members' success? Plan to attend The Buzz, a networking event Beachworx hosts each Tuesday at 11 a.m. The business-to-business networking group welcomes visitors interested in learning more about the group.

But success isn't limited to

the brick-and-mortar solutions Beachworx offers. Beachworx's virtual address product benefits home-based and established businesses from outside of Florida, as well as those already doing business in the state.

A virtual address from Beachworx gives a business a Florida mailing address in a Class A office building. This solution helps protect the identity of home-based business owners and lends more credibility to a business than a P.O. Box. A virtual address membership can be enhanced to include in-bound mail and package receipt and mail forwarding. Virtual address members use Google tools to enhance their businesses' online presence with a My Business profile. "The virtual membership is a great way to dip your toe into Beachworx," Steven said, adding that this membership tier starts at \$49 per month. "We have a number of virtual members who still may work from home, but they'll buy conference room packages and come in to have meetings in a professional conference space. Like I said, it's really flexible."

For more information on any of these solutions, contact a Beachworx concierge at info@ thebeachworx.com or use the QR code on our ad.

# **CLAIMOLOGY**

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

**Have Questions about Property Damage or Insurance Policies?** 

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You could have it answered in one our columns.

# LiveOak Fiber to Invest \$100M in Okaloosa County Fiber Network

LiveOak Fiber, a newly formed broadband service provider, is investing \$100 million to construct and operate a next-generation high-speed fiber optic network in Okaloosa County. The new network will bring alternative options to underserved regions of the county, ensuring access to affordable and reliable digital infrastructure for businesses and residents in the area.

As it stands, around 2.7 million Floridians lack access to reliable broadband internet with Okaloosa County facing some of these biggest challenges. When complete, LiveOak Fiber's network will provide fiber-based broadband internet and communications

solutions to serve homes and businesses who need it most. Residents can expect a robust internet service with 10G per second - the fastest speeds in the U.S.

LiveOak Fiber is committed to providing communities with necessary internet services that are designed to enable social and economic growth and with plans and commitments to hire locally, they expect the project to create 50 new jobs in the County over the next three years.

"Okaloosa County residents and businesses need the critical infrastructure and services to support a growing population and attract new investment," said Jody Craft,

President of LiveOak Fiber. "Bringing high-speed fiber and the modern services it enables to these communities changes lives, improves education, advances healthcare options and grows local businesses."

Construction on the project is planned for later this year. LiveOak expects to begin connecting its first customers as early as February 2023. With plans and commitments to hire locally, the company expects to create 50 new jobs in Okaloosa County over the next three years.

One Okaloosa EDC assisted LiveOak with the community review and data gathering efforts that led to the company's favorable decision.



# A Pastor's Ponderings: Reaching the Unreachable



By Pastor Doug Stauffer

Societal changes seem to be taking place at the speed of light. With these changing times, more churches must adapt their approach or risk becoming irrelevant. Christians must consider ways to think outside the box. Every believer and pastor must evangelize outside their comfort zones. One of the biggest problems with the 21st century pastorate concerns the Christian view of how a pastor interacts with the masses. We must expect sinners to talk and act like sinners!

Every believer (especially pastors) must figure out how to reach the unreachable and approach the unapproachable. Relationships must be built in

loving compassion before calamity hits! Believers must use every opportunity to build these relationships, knowing that most of them involve the less-thankful tasks of planting and watering. Pastor Jim Vail wrote such a story of relationship building.

Pastor Vail wrote: "Rock was a big-time biker who had developed cancer. I went to visit and befriend him. He was friendly and welcoming but would say cringe-worthy things! After a few visits, it seemed apparent that talking about Christ was not something he welcomed. Determined to befriend him, I visited him almost weekly, enduring his often foul language and ideas of life and death.

"His declining health became evident by his weight loss and his turning yellow from liver failure. One day I said, 'Rock, I know you don't want to hear about Jesus Christ, but soon you may no longer be alert and oriented. If you change your mind about him, you will need to know and understand how to be forgiven by God of all your sins and how to know that you have eternal

life! If I promise not to pressure you into anything, can I give you the knowledge of how to become right with the Lord?' He agreed.

"I sat next to him with my Bible and asked him to read and explain selected passages about sin, God's justice, and hell. He explained them fairly well. Suddenly, in shock, he gasped: 'I'm in trouble! I'm going to hell!' I then had him read about the deity of Jesus Christ, His sacrificial death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and promises of eternal life to those who repent of their sins by trusting in Jesus Christ.

"Suddenly, he burst into tears as he exclaimed that he had never heard or understood this before! 'I want Jesus Christ for me... NOW! Can I ask Him to forgive me right now? I want Him to be MY Savior!' As I held his hand, he poured his heart out to the Lord, sobbing the whole time. Afterwards, he had me promise to conduct his funeral and tell this good news to all attending.

"The following day, his wife phoned my office. 'Rock is a new man! He is cheerful, sweet, and loving... and all he wants to do is talk about Jesus and pray together! Thank you!' I went to see Rock almost every day and grew to love him as a dear brother. His mind never lost its alertness. We would study, pray, and cry tears of joy together. A few weeks later, Rock called his family to his bedside and said, 'Let's pray together!'

"They each prayed, and then Rock prayed. Then he smiled, closed his eyes and went to be with his beloved Savior. A few days later, I kept my promise to my dear friend and told a packed crowd what Jesus Christ had done for Rock and what He could do for them!"

Will you ask God if He wants you to explore new avenues of reaching the unreachable by approaching the unapproachable?

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").

#### **20 QUESTIONS**

continued from page 16

District, AVCON Inc., Jack and Beth Rhodes, Crosspoint United Methodist Church, Impact 100 of Northwest Florida and First Nation Group.

# Does A Bed 4 Me accept in-kind donations?

Yes! Our wish list is posted on our website and we always welcome new, standard-size sleeping pillows, Amazon and Walmart gift cards.

#### What is happening next?

A Bed 4 Me is excited to host our annual event, Dinner of Dreams, on Sunday, Oct. 2. It is an evening of outdoor dining with four local chefs and live music. It's held at the beautiful Niceville Senior Center courtyard and the chefs use their culinary creativity to create wonderful meals. Roman Street Trio from Mobile performs their unique sound. They are always a treat! All proceeds benefit A Bed 4 Me and tickets can be purchased on Eventbrite at www. eventbrite.com/e/dinner-ofdreams-tickets-363276238007.

How can people contact you?

Anyone is welcome to send us a message through our website, abed4me.org, or email diane@ abed4me.org

# What is your long-term vision for the organization?

A Bed 4 Me continues to dream about serving other communities in our surrounding areas. We have a tough time saying no to families living outside our service area. While we know expansion must be well-planned and deliberate, we dream of serving all the counties in the Panhandle.

## Do you have an inspiring story to share before we go?

So many, it is always hard to pick one. As we like to say sometimes it is more than just a bed.

We served a single mom a few months ago. In order to set up the beds we need the area to be free and clear of debris. As we entered the room, we noticed the hard work that went into the cleaning process. The bedroom smelled of bleach and the floors were shiny with polish. The conditions of the existing mattresses were deplorable and yet smiles were on the faces of the children for the work they completed. (Teamwork...check.)

Once we set up the new beds, the older sibling immediately began helping us with the bedding for her younger sibling. Mom stood in the doorway and watched the efforts unfold. (Pride in her family...check.)

The children finished school online due to covid. The mom was out of work but actively seeking employment.

On Mother's Day we sent the mom a text: Happy Mother's Day! The mom responded, "I had an interview, I got the job!" The kids will return to school in the fall. Thank you for all you do and for giving my children beds."

At A Bed 4 Me, we say our goal is to provide a bed to a child for a good night's sleep. Our dream is to make a brighter future. In this case, the small piece of the puzzle we were able to provide helped this family. The hope for something better and brighter was in the works. That's a dream come true.

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.

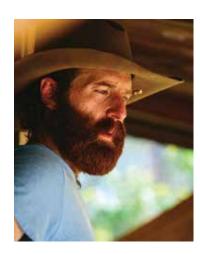


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## Sean of the South



By Sean Dietrich

It was an average Thursday night. The crowd waiting to get into Truist Park was a biblical mass. There were too many people to comprehend.

Everyone was sweating through their undergarments. The smell of human armpit odor was in the air.

It was a sold-out game. Forty-odd thousand baseball fans stood waiting for the sacred gates to open. There wasn't a frown in the bunch. Almost everyone in this crowd was cheerful.

That's baseball for you.

At its heart baseball has always been about fun. Plain and simple. At ballgames, most people are glad to be there.

You'll see kids in jerseys, laughing with each other. Mothers smiling, bouncing babies on hips. Old men with bright eyes, wearing leather mitts that predate the Eisenhower presidency, telling stories about "the Say Hey Kid" and "Hammerin' Hank" to their grandchildren.

And that's the beauty of this game. It is one of the only American institutions remaining wherein people of different persuasions, ages and creeds can find a common bond, and boo in unison at the same umpire.

A place where all God's children can come together and pay \$18 for a beer.

That's probably why I love the game so much. Because there are no divisions in a ballpark. Here, you'll see all cultures. All classes. All kinds.

Guys who drive Peterbilts brush shoulders with men who drive Range Rovers. Bankers and attorneys stand alongside millworkers and pipe fitters and cheer for the same home run.

A home run which was launched by a 24-year-old Afro-Dominican who earns more money per fiscal year than Pope Francis.

The gates opened.

Children in line started vibrating with enthusiasm. Parents hoisted toddlers onto shoulders. And the throngs began moving toward the City of Joy.

Truist Park, 10 miles north of Atlanta. A 1.1-billion-dollar ball-park and real-estate development that makes Disney World look like a trip to the gastroenterologist. This place is nothing but a fun zone.

Even the guy scanning tickets was having fun. He scanned my ticket and said, "You ready to kick butt tonight, boss?"

"I'm ready to win," I said.
"That's my man," he shouted.



Then he high-fived me.

It was a firm, strong high-five. The kind that you remember for several minutes thereafter.

In real life, you don't get many high-fives. But you get them in ballparks.

My first beer of the evening was purchased from a vendor who carried a heavy ice chest over his head.

"ICE COOOLD BEEEER!" he shouted to each passerby.

I asked how he liked his job.

"Man, I walk eight to ten miles every game. I run up bleachers all night until my legs burn. I work like a mule. But people are so generous. They tip me better than any job I ever had. I'll make more money this week than I made all month last year. I love it here. You don't meet any sad people at a baseball game."

And he was right. I was looking around and I didn't find a single long face.

So it was an all-around great night. But frankly I don't remember much about the game. Not because I don't love the Braves. I do.

I've been rooting for the Bravos since I was a young guy and the Superstation broadcast their games for free.

I loved Dale Murphy, I remember the Sid Bream slide, the 78-pitch game thrown by Greg Maddux, and I recall with fondness almost every time coach Bobby Cox threatened an umpire.

But the reason tonight's game was so good has nothing to do with nostalgia. Not for me. Tonight's ballgame was a great experience because I rarely see so

many joyous people in one place.

There was the "Kiss Cam," when the jumbotron showed images of random people in the ballpark kissing.

There was the booty-shaking contest, when my wife and I bounced our hindparts together, high in the bleachers, along with thousands of others who danced to Bill Haley and his Comets singing "Shake, Rattle and Roll."

There were the crummy hotdogs. The overcooked hamburgers. The stale French fries. The tasteless nachos, served in a plastic batting helmet.

And there was the height of the evening.

It happened during the seventh-inning stretch. And it happens at every Braves game.

This anomalous event occurs when 42,000 stand to sing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

These are ordinary humans. People who disagree on virtually everything within our society. These are people who would rather eat dirt than find common ground.

But tonight, the entire stadium took to their feet, cheered and made music together. Everyone hollered. Everyone knew the lyrics.

Some raised plastic cups into the air as they sang. Little girls sat on the shoulders of old men. Teenage boys bellowed alongside their dads. Strangers high-fived hard enough to break their wrists.

And for a very brief moment on an average Thursday night, everything was okay in America.

And well. That's baseball for you.





Bluewater Bay Area



# Road to Redemption:

# Shanna's Story of God's Intervention

By Victoria Ostrosky

Domestic. Backyard barbeques, washing dishes, mowing lawns, bedtime stories, popcorn and a movie on the couch. Peaceful, happy scenes that give us warm fuzzies. Everyday tasks performed with people we love making our lives worth living.

Abuse. Fighting and yelling. Screaming and threats. Bullies and bruises, contusions and broken bones, broken spirits and broken hearts.

These two words don't belong together. But they are too often found right there grasping each other in a dance of death.

Domestic abuse has been going on for millenia, but that doesn't make it unworthy of our notice. The vast majority of domestic abuse is aimed at women and children and you can find it in every neighborhood and every church.

Shanna was an abused wife and mother of five children. She was submissive for years to her manipulative and physically abusive husband. His bad behavior devolved as he became addicted to cocaine. "I could see the darkness behind his eyes." One day he almost beat her to death and that was finally the last straw for Shanna. She ended up at Hosanna House, a safe place for abused women, and it took her nine months to get her children back.

Shanna was born and raised in Fort Walton Beach and got married right out of high school. He was her knight in shining armor, swept her off her feet and promised to take care of her. When she became pregnant with her first child, he began to isolate her from her family and friends. She was no longer allowed to spend time with them. Her mom did periodic welfare checks over the years but was unable to foster a relationship with her daughter and grandchildren.

While Shanna was at Hosanna House, she grew in Christ and learned more about what being a daughter in Christ meant. She was uncomfortable going to church at first, because she was embarrassed about being divorced, but the people at Destiny welcomed her and spoke life and healing and encouragement into her.

Anyone who has researched what abuse does to the victim, knows that it's more than physical, as bad as that is. It's mental and emotional, too. Victims are verbally beat down over a period of months or years, and come to



feel that they are worthless, ugly, unworthy of love, and hopeless. The bruises and broken bones heal, but broken spirits and broken hearts take a lot longer.

Shanna's story hit a little close to home for me. I could feel her pain and her shame, because I experienced my own abuse many years ago, and I can testify to the healing power of God. We hear the phrase 'being the hands and feet of Jesus', and maybe you've wondered exactly what that means for you.

For the Shannas in the world, it means stepping up and speaking life and love and healing into someone who is broken inside. It means taking the time to provide for their physical needs and emotional needs as well. It means time, and more time. Because growth and healing do just that

they take a lot of time.

God has given back to Shanna what the difficult years took away. She is now remarried to a wonderful man who adopted all five of her children, and who loves Jesus like she does. "It's not a religion, it's a relationship. We've grown together in the Lord."

"Don't lose hope and get on your knees and cry out to Him," Shanna says. "You need to invite Him into the situation. The moment you seek Him with all your heart is when things change. On the other side of fear is everything you ever wanted."

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

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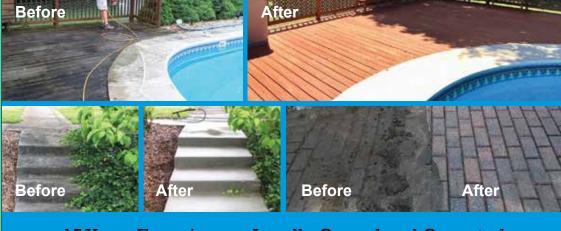
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#### By Rick Moore

An attention getting picture with an enticing headline is often called click-bait. Here are a few of the most viewed clickbait statements on the internet: These Photos Will Make You Think Twice, Here Is What They Look Like Now, You Won't Believe What She Said, and the list goes on. Choosing to fall for certain click-bait can lead to your computer being infected, and even worse, it can lead to an infection of your mind. No one ever plans to get hooked on bad things, but one click leads to another, and pretty soon, addiction sets in.

George was a ten year old

who loved to fish. His family reunion was only a day away, and he was determined to catch a larger fish than anyone else in his family. He woke-up before the break of dawn to start digging for worms. George would shovel in the rich dirt along the banks of the water for night-crawlers. The lid to his mason jar had holes in it to preserve the worms he would catch. As he was just about to finish filling his jar and walk to his favorite fishing

hole, he saw it. There it was, in

the corner of his eye. It was the

biggest, the longest, the juici-

est worm he had ever seen. He

scooped it up, placed it in the jar

and said out loud, "This worm

is going to catch me a big one!"

Now, let me tell you about Sammy. Sammy was a fish, and his family was also starting their family reunion that morning. Relatives from all over the lake swam to Sammy's for the big day. Sammy noticed his grandfather had a big scar on his lip. His grandfather said it happened when he was a young fish just like Sammy. He was swimming around with his friends, when out of the corner of his

## The Bait

eye, he saw it. It was the biggest, the longest, the juiciest worm he had ever seen. Grandpa said he swam up to it and gave it a nibble just to make sure it wasn't a trick. He swam around it once, swam around it twice, and on the third time, bit down on the worm as hard as he could. When he did, he felt an awful pain in his mouth. He was hooked! He called for his friends to help, but they just swam away. He was being pulled to the top of the water, when he tugged as hard as he could. That is when the hook went right through his lip. Sammy said, "That's horrible, but I'm glad it will never happen to me."

Tired of hanging around old people, Sammy and his friends swam off to play. That is when, out of the corner of his eye, he saw it. It was the biggest, the longest, the juiciest worm he had ever seen. Sammy wanted to make sure it wasn't a trap. He swam around it once, swam around it twice, and on the third time, bit down on the worm as hard as he could. When he did, he felt an awful pain. He was



hooked! He called for his friends to help, but they just swam away. His grandfather had just warned him moments ago, but he didn't heed the warning. As Sammy was being pulled to the top of the water, he remembered how his grandfather was able to yank real hard and get off the hook, but Sammy was not as fortunate as his grandfather.

Back to George. That day he was smiling from ear to ear be-

cause George caught the biggest fish of them all. Before his father cleaned and fried it for lunch, George took a picture with the fish and named it Sammy. Sammy had ignored his grandfather and fallen for the bait. If only we...I mean he would have listened

Rick Moore is Communications Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.

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Arts & Music

## We Are the Emerald Coast Chorus!

By Don Lambert, ECC Member

Singing has the power to make individuals and communities healthier and happier! And we are blessed to have The Emerald Coast Chorus (ECC), a singing organization based in Fort Walton Beach that serves communities throughout the Florida panhandle.

The chorus has been a chapter in the Sunshine District of the Barbershop Harmony Society since 1978. A 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, its members enjoy sharing four-part barbershop harmony with the residents of our communities. The Barbershop Harmony Society, and by extension, the Emerald Coast Chorus, preserves and extends the reach of Barbershop harmony—an American close harmony acapella musical art form whose roots lie in African-American improvisation and European harmony traditions through active programs in music education, publishing, performance and outreach. The benefits of singing, and music more specifically, harmonizing, have long been explored.

Group harmonizing can help improve physical and emotional health, build healthier communities, young people become healthier adults, forge inter-generational bonds, reduce barriers across diverse cultures and groups and build healthy self-identities.

Members of the Emerald Coast Chorus believe that the gift of harmony is too wonderful to keep to ourselves," said. "It is a gift that we are compelled to share with everyone. We need to share it with young and old, with people of every color and every strata, with city people and country people and everyone in between, because the world needs what we have."

One example of the sharing of this gift of music with others is the annual Joe Breedon Retreat, which is held each fall at Camp Timpoochee in Niceville. The Camp Timpoochee retreat weekend is the only acappella music festival in the Florida Panhandle and southern Alabama. Its uniqueness attracts many outof-town visitors and generates revenue for Camp Timpoochee and other local restaurants and businesses. Approximately 35% of all attendees, and over 50% of the adults are from outside Okaloosa county. In the process, participants contribute significantly to the arts opportunities in the area. The project is designed and planned as a regional festival, and the chorus brings in nationally renowned coaches and teachers. They are leading musicians certified by the Barbershop Harmony Society. Participants, especially high school students, sharpen their presentation, music and singing skills in a low-stress, supportive learning environment. Over the years, the chorus has developed a close and unique relationship with several high school music directors. They have come to rely on the chorus both for availability of acappella music and for coaching student quartets and ensembles. We keep the music teachers informed throughout the year of upcoming Youth Harmony Workshops and the Harmony Explosion Camps. Furthermore, we contact school music directors in the spring so they can make plans prior to school starting in the fall. As soon as school



starts, we begin to work with the students in developing quartets. We offer classroom visits, coaching, and free sheet music. We let the students know there are local chapters they can join if they wish to experience more acapella and barbershop singing. The teachers attend our weekend retreat year after year. Students experience barbershop chords (many for the first time), learn from excellent music coaches, and get to perform and perhaps even compete in a low-stress environment. Many students build on this experience as they attend college and sing acapella, with some students even continuing to pursue musical careers.

A local defense contractor at Eglin Air Force Base—Axient LLC—has recognized the value of encouraging its employees to actively give back to the community as the Emerald Coast Chorus does. Axient recently awarded the chorus a grant to assist in the execution of its mission.

The Emerald Coast Chorus Calls all gentlemen who might be interested in singing, having fun, learning to sing barbershop four-part harmony, sharing an art form with the community and did we mention having fun! If this sounds like something you might be interested in, please

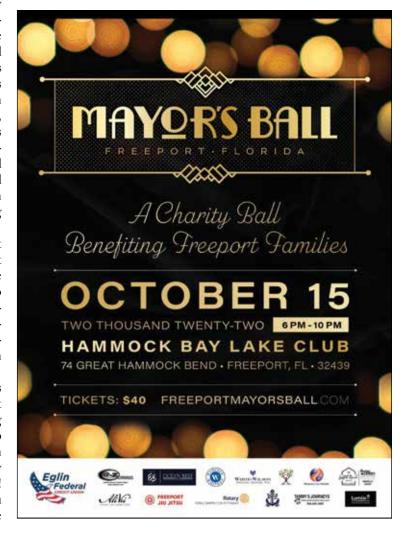
visit. We meet every Thursday night at 6:30 pm in the Choral room of Shalimar Method-

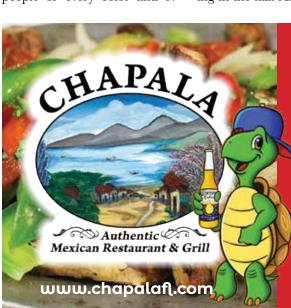
ist Church at 1 Old Ferry Rd,

Shalimar, 32579. You don't have

to know how to read music. We can provide you with professionally-made learning tracks that are part-specific for all of the songs we know and are learning.

Why not hire Emerald Coast Chorus to entertain at your next event? We can perform at corporate functions, charity events, community entertainment events, birthday parties, Christmas parties, awards nights, weddings, engagements, anniversaries, engagements, and even funerals and memorial services. And it's a lot of fun!





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# A Dreamy Vacation by the Beach

# How Does Music Help Us Chill?

By Lisa Cyr

As temperatures are soaring into the 90s, there is no doubt that the greatest way to spend your time is soaking up the sun at the beach or pool (don't forget the sun protection!) and cooling off with a refreshing beverage.

When chilling on vacation, having a barbecue, swimming, or going out for a jog, we naturally reach for our portable speakers or headphones and a playlist of our favorite tunes. But why?

Listening to music is a fantastic tool for beating stress and boosting your mood, especially with relaxing genres like classical or ambient. The science agrees - a study in 2021 showed that adults listening to both their personal selection and a 'neutral' selection of music for ten minutes had significantly lowered their cortisol levels (the stress hormone) in both home and clinical environments.

As well as reducing stress,

music can also bring feelings of happiness and wellbeing. In a 2011 research paper by Nature Neuroscience, researchers reported a release of dopamine while listening to music, a hormone which plays a role in many functions including a happy mood, lower heart rate, and blood pressure. Dopamine (the happiness hormone) was found to be greater both in anticipation of and during the rewarding parts of a song which suggests our brains will reward us for familiarity and predictability. Listening to music we've heard before gives us a greater dopamine reward as we wait for those predictable song parts.

Is there any one genre which is best for relaxing? You might expect that some genres are 'better' for reducing stress, but the American Music Therapy Association says that "all styles of music can be useful in effecting change in a client or patient's life." The sense of com-



munity and connection created in different musical circles can be greatly beneficial, like when we gather around a campfire on the beach and sing memorable songs together. We make memories which draw us back to the same vacation place, year after year.

How can we best enjoy the benefits of listening to music?

Here are some ideas for incorporating music into your summer vacation:

**Listen to aid your memory.** Do you have any nostalgic memories associated with music? Listening to music can help us better remember the things we never want to forget, like big events or personal experiences while visiting a new place or re-visiting an old one.

Boost your energy for physical activity. A game of beach volleyball? A morning jog? Listening to music can increase your excitement levels and give you extra endurance.

**Recover from traveling.** A long car or plane ride can really fry the nerves. Put your headphones in and take a moment to escape and relax when-

ever you need to.

**Enjoy music with others.** Music is best enjoyed with a group. Tune into a favorite radio station at your next family barbecue, or why not check out local performances at the many venues along route 30a and 98.

Wishing you a fun and relaxing summer with family and friends as you enjoy the beaches and activities that our beautiful area offers. Studio 237 Music Lessons teaches private lessons in Santa Rosa Beach on guitar, ukulele, piano, drums, voice, and more. For info, call 850.231.3199 or visit the www.Studio237Music.



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6-Kitchen People with Jeanette Herron. 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Learn to paint Jeanette Herron's iconic and whimsical "kitchen people" or "little chefs." \$65 with supplies included, \$37.50 with your own supplies. Reserve your spot: 850-729-2600.

13—Encaustic **Scenes** with Corina Zalace. 1-3 p.m. Instructor and artist Corina Zalace encourages students to explore working with a hot iron and stylus to create 4-5 colored wax pictures (plus envelopes) of local scenes. Limited to 5 students, with no art experience necessary. \$47.50. Supplies included. Register: 850-720-2600.

20-Pinecone Art for Adults with Marla Arm**strong.** 10:30 a.m.-1-30 p.m. Artist Marla Armstrong will be instructing a workshop on "Pinecone Wall Décor." Students will paint a background and design a "flower" arrangement of painted pine cones to create a wall hanging for a desired season or a year-round piece of art. \$47.50. Supplies included. Limited seating available. 16 years old and up. Register at 850-729-2600. La Chama Venez food truck on site!

27-Book Release and Signing with Eliza Scalia. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Join us for a book release and signing with local author Eliza Scalia for her NEW-EST book "The Fear." Cafe Rico food truck will be onsite.

#### **Ongoing Classes:**

Rosalyn O'grady - Oil or Acrylics. Tuesday mornings 10 a.m. - noon. \$20 per session plus supplies. ogradytr@cox.net. www.RosalynOgrady.com.

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

Chris Mcloone - Teens' Drawing w/ Chris McLoone starts Wednesday, August 17. Wednesday afternoons 3:30-4:30 p.m. \$15. Bring a sketchbook and pencil. Learn to draw your favorite anime characters. Sign up at gallery: 850-729-2600.

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July

27—Unicorn Day! Bring your kid to create while you take a break. \$42.80

**28—Cat Camp!** Full day of painting and creating with JoJo! \$53.50

29-Glass Art Open Studio. Everyone is welcome to come and create! Drop in anytime! \$37.63

30—Family Glass Art. Join us for fun family time creating! Come hungry and grab lunch, too! \$26.63

30—Open Leather & Pearls. Open studio jewelry with Sherrie on Saturday! \$21.30

#### **August**

2-Open Studio Family Glass Art. Create your own glass art w/ JoJo! \$26.75

3—Glass Art Family Tree. Come and make a 12x12 glass tree on board or an 8x10 glass window. \$96.30

4 & 5—Junior Baker Camp with Mery. Junior bakers will be baking and decorating! Starts Aug 4. \$85.60

6-Back to School Cookies Grab & Go. Back to school themed sugar cookie tray you can decorate at home! \$21.40

6—Open Leather **Pearls.** Join us for open studio jewelry with Sherrie on Saturday! \$21.30

10-Sept 14 Pottery Series. Join us for Laurel's pottery Series! 6-week journey of creativity! Starts Aug 10. \$267.50

Book classes at bigorangehousedesigns.com.

Want to book a private table in a class or host a party? Contact JoJo at 334-320-6658 or bigorangehousedesigns@gmail.

bigorangehousedesigns.com (850) 737-6193 4652 Hwy. 20E, Pineapple Plaza, Bluewater Bay in Niceville

# Okaloosa Public Arts Call to Artists!

By Toni Dineen, OPA SECRETARY/HISTORIAN

Okaloosa Public Arts (OPA) has many exciting opportunities for artists to share their talents in the upcoming months including our annual "Artists Choice" show at the Okaloosa County Administration Building, High School Art Banner Competition, Middle School Art Competition and the new "Happy Heron" project. All initiatives take place in Okaloosa County and support OPA's mission of "Providing exceptional and meaningful art in our public spaces through private donations."

The first event takes place in September as we refresh art on all three floors of the Okaloosa County Administration Building in Shalimar. OPA invites all artists to submit up to three works of art depicting your choice of subject matter to be professionally judged and exhibited from September 6, 2022 through September 2023. \$3600 in prize money will be awarded. For registration information, visit our web site www. okaloosapublicarts.org.

The next event is our yearly

High School Art Banner Competition coordinated with Okaloosa County Art teachers. Our seven county high schools each hold a competition to have students represent their school with

four pieces of art to be hung on banners in Cinco Bayou. If you are driving on Eglin Parkway, you will see the beautiful entries we received in the 2021 competition. In addition to the

banners students also receive a financial reward.

A new addition this year is a middle school art show. 7th and 8th graders from each middle school in Okaloosa County will

be invited to enter an art show to be hung and judged at the new Liza Jackson School. 6th grade students will be invited to enter artwork for a show at the

Continued on next page



SATURDAY 9 AM - 5 PM | SUNDAY 10 AM - 4 PM

Annual arts festival featuring fine artists exhibiting their original art, live music, food trucks, crafted cocktails.

FREE for Members - JOIN NOW!



850.650.2226 | INFO@MKAF.ORG | 4323 COMMONS DR W, DESTIN, FLORIDA 32541



NEW

**SEPT 10 - OCT 1** 

Lights, Camera, Action! Join us Saturday evenings in the village for Fall Flix featuring an exciting variety of films. Table and lawn seating available. Food trucks on site each week!



**SEPT** Artful Dining @ Vin'tij Food & Wine in Grand Boulevard

NOV 10 10th Annual Wine Walkabout at Ruth's Chris Steak House at Silver Shells Resort in Destin.

> Support ArtsReach programs in our community.



## PRESTO!

## at The Magic Parlor

Join the gang at The Magic Parlor as they present a hilarious and magical evening with some of the world's most talented magicians from stage and screen. Couples and families alike will enjoy this unforgettable 90-minute mustsee masterpiece that unfolds nightly. Its performers 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, The Late Late Show with James Corden...do we need to keep going? They're the best of the best.

## PRESTO! Loves Locals Offer!

Locals with Okaloosa, Santa Rosa or Walton county IDs can purchase 2 for 1 tickets at the box office for any per-



formance. Locals will receive one (1) ticket of equal or lesser value for each individual ticket purchased in any seating section/price range. To take advantage of this exciting offer, locals can head over to the box office at 4100 Legendary Drive, West Lot Destin, FL 32541 from 1-9 p.m. Tickets can be purchased in advance or day of performance by showing local identification. You can also purchase tickets online and have the ability to view our seat map and select your own seats. The box office opens each show day at 1 p.m. and can be reached at (850) 688-1201. To get to know the cast and crew, visit prestodestin.com.

#### **CALL TO ARTISTS**

continued from previous page

Fort Walton Beach Public Library. These shows will be held in coordination with the art departments at each school.

Finally, we are extremely proud to announce the "Happy Heron" project. If you are familiar with the "Pensacola Pelicans," you will be happy to know Okaloosa County will now have its own beautiful Heron statues. Twenty artists will be selected to paint 5-Ft. Herons to be placed throughout Okaloosa County. We are currently working the details with Okaloosa County Commissioners and will have more information distributed in the coming months.

Okaloosa Public Arts (OPA) began as a group of ladies who enjoyed meeting together and discussing art. In early 2011, this group of friends decided to create a "committee" to put art in public places in Okaloosa County. Thus, OPA was born. Eventually the group formed a 501 (c)3 charity and was selected to become a charity organization sponsored by Jay Ghosh

Enterprises and Mary Esther Bingo.

The first project sponsored by OPA was the Courthouse Annex art project. This included a "heritage hall" with photographs of the old courthouse in Crestview and other historical photos. A statue of "Lady Liberty" was also proposed and eventually donated by Judge Stone. A mural was designed by Elia Saxer and placed on permanent display. The first OPA juried show was held at

the Courthouse Annex in Ft Walton Beach in September 2011. 84 local artists participated with a variety of media.

Since 2011, OPA has sponsored more than 20 art shows at area locations. OPA has donated over \$100,000 in art scholarships, art supplies, and awards to local artists and art programs including area High Schools,



Current OPA Board.
First row: Elia Saxer, Toni Dineen, Rick Otoupalik.
Second row: Linda Kernick, Linda Carr, Anne
Johnston, Thalia Newton. Third row: Pat
Roberts, Ruta Kanaporis, Charlotte Arnold,
Bernadette Sims, Pam Folse, Helen Harris.

NWF State College, Arts and Design Society, Emerald Coast Science Center, NFW Ballet, and After School Program in Reaching Excellence (ASPIRE).

To learn more about OPA, visit our Facebook Page, Okaloosa Public Arts, and website www.okaloosapublicarts.org.





Arts & Music

# Creative Writing Class Offered

This fall, University of West Florida (UWF) is offering a creative writing class at the Emerald Coast Campus in Fort Walton Beach. Writers and students interested in exploring narrative fiction should enroll now for this course. Advanced Creative Writing, a workshop course in narrative fiction, taught by Diana Jernigan, that helps creative writers explore fiction through developing plot, characters, setting, point of view and other elements of fiction, with an eye toward publication, starts Aug. 22,



Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m., 1170 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd., Fort Walton Beach. The university offers tuition waivers for senior citizens in some cases. Visit the website uwf. edu/offices/emerald-coast or contact Andrea Rymer at (850) 863.6569 or arymer@uwf.edu.



**Thursday August 25, 2022**The Island Resort at Fort Walton Beach

Scan the code to learn more and register today!

Use code **LIFEMEDIA** to get your ticket for just \$99!





# **Local Coupons**

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Michael Cavanaugh February 18

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