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Get Your Art On with the Cultural Arts Alliance in May

By Christopher Manson

Celebrating its 35th year this month, the Cultural Arts Alliance (CAA) of Walton County's ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival is one of the organization's signature – and biggest – events. In recent years, the CAA has expanded this into Art Month, with visual, performing, and literary arts programming in diverse formats at various venues throughout Walton County.

Additional Art Month events and programs include Under the Sea, a fundraiser for the CAA's Underwater Museum of Art; the Longleaf Writers Conference, formerly the Seaside Writers Conference, a gathering of creative writers from across the nation, featuring award-winning scribes from the worlds of poetry, fiction and screenwriting offering workshops and seminars; Digital Graffiti at Alys Beach, a unique "projection art" festival employing digital technologies; "Sinfonia Goes Pop!," a free concert at







the Alys Beach Amphitheatre; performances by the Emerald Coast Theatre Company; and, of course, gallery events.

Find the complete Art Month schedule at culturalartsalliance.com.

CAA Events Director Allie Anderson says patrons can

expect new twists for May 13 and 14's ArtsQuest festival at Grand Boulevard Town Center. "Things are different with the layout," she says. "We're expecting around 5,000 people over the weekend." This year's festival includes adult art classes with the likes of

Justin Gaffrey, non-stop live entertainment and new sponsors.

"The other events are happening almost every day throughout May," says Ms. Anderson. "We support and promote them all and want people to go to as many as they can."

Ms. Anderson handles all of the huge CAA events, including the 30A Songwriters Festival and the Flutterby Festival. "Anything involving 500 or more people," she says.

She came onboard in September 2022. Prior to that, Ms. Anderson ran her own business designing custom apparel – t-shirts, tote bags and the like – for sororities all over the country. Originally from Panama City, she has also lived in Dallas and California.

Now she's back in Panama City with her two daughters and couldn't be happier. "It's nice to be back with friends and family," says Ms. Ander-

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Thunder Beach Celebrates 25 Years!



BY PAUL BONNETTE

Panama City Beach may be quiet now, but soon the sounds of thunder begin rolling in; locals and visitors alike know it is once again time for the Thunder Beach Motorcycle Rally. This five day event returns to Panama City Beach May 3-7 and they're celebrating its 25th anniversary by pulling out all the stops.

Known throughout the Southeast as the "most biker friendly free rally in the United States," Thunder Beach Motorcycle Rally pulls crowds from all over for numerous arts and crafts vendors, bike shows and contests, and of course, legendary rock concerts. For their anniver-

THUNDER BEACH

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ART

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son. "I appreciate the growth that's going on. There's so much to do here now. I just love the community and how much everyone supports each other."

Her connection to the arts began at a young age. "I was an artist growing up, and my mom is a glass artist," she says. "We used to do paint classes together. We were always around the arts, and I really found an appreciation for it at a young age. My mom is the one who told me about the CAA position."

ArtsQuest officially kicks off Thursday, May 11, at 6 p.m. with the Underwater Museum of Art fundraiser at Grand Boulevard Town Center. The event celebrates the museum's fifth installation with art, dancing, cocktails, food and more. "We'll have two sculptures by Allison Wickey and Zachary Long — about six feet tall each – at Under the Sea for people to view before they go underwater," says Ms. Anderson.



Dallas Primavera, this year's ArtsQuest featured artist, is a longtime CAA member. His work will be featured on posters and t-shirts. Mr. Primavera is based out of Jacksonville Beach and has been painting for over 20 years. "I'm traveling around the state of Florida to do art shows and trying to get my name out there," he says.

The Florida State alum says he's always been a vivid dream-



er. "I have developed a skill that I will try to put into words," the official bio reads. "As I close my eyes, every night I relive the

same dream – long halls filled with paintings on both sides, in every color, shape and size.

"At first, I would wake up

with a feeling of jealousy, like what I saw was exactly where I was going. A warm wave of understanding washed over me as I realized everything I saw was mine to come. Best part, I remembered everything I dreamt about. To this day, the process is the source of my inspiration, and it keeps getting stronger.

"He does beautiful work," says Ms. Anderson. "The posters are amazing." Discover more at arthydallas.com.



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THUNDER BEACH

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sary, Thunder Beach is going all out with some of the biggest names in rock including Rob Zombie, Buckcherry, Jasmine Cain, Pantera, Candlebox, Big Engine, Drowning Pool, Jackyl, Lynyrd Skynyrd and more.

Chase Michael took over as owner of Thunder Beach Productions last year with the desire to make Thunder Beach into an even bigger event by adding more headliner concerts. For Michael, as Thunder Beach was already a household name in the Southeast, it was an easy transition.

"Thunder Beach is a well-known name that has been around a long time," he explains. "That is kind of what drives the ability for us to bring in these concerts and really dictate where the event is going. Honestly that's what appealed most to me to get involved in



Thunder Beach is it had the crowd there already, so it just needed to elevate it and bring it to the next level and that was bringing the concerts in."

For motorcycle enthusiasts of all ages, Thunder Beach offers something for everyone, from numerous vendors, bike shows, and plenty of daytime entertainment to parades and the aforementioned block-buster concerts. In terms of overall experience, it doesn't hurt that Frank Brown Park, the event's host, is such an easily accessible venue. "I have been to at least five hundred rallies all over the

country and there is not a motorcycle venue like Frank Brown Park," Michaels says. "There is nowhere as big as that. To have all of those vendors and concerts all in one venue, it just doesn't exist anywhere else. To be five blocks from the beach and to have this beautiful venue... Frank Brown Park is quite the spectacle because they will have everything from corporate displays from Harley, Indian, Yamaha and BMW and the concerts as well as a ton of vendors that everybody can shop. It's pretty amazing in my opinion.

As thousands of riders and spectators descend into Bay County for the Thunder Beach Spring Rally, Michael plans to keep the momentum going to make Thunder Beach part of our area's tourist season. "I'm really focusing on the spring and fall rally, the two bookends to the Panama City Beach summer season. I'd like to make it make sense to where every business in the town benefits from it whether they are a grocery store, bar, restaurant or a hotel. It's just an opportunity to showcase the town and what it has to offer,"

Whether you are a rider, motorcycle enthusiast or just looking to shop at the numerous vendors and enjoy some exciting concerts, Thunder Beach clearly has something that draws visitors and locals to this event and the 25th anniversary promises to be even bigger. For more information or to buy tickets, visit www.thunderbeach.com.



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The Velcro Pygmies Reach and Teach

Impact Our Students From Stages to Schools

By WILL ESTELL

If you've experienced The Velcro Pygmies live, then they need no introduction. They've performed for years locally at Tailfins, Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's Concerts in the Village, Club L.A. and recently at Seaside School's Taste of the Race. If you're a fan of 80s and 90s rock, and moreover, the showmanship that goes along with it, you're probably going to become a Pygmies fan around the third or fourth song of your first show. The world-famous Velcro Pygmies specialize in taking their fans on a journey to a place and space in time when hair was big, pants were tight, screaming was singing, and in the illustrious words of KISS's Gene Simmons, "If it's too loud. You're too old" rang true.

The Pygmies formed in Louisville, Ky., in the 90s, playing night clubs, college campuses and frat parties, primarily across the Southeast. The band whose four members consist of founder and frontman, Cameron Flener, guitarist, Chase West, bassist, Max War, and drummer, Chris Eddins — reside across two states, but tour together for three to five shows each week. They've managed to not only maintain a strong fan base, especially here in Destin, but also to drastically build upon it over the decades.

Whether you go to a Velcro Pygmies show here in Destin, Auburn or Tuscaloosa, Ala., Atlanta, Houston or Cleveland, you will see a crowd made up of 35 to 50 somethings who became fans in their own college days, as well as 19 and 25 year old fans that have more recently started following the Pygmies and their brand of big hair, glitter bombs and long guitar solos. Somehow, they've managed to capture that almost magical magnetism that entices and entertains beyond any particular barriers. That, in a nutshell, is what makes Reach and Teach work too.

Giving Back Through Reach & Teach

In an effort to follow a passion of positively impacting future generations, five years ago Cameron Flener (affectionately





create good, productive human beings," he said. "The vision that April and I have created for Reach and Teach is to take this program all over the entire country. We want to help these students in realizing what the utilization of real-world life skills are about. These are soft skills we are teaching. The things that we all need to know: How to budget, how to present or pitch potential sponsors, how to sell their vision to others. Reach and Teach is about empowering these young people to believe in

Continued on next page

referred to as Cam by his friends and Pygmie fans) made the leap from the clubs to the classrooms, in a remarkable endeavor called Reach and Teach.

Reach and Teach is a unique program. The free program is facilitated through individual school systems and is built upon a nine-week curriculum, whereby students are given the opportunity to orchestrate, plan and execute a concert that takes place at their school. The Reach and Teach program is the brainchild of April Clark, a high school business teacher in Alabama, who originated the concept. The forward-thinking teacher was in the beginning stages of facilitating her vision of such an opportunity for students, and teamed with Pygmies founder, Flener, after the singer related to Clark how impressed he was with the program she was working on, and how much he would like to be a part of it full time.

I sat down with Cam, over lunch, to talk a little more about this program firsthand. Though Flener has made a living through rock music, he is as much an entrepreneur and great thinker as a great performer. He's extremely well spoken, intuitive and insightful, and as such was quick to point out that Reach and Teach isn't about rock and roll music as much as it is about truly giving something back, creating a legacy of sorts and being involved in something that is much larger than himself or his band.

"We're not creating rock promoters, we are helping to







VELCRO PYGMIES

continued from previous page

themselves and their abilities to make things happen."

Clark explained it this way: "A rock concert provides the perfect vehicle for condensing all the aspects of operating a business into a limited time frame. Students learn about budgeting, marketing, public relations, web design, audio visual, logistics, and, most importantly, are able to analyze the results of their event once it's over."

Cam went on to say, "Reach and Teach students are hands-on in doing everything from deciding on the venue (normally on the school grounds, and during regular school hours) to helping the band set up and tear down the stage. They truly learn what it takes to plan an event from concept to fruition, including how to make money for their school or school related fundraiser along the way. All with something that excites and interests them."

As a magazine editor and writer, I first became familiar with Reach and Teach during its infancy, around 2018. Since

EMERALD LADY JEWELRY

In the Best Buy Plaza, Destin



then I have had the opportunity to hear from educators, school administrators, and parents about the merits of this remarkable free program which has now impacted students in over 20 states. And now it's coming to our area. The program will be presented during the 2023 and 2024 school years at a growing number of high schools in Northwest Florida. Because of its popularity, Reach and Teach

has quickly become sustained by sponsorship monies from a growing number of companies who want to insure Reach and Teach continues to be free for the schools and students who benefit from it.

Some of the stories are remarkable in their positive impacts and life-changing alterations—students discovered and honed their skills as photographers, sound engineers and sponsorship salespeople. Some even became musicians, writers and singers after taking part in Reach and Teach through their own high school.

Beyond the life skills the students learn from the program, Cam said, "Our program provides institutions a new and exciting opportunity for fundraising, or as we call it 'FUN raising.' Because the program is provided free of charge to qualifying institutions, it allows many school systems to raise a significantly greater amount of money than your average runof-the-mill, plastic spirit cups, cookie dough or discount cards fundraiser could ever accomplish. As a result, schools are encouraged to sell tickets to the event and even allow outside guests to attend the subsequent performance. We don't ask for money. Reach and Teach simply asks that we are able to present our sponsorship portfolio to the students during the period the program is running."

This works out well for companies like Rock 'n Roll Sushi, Buc-ee's, Chord Buddy, OWA and other sponsors who feel strongly about using their successes to give back and help make this program possible for the thousands of students that are benefitting from this gen-

erosity and remarkable effort. The students win. The schools win. The sponsors win. Even the local community and concert attendees win. Everyone involved leaves every show, at every school just a little better than they were before those nine weeks leading to the culmination of that big show.

The Velcro Pygmies certainly rock. However, Reach and Teach isn't as much about music as it is about preparing the future leaders of our great country for a much larger and more important stage: Adulthood.

Find The Velcro Pygmies on Facebook or IG. To learn more about Reach and Teach, visit ReachandTeach.rocks and follow on Facebook at Reachand-Teach.

Will Estell is a writer, media entrepreneur, occasional actor, and coastal real estate professional with more than 600 published magazine features in an array of genres. Over the past 25 years, he has been instrumental in shepherding 12 new magazines from concept to fruition, as well as serving as editor in chief for numerous others. Originally from the backwoods of rural Mississippi, Will is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre, along with his wife, WEAR ABC 3 news anchor, Laura Hussey. Will is a regular contributor to Life Media's publications, as well as many other magazines, papers, and websites. He also happens to be a Velcro Pygmies fan, himself, and has even been known to join them on stage for a



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Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music

A Gift to our Community that Keeps on Growing

By Kelly Murphy-Redd, CEcd

Marlayna Goosby, founder and director of Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music uses her gift to grow the gifts of others.

Born in Louisiana and a military "brat," Marlayna lived in England, Alaska and Alabama before moving to Fort Walton Beach in 1995. Her father was Command Chief at Hurlburt Field and her husband is a retired reservist Chief Master Sergeant from Duke Field.

She attended Fort Walton Beach High School and was appointed to the All-County Honor Band all four years and the Florida All-State Honor Band one year. Marlayna received a music scholarship to the University of Southern Mississippi. As First Clarinet in the university symphony, Marlayna played alongside Doc Severinsen and the original cast of Les Miserable and graduated with a degree in music.

Marlayna has wonderful memories of her 32 years as a musician. She remembers practicing in her basement, on a stool, on the concrete floor when she was very young, and being taken to group lessons in Anchorage, Alaska when it was ten to twenty degrees below zero.



She lights up when talking about playing in the Viking Band at Fort Walton Beach High School under the tutelage of Mr. Randy Folsom and Mr. Ernest Hebson, who still mentor her today. Marlayna insists the years spent with these gentlemen also helped make her and her fellow students into good adults.

Coming home from college, Marlayna worked as a mail clerk at Troy University, and after five years, she moved up to academic advisor. She was the grants director for the Boys and Girls Club of the Emerald Coast and the Director of Academic Advising and Testing for Northwest Florida State College. Marlayna began playing with the Emerald Coast Community Band in 2017.

Deciding to begin teaching music lessons in her home, she grew the number of students to 23 and had a waiting list of 11 students.

The next decision was to expand. She prayed and began working with a realtor to find an appropriate space to rent. Every location they looked at had day-time businesses next door that

might not appreciate the music all day. She needed a stand-alone building. The realtor suggested they look at a building on Beal with road frontage. It turned out to be the building Marlayna took music lessons in when she was younger!

Marlayna and her husband worked day and night to paint the purple walls and grind down the orange concrete floors. The renovation was a labor of love. Starting small, Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music opened on May 6, 2019, with one employee. In October 2021, they outgrew the space and found a new location in Harbor Village on Beal.

Since opening its new location, Grow Your Gift has served 300 students per week in the building and through community partnerships such as the Montessori Learning Center, Boys and Girls Club of the Emerald Coast, Choctaw High School, Meigs Middle School, Sinfonia Gulf Coast Youth Orchestra, St. Mary's Middle School, Shoal River Middle School, Davidson Middle School, Ruckel Middle School, and Liza Jackson Preparatory School. Playground Music donated 20 instruments to help the outreach to the Boys and Girls Club through the Full

Circle Foundation.

Marlayna created the Full Circle Foundation to provide scholarships to students who need access to music education but do not have the ability to pay. With community help, she raised \$20,000 in two years.

Grow Your Gift is built on the vision of being the preeminent music institution in the community and that healing comes through music. Students can find their unique voice, gain confidence and self-esteem, and unleash their creativity. Friendships are built through group lessons because Grow Your Gift emphasizes collaboration, making sure the students get to know each other. Students share in the community through performances, learn new concepts, engage in peer-to-peer mentoring, and are held accountable because the group depends on each other. Grow Your Gift provides a high level of service, organization, and commitment.

The conservatory teaches 15 different instruments to students from six months old to 74 years old. There are 16 employees who are all musicians and Marlayna's entire family are musicians.

An ardent proponent of mu-

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Apex Design Center Partners with Dorsey Design Co.

Jaime Dorsey is a California transplant successfully growing her interior design firm, Dorsey Design Co., in Bluewater Bay and surrounding areas. She has a trained eye in design, after designing and remodeling homes and commercial real estate properties in California. Over the past four years, she has helped create dream spaces that her clients love year over vear. When she moved to Florida in 2022 with her family, she found that her true passion is in designing home interiors. Her attention to detail, respect for classic architecture and strong work ethic make her a standout leader in this space.

Dorsey Design Co., is a family-owned business and is composed of herself as Lead Designer, her husband, Brian Dorsey, and brother-in-law Daniel Dorsey. Together, the brothers help execute her designs and knock down walls if they need to! With their vast knowledge of construction and hands-on training from their father (who has an extensive history of professional car design and home construc-



tion) they are no strangers to dust, remolding and hard work. Supporting roles with other family members help make Dorsey Design Co., a growing success.

Many have come to know Jaime and Dorsey Design Co., by their classicism with modern twist designs; a unique and compelling style that is one-of-akind, timeless and beautiful.

With the use of mix materials, textures and colors, combined with an understanding and expert application of detailing, scale and proportion, Dorsey Design Co. has a bi-coastal resume of projects in both the retail and home spaces. However, the true passion lies in home interior design and making a



house a home for their clients.

Dorsey Design Co. is currently accepting design requests for kitchen design and entire home remodels. Jaime is particularly passionate about updating older homes with modern, fresh and functional designs. Their phi-

losophy has always been rooted in the utmost care, professionalism and respect for their clients. Their expertise helps ease any worries or concerns their clients may have around a room or entire home remodel. Dorsey Design Co. prides itself on listening to their clients' wants and needs and working together to find the best way to execute them, while guiding them through the process every step of the way.

To learn more about Jaime & Dorsey Design Co., visit www. dorseydesignco.com or find them on Instagram at @dorseydesignco_.

Apex Design center Senior Partner Chuck Hall said his clients have been impressed with the knowledge and insight Jaime has provided. As a home improvement business focused on providing "expert blue collar" solutions to our clients' projects Jaime has brought that "Design Expertise" we have been missing. Having her as a resource enables us to offer our clients another level of service including color, texture and style selections with professional visual renderings that leave nothing to chance. Jaime always puts the clients interest 1st guiding them to right choices. We have learned a lot from her already and continue building our product assortment to better accommodate our clients.

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Bluewater Bay Development To Include 40 Homes

By Kenneth Books

Ground is being broken for Addie's Place, a 40-home, gated community off Bluewater Boulevard in Bluewater Bay. The homes, which will range in price from about \$700,000 to \$900,000, will have a footprint from 2,100 to roughly 4,000 square feet.

"The first move-ins will take place in the fall," said Craig Harley, area manager of developer Randy Wise's Classic Homes Division, which is developing the community. "We expect a full complement of sales within two years."

Addie's Place is named after Randy Wise's grandmother, Addie Willingham, Wise said. Another Randy Wise Bluewater Bay development, Fate's Landing, is named after his grandfather, Lafayette, nicknamed Fate.

The homes at Addie's Place will each have a unique look, rather than the cookie cutter format used in many developments. Some will have amenities such as outdoor kitchens, fireplaces, pool baths, libraries, bonus rooms and accent walls. "The vast majority of our homes are personalized," said Harley. "No two will be alike."

So far, 10 homes have been presold, Harley said.

One of the couples who have reserved a home for themselves are Rich and Linda Toliver. The couple, who live in Huntsville,



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Ala., fell in love with the Emerald Coast during the 14 years Rich worked at Eglin. At the time, they lived in Fort Walton Beach.

"In Niceville, you can still have a family," Rich said. "We wanted dogs, a yard and people. We wanted our own community. This is a real town."

Randy Wise has built homes in Niceville for about 40 years,

gaining a reputation for value. "To maintain this level of quality and customer service, you have to do things right," Harley said. The firm has built roughly 250 homes in Bluewater Bay, he said.

The plan for Addie's Place shows planned locations of homes. Dotted lots have been presold.

Memorial Day:

A Tribute to Our Fallen Heroes

Doug Stauffer, Pastor, Chaplain, Veteran (Father, Son and Brother to Veterans)

From every branch of service, every walk of life,

America's soldiers are faced with peril and strife.

Bravery and sacrifice we continually recognize,

Never forget those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Memorial Day: a reminder to pay respect

To those who served, freedoms to protect.

On this solemn day, their legacy lives on,

Honored and remembered, even after they're gone.

Let us guide our children to look up high

To heroes who serve and fight, and some die.

Not to those in sports or Hollywood's fame,



But those who defend our country's name.

Remember the Gold Star families still here.

Show them our gratitude for losing those dear.

They deserve our love, honor, and care,

For their loss is beyond compare.

Take a moment right now to remember and reflect

Of the fallen soldiers we must never forget.

Let us pay our respects to these heroes today

And honor their memory in every possible way.



tappenings Around the Bay

Chess Night

6 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

Watercolor Techniques with Theresia McInnis 12:45 pm | Artful Things | Niceville

04 | Homebuyer Education Class

6 pm - 9 pm | Walton County Extension Office | DeFuniak Springs Open Mic & Karaoke Night

6 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

Concerts in the Village: Ozomatli

7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee 05 |

7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | Fort Walton Beach

Niceville Chamber of Commerce's Golf Classic 12:30 pm | Rocky Bayou Country Club | Niceville

Live Music: Fathom

6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

05- | The Sound of Music

14 Times Vary | Emerald Coast Theatre Co. | Miramar Beach

06 | The Pearl Project's First Annual Family Sock Hop 4 pm | Niceville Community Center | Niceville

Live Music: Duchess

6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Oils and Acrylics with Rosalyn O'Grady 09 10 am | Artful Things | Niceville

Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber Second Wednesday Breakfast 7:30 am | Niceville Community Center | Niceville

Impact100 of Northwest Florida Membership Recruitment Event

9:30 am | JoJo's Coffee & Goodness | Niceville Anime & Drawing Basics with Chris McLoone

3:30 pm | Artful Things | Niceville

Greater FWB Chamber Nothing But Networking

11:30 am | The Place on Beal | Fort Walton Beach

Open Mic & Karaoke Night

6 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

Concerts in the Village: Lucky Chops

7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

12 | Rock Fest

6 pm | Outdoor Recreation Marina | Hulburt Field

13 | NFSO Duruflé Requiem

7 pm | Resurrection Catholic Church | Miramar Beach Mother's Day Tea Party

1 pm - 3 pm | Heritage Museum of NWFL | Valparaiso My Chemical Cocktail

6 pm | Emerald Coast Science Center | Fort Walton Beach

13-35th Annual ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival

10 am | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach 14





Mother's Day Brunch 14

LJ Schooners | Niceville

Live Music with Ronny Dean Garrett

4 pm - 8 pm | LJ Schooners

GSSF Indoor League 15 |

9 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Niceville

16 | Young Professionals of Northwest Florida Leadership Conference 11:30 am | Northwest Florida State College | Niceville

Open Mic & Karaoke Night 18 | 6 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

Concerts in the Village: Yacht Rock Revue 7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

Live Music: Luke and Kaylee 19 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville 11th Annual Destin Rotary Cajun Crawfish Bash 5:30 pm | Seascape Towne Centre | Miramar Beach

Bay Area Health & Wellness Expo 20 | 10 am | Hammock Bay General Store | Freeport Introduction to Gothic with Elia Saxer 10:30 am | Artful Things | Niceville **Purple Monkey Luau Party** 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

67th Annual Billy Bowlegs Torchlight Parade 22 powered by Step One Automotive Group 7 pm | Eglin Parkway | Fort Walton Beach

Open Mic & Karaoke Night

6 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

Concerts in the Village: Sinfonia Gulf Coast feat. Morgan James and Symphonic Soul

7 pm | MKAF Cultural Arts Village | Destin

80's Rock & Dance Party 26 6:30 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

Gate to Gate Memorial Run/Walk 27 7 am | Unity Park | Eglin Air Force Base Acrylic Pour with Debi Profeta 10:30 am | Artful Things | Niceville

Live Music: Marsha Marsha Band 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Sunday Sunset Shrimp Boil 28 |

4 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville Sinfonia Goes Pops

7:30 pm | Alys Beach Amphitheatre | Alys Beach

Memorial Day Weekend at LJ Schooners:

May 26 | Catalyst | 6 pm - 10 pm

May 27 | Duchess | 6 pm - 10 pm May 28 | Gilleran's Island | 4 pm - 8 pm

May 29 | Parker Willingham | 4 pm - 8 pm

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

Hammock Bay - 1st & 3rd Sundays May 7, 21 8am | Victory Blvd | Freeport

Grand Boulevard - Saturdays May 6, 13, 20, 27 9am-1pm | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach











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20 Questions on the Coast: An Interview with Kurt Freudenreich, The Sonder Project

By Michelle Jannazo

How long have you lived here?

I've lived in the Freeport area since 1995. Went to school here when there was only one traffic light!

What is your work here?

Since 2015, my wife, Kim, and I have owned and operated Arbor Barber Trees, a tree care service. Most recently we purchased a sawmill and started ABTWOODSHOP. Now, when we remove old growth because it is diseased, dying or endangering human life, we bring it to

the shop and give it a second life. By milling and repurposing the wood, we are good stewards of the resources available to us.

How are you actively involved in our community?

My wife and I are Rotarians and have also hosted fundraisers for the Freeport Area Youth Sports Association. I'm working to support The Sonder Project.

What is The Sonder Project?

Started in 2015, The Sonder Project is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with eight board members, founded here in the Panhandle with the mission to empower impoverished communities through high-impact, sustainable development. They focus their work in Sub-Saharan Africa, because that is where they can make the greatest impact on the most number of lives at the most efficient cost. Annually, it serves at least 5,000 people directly every year, with an operating budget of approximately \$500,000, and likely many more, as the initiatives have a lasting impact for generations. Staff includes one U.S.based full-time staff member and six international, full-time staff members.

How did you become involved?

After Hurricane Michael, The Sonder Project adapted to support local relief efforts while continuing their work in Sub-Saharan Africa. It organized volunteer days to remove fallen trees and debris, and my wife and I and our Rotary Club supported their effort. Arbor Barber Trees partnered with The Sonder Project to support the Panama City area. It was destiny, because I always dreamed of funding a water project in the developing world, but was never sure how to accomplish it. After connecting with The Sonder Project, the dream became reality, and we haven't stopped changing lives together ever since.

How have you most recently supported the Sonder Project?

I walk. Specifically, I hike to support The Sonder Project's efforts to raise awareness and funds for education in impov-



erished nations. We use a social media platform to attract followers and potential donors who watch me push my comfort levels by rucking on long distance hikes.

Since 2020, I completed the Continental Divide Trail and the Florida Trail. This year, I hiked the 223-mile-long Ouachita National Recreational Trail (ONRT), the longest trail in the Ouachita National Forest. When friend and business owner Aaron Sundstrom of 98 Realty approached me with the proposition of conquering the ONRT together, I jumped at the chance. Although I have hiked longer mileage, pound for pound, this trail was no joke! We began by training and planning for the 34,976.4-foot ascent and the 34,402-foot descent. We began at Pinnacle Mountain State Park in Little Rock, Ark., and ended at Talimena State Park in Oklahoma. Through social media, we give people a glimpse into places that 99 percent of the population never sees. Knowing

we were raising funds to sponsor children in need motivated me to extremes.

Wow! What was most challenging about this adventure?

First are the sacrifices my family made so I could leave my home and business for three weeks. Prior to the trip, my wife and I scheduled our workload accordingly to accommodate the time it would take to complete the trail. Support from the Sundstrom family was also critical to our success. Eight lives have been changed for the better because of the sacrifices our families made. Our goal is to have 50 sponsors for the fundraiser by the end of 2023.

The second hardest challenge is the psychological intensity. Negativity sets in when you are cold, hungry, tired and hurting day after day. Severe elevation changes and rocky, wet terrain make for potential knee and ankle injuries. These conditions wear you down. If it weren't for The Sonder Project, I'd stay home. I believe through educating children we can change a nation. If sacrificing my comforts means a chance to help change a nation, a community, and even just one life, then I'm willing to

What programs does The Sonder Project offer?

It drills deep-water wells affixed to provide clean water any time, any day to benefit communities of at least 300 people. It distributes water filters for families living too remotely to

Continued on next page





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20 QUESTIONS

continued from previous page

benefit from a well. It also distributes handheld Sawyer water filters to provide clean drinking water. It constructs elementary school blocks with separate latrine facilities for schools lacking adequate and safe structures. It has one 11-acre solar-irrigated community farm that it's been developing for a few years with the goal of providing year-round food security and an economic engine for a community living in extreme poverty. And it sponsors students who have been selected into secondary school (the equivalent of high school) with the school fees, exam fees, boarding fees, uniforms and materials necessary to help students coming from extreme poverty to stay in school. Unlike in the U.S., high school in our partner countries is not compulsory, which means students attend at a cost. Less than 50 percent of the students ever reach the ninth grade, and this has a major impact on education levels throughout the country.

Does The Sonder Project have volunteer opportunities?

Opportunities are limited since its work is conducted overseas. With that said, it is always seeking volunteers interested in hosting an event or helping spread awareness about our work. Interested volunteers can reach out to info@thesonderproject.org. Engaged Sonder Project community members also participate in a Sonder Immersion and see the impact of our work firsthand. This experience brings participants to one of their partner communities to experience life in a rural African village while volunteering.

Who are some of the business and community sponsors?

The largest community sponsors include: 360 Blue, Corcoran Reverie, YOLO and 20/30north Studios. We also partner with The 30A Company, Tribe Kelley Surf Post, Vacayzen, Key Data Dashboard, VIE Magazine, Destin Jeep Rentals, Swiftly Catered, Reel 30A, Pecan Jacks, Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club, Beach Sand Sculptures, Eva Chauvin Photography, The Spa at Silver Shells and The Hub. Any business interested in sponsoring a project or offering an in-kind donation that can be in-



cluded in a silent auction, should reach out to Chad at chad@thesonderproject.org.

What are the future plans of The Sonder Project?

There is no shortage of communities in need of clean water sources, adequate school facilities, student sponsorship and increased food security in our partner countries. As a result, it is committed to continuing our current project initiatives. It also plans more mentorship opportunities in our Student Sponsorship program by increasing staff capacity and conducting workshops related to career development, reproductive health, leadership and other relevant

youth development offerings. In the water program, it continues to build sustainability by empowering local area mechanics and community leaders with the tools necessary to maintain drinking wells and support water filter troubleshooting, while also expanding sanitation training around clean water.

How can people contact you if they'd like to donate or be involved?

Follow The Sonder Project on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Visit the website at thesonderproject.org or email us at info@thesonderproject.org. To support my mission, please visit https://support.thesonderproject.org/MOAM.

Of course, I have to ask: What's the next challenge you'd like to take on?

I'm working on something that combines The Sonder Project and my love of Jiu Jitsu. This fall, I aim to hike The Pinhoti Trail. More immediately, we are featuring woodworking products at venues along 30A and donating a portion of proceeds to The Sonder Project and all its good works

20 Questions on The Coast is an interview series highlighting servant leadership in our area.



Community



By Joe Capers

With Spring Break and Summer around the corner, a lot of us locals (and our guests) will be out in our golf carts. You might even want to purchase one. Just remember, as there are different kinds of golf carts, which you'll discover when you go to the dealership and start looking at them, there's also different types of insurance coverage depending on your vehicle.

Let's shed some light on the differences, coverages and when you need what.

To begin with, there are two main 'uses' for golf carts/LSVs. Either personal or business/commercial. When your golf cart or LSV is used by you and your direct family members only, that's considered personal use. If you have a rental condo, for instance, and include a golf cart for your renter's use, that makes it business/commercial.

So, you're wondering, what's the big deal? Let's start with personal use and the two types – golf carts and LSVs. Golf carts are usually electric and have a maximum speed of about 15 mph and are designed to be used on your property or within the community your home is located, and back and forth to the

It's Golf Cart Season! Make Sure You Have the Correct Coverage for Yours

golf course. They aren't tagged or registered for driving on the street like your car. Some home or condo policies might include minimal golf cart coverage with an endorsement, but this won't give you everything you need and is not recommended. A separate golf cart policy would give you the best coverage.

Next, there are LSVs, or low speed vehicles. These are a type of golf cart with a maximum speed of around 25 mph and are manufactured with safety features such as rear-view mirrors, seat belts, brake lights, and turn signals, among other features. When tagged and registered, they are allowed on public roads with posted speeds of a maximum 35 mph.

There are differences in both coverage and premium. Essential golf cart coverages for any Personal Insurance Program should include: Liability to Others (Bodily Injury and Property Damage), Medical Payments, Guest Limits Liability, Uninsured Motorist Limits, and, if you need coverage to protect for damage to your cart, Comprehensive and Collision. BUT, once it's tagged and registered for street use, you will also need PIP (personal injury protection) coverage Florida requires of every vehicle on the road. This one coverage, in insurance speak, changes the product from golf cart coverage to LSV coverage and must be written on an auto policy platform. LSVs are more expensive to insure (with the mandatory PIP coverage) than golf carts, since LSVs are allowed on the road with cars, trucks and semis which increases the risk/exposure substantially.

As an example, your chances of being involved in a severe accident in your complex is much lower than if you were driving your golf cart on a public road. A Mercedes colliding with a golf cart going 35 mph would probably cause more damage than two golf carts bumping heads.

When you allow your renter to use your golf cart, you now need different coverage. If you have a personal use golf cart policy, it will not protect you or your renters if they cause Liability to Others from their negligence. This is where a policy designed for rental exposure is necessary. Because your renter is using your golf cart, this falls under the purview of a commercial product. So, you need a type of Commercial General Liability insurance. This insurance is designed to give you, typically, \$1 million in liability coverage and some physical damage (Inland Marine) coverage for the golf cart. Keep in mind, this product may not have the same coverages as a properly structured personal use golf cart policy as described above. And this policy does not provide the PIP coverage that would be required if the cart is tagged and registered with the state. And it



is nearly impossible to find an auto carrier that will write a policy with PIP if it falls under a rental situation.

Here in Okaloosa and Walton counties, as well as Bay and Escambia counties, we have many beachfront, gated and golf course communities with a plethora of golf carts being used every day.

Talk to your agent to ensure you have the correct coverage for your use as there are many different scenarios that will determine the right coverage for your golf cart. Insurance Zone, founded by Joe and Lea Capers, is now Abora Insurance Group. Voted Top in the Market for 10 years in a row, Abora is a full-service commercial and personal lines insurance agency serving Destin, Miramar Beach, Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, Freeport, Santa Rosa Beach (30A) and Inlet Beach. Abora can find solutions from a wide variety of the best insurance carriers in the market for Home, Auto and Life insurance on your terms. Call (850) 424.6979 or visit Getabora.com.









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Bay Buzz



Niceville Children's Advocacy Center Reopens

The public is invited to attend and celebrate the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center's (ECCAC) grand re-opening of its center in Okaloosa County with a ribbon cutting and the official re-naming to the Julie Sacco Porterfield Children's Advocacy Center, 401 McEwen Drive, Niceville, at 10 a.m. Friday, May 5. This center experienced a fire and significant water damage last summer that flooded both floors of the 13,000-sq.-ft. building. The center had to be completely vacated with staff and services continuing to provide services for kids in various other donated locations in the area. With the help of many, the center has since undergone a recently completed major renovation and restoration. Guests can tour the center, meet the team and learn more about the programs and services offered to the children and families it helps. It will be a celebration with music, food and beverages.

Paddle at the Park

Grab your paddle board and head to the 11th Annual Paddle at the Park, sponsored by HCA Florida Destin Emergency. With a new location and date, this standup paddle board race will take place in the Gulf of Mexico behind The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island on Saturday, May 6. It features 1- and 3-mile recreational races, a 6-mile elite race and a kids' fun out-andback paddle, to be followed by awards. Kayaks and inflatables are welcome too. Registration is now open on Paddleguru. com. For details: destinchamber. com/paddle-at-the-porch.

It's Tequila & Taco Fest Time

Tequila and Tacos Anyone?



May 12-14, the Village of Baytowne Wharf will come alive with local restaurants and food trucks competing for the Best Taco on The Emerald Coast with a first-place prize of \$2,500 – and you will have a say in the People's Choice Award! Sample many types of Tequilas and Margaritas from Blancos, Resposados, Anjieos and even Mezcals while indulging in some of the area's best tacos. For tickets: www.efestevents.com

FORE! The Love of Animals Golf Tournament

Calling all animal lovers and golf enthusiasts! Alaqua Animal Refuge will host the Second Annual "FORE! The Love of Animals" Golf Tournament Saturday, June 10, at The Links Golf Club at Sandestin. Presented

by Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort® as the Top Dog Title Sponsor, the Tournament welcomes teams of four plus. 8:30 a.m. check-in; 10 a.m. shotgun start, scramble format; breakfast by Chick-fil-A and a Bloody Mary and Mimosa bar; 18 holes of golf with a cart; boxed lunch; two drink tickets; and a fun after-party. Registration is open at www.Alaqua.org; \$250 per golfer or \$850 per foursome.

Coffee and Conservation Anyone?

A new program exploring conservation in our local area meets every second and fourth Tuesday of the month for eight weeks, featuring open discussion on community conservation ideas and issues over coffee and refreshments. Aldo Leopold's book, A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There, is being used and Forestry Agent Ian Stone facilitates the discussion each week. Free to attend, an RSVP is requested to get an estimate of potential attendance through Eventbright.

Okaloosa County Included in Recent State Broadband Projects

Gov. Ron DeSantis recently announced more than \$22 million awarded to eight projects across eight Florida counties through the Broadband Opportunity Program to expand broadband Internet access in Florida's underserved communities and impact more than 33,200 unserved residential, educational, business and community locations. These awards are in addition to \$144 million the governor awarded in February, bringing Florida's total investment to \$166 million for the expansion of broadband Internet in Florida's rural communities.

In this set, the city of Laurel Hill, unincorporated Deerland and Svea, and unincorporated Okaloosa County (\$853,000) were included to add 103.5 miles of fiber optic cable to their existing network to provide 831 unserved locations within Okaloosa County with symmetrical download and upload speeds of 1GR



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The Seaside School, Inc. Launches Multi-Million Dollar Seacoast Collegiate High School Expansion Project with Northwest Florida State College

The Seaside School, Inc., Florida's oldest continuously operated public charter school and #1 combination public charter school in the state of Florida, announced today the launch of the Seacoast Collegiate High School (SCHS) Expansion Project in partnership with Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC). This multi-million-dollar expansion project will further expand the partnership between SCHS and NWFSC by providing a permanent home for SCHS at the South Walton Campus of NWFSC as well as developing a high school dual enrollment center for all students in Walton County. In addition, the new facility will include "The Accelerator" which will offer training, mentoring, and collaboration to new area businesses and entrepreneurs. "Walton County and the surrounding areas are currently experiencing rapid growth," said Patrick McCarthy, Seaside School Foundation President. "We believe investing in the people of our community is needed and necessary now more than ever. By expanding this partnership between two his-



torically successful institutions, we will make Walton County an even better place to live and thrive."

Currently, ninth and tenth grades at SCHS operate in five classrooms that are leased from NWFSC at the South Walton Campus. Students in eleventh and twelfth grades attend classes on the Niceville Campus of NWFSC. With this expansion project, The Seaside School, Inc. will be able to consolidate all high school students at the NWFSC South Walton Campus as well as expand the collegiate programs to more students in Walton

Tickets also available for purchase

County by adding additional instructional space for students in grades nine through twelve and the community. "Our goal is to create a vibrant epicenter for not only dual enrollment education but also higher learning opportunities that will not only benefit our students, but will provide all high school students in Walton County more access to a college education and fulfill their educational goals," said Kim Mixson, The Seaside School, Inc. Chief Academic Officer.

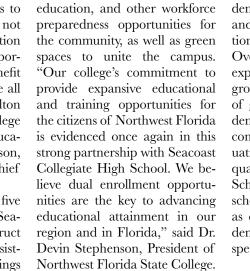
NWFSC is providing five acres of land on which The Seaside School, Inc. will construct new educational facilities consisting of three additional buildings for both SCHS and NWFSC

classrooms, shared lab space, "The Accelerator" for workforce development, continuing education, and other workforce

Despite the growth, SCHS

holds strong to their core values of providing a small learning environment with a focus on students' individual learning needs and independence in combination with a collegiate program. Over the last decade, SCHS has experienced great success and growth with the anticipation of graduating a class of 60 students this spring. The school has consistently had a 100% graduation rate and more students qualifying for the Bright Futures Scholarships than any other high school in Walton County as well as continually earning top academic scores. "Our school has spent over 25 years supporting

Continued on next page





SANGER Call or click for tickets

NFSO at Resurrection Catholic Church: Duruflé Requiem

The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, Todd Craven, Music Director/ Conductor Featuring the Northwest Florida Symphony Chorale, Darrin Scott Isaac, Music Director Soloists: Stephanie Riegle, flute and Katie Ott, harp Works by W.A. Mozart, Matthew Fossa and Maurice Duruflé

Experience the beauty of the famous Requiem by French composer Maurice Duruflé performed in the perfect spiritual and ambient setting of the Resurrection Catholic Church with a full 65- piece chorale and orchestra.

The first half of the program highlights principal musicians from the NFSO: the premiere of a new work by principal oboist Matthew Fossa and a performance of the



magical Concerto for Flute and Harp by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, featuring Stephanie Riegle and Katie Ott.

Saturday, May 13,

The performance is at 7:00 p.m. Tickets: \$25

Call the Mattie Kelly Arts Center box office at (850) 729-6000 or visit mattiekellyartscenter.org.

Tickets also available for purchase the day of the performance at Resurrection Catholic Church, Miramar Beach, FL





By Stacy Lingenfelter Sarikanon, Stunning Spaces – Decorating Den Interiors

When it comes to color, I advise my clients to follow their heart. As an interior decorator, my color philosophy revolves around the fact that sometimes color preferences are not always the same as your favorite colors. But when some sound thought is considered when planning for

Some Sound Color Advice

a new color scheme, generally your heart's color desires will rule supreme! And, as most people have discovered, planning a color scheme is a carefully thought-out process.

I suggest that my clients follow five easy steps in assessing their space for a new color scheme.

First, decide where your best opportunities are for using color! Will painting one wall in an accent color give your room the spark you desire? Or perhaps a soft blending of similar color hues will give your new room its desired "feeling or mood."

Then, take a critical look at your room's architectural features. Do you want them to stand out – take center stage – or be minimized? For instance, perhaps you have painted bookshelves flanking a room's fire-



place. Adding an accent color to the back walls of your bookshelves might add just a bit of much-needed color flair to the entire wall scheme.

Third, try to define how your space is being used. Reading, relaxing, game playing, watching TV? An important consideration in selecting your new color scheme is how you actually use and enjoy the space.

Next, analyze your room's lighting. How much natural light does your room have? A room with a lot of artificial light will definitely call for a different color plan than one with a lot of natural light.

And last, but not least, it's critical that you take into account your "new" room's relationship to the oth-

er rooms in your home. Color continuity is key to creating the overall look most people desire for their homes.

SEASIDE SCHOOL

continued from previous page

our students and their community. This project will allow us to remain committed to fostering a high level of academic achievement for our students while providing them with skills to contribute to the area's business community," said The Seaside School, Inc. Director of Strategic Development, Joy Robbins. "Currently, our high school students are working on earning their Associate of Arts degree, but with this level of growth and expansion, we will be able to of-

fer our students the opportunity to earn an Associate of Science degree with a concentration in Business Management."

The next step in this project is to secure funding and letters of support from stakeholders, community members, and through a variety of philanthropic initiatives led by the Seaside School Foundation whose primary mission is to take a long-term approach to raise, invest, and spend funds in support of The Seaside School, Inc. and to steward those funds so they provide support in perpetuity. "The Seaside School Foundation is

excited to bring our community along in this great adventure that involves the School community and so much more. We are not just building a high school that will serve only our students, we are building a dual enrollment center that will enroll and serve other high school and college students throughout Walton County." said Teresa Horton, Executive Director of

the Seaside School Foundation. "The generosity of donors and philanthropic support is essential to make this very important project and vision a reality. A comprehensive center that provides an outstanding education, innovation, leadership, workforce development, continuing education and so much more, is definitely a worthy investment."

For more information on the

Seacoast Collegiate High School Expansion Project including naming and gift opportunities, campus renderings and upcoming informational sessions, visit SeasideSchools.net. The Seaside School, Inc., hopes to break ground on the new facilities this year with doors opening to students in 2025.







The Vietnam POWs 50 Years Later Home Sweet Home

By Doug Stauffer

The "Welcome Home" ceremony at the Air Force Armament Museum honored those who were captured in the Vietnam War and returned home 50 years ago. The date was March 4, 1973, when the North Viet-

namese released nearly 600 U.S. POWs from their prisons.

On Feb. 12, 1973, the first of 591 U.S. prisoners began the trip home, with more flights returning until late March. The festivities hosted a reception and program to honor the POWs now calling Okaloosa County home. The honored include:

Brig. Gen. George "Bud" Day, USAF, Ret. Col. Keith Hall, USAF, Ret. Col. Howard Hill, USAF, Ret. Col. Ed Hubbard, USAF, Ret. Col. Ron Webb, USAF, Ret.



Lt. Col. Dave Gray, USAF, Ret.

"We hope this brings a feeling of strong patriotism and respect for what these men endured in those days," said Tricia Flaherty, Director of Operations at the Air Force Armament Museum. The words "You are not forgotten" are a constant reminder that we should always remember the sacrifices of these veterans who paid so dearly in defense of freedom and our na-

The United States fought in the Vietnam War for 10 years, from 1965 to the fall of Saigon in 1975. On Jan. 27, 1973, the U.S. signed the withdrawal agreement of American troops from South Vietnam. The agreement included the negotiated release of the nearly 600 prisoners of war held by North Vietnam in various prisons and camps, including the infamous Hỏa Lò prison in Hanoi, dubbed by many as the "Hanoi Hilton.'

Hundreds of American POWs, primarily Air Force airmen, endured months of isolation and squalid conditions at Hỏa Lò. From the beginning, U.S. POWs at Hỏa Lò endured miserable, unsanitary conditions, including meager food rations and the ever-present threat of starvation. The captors subjected American prisoners of war to extreme torture and mal-

nutrition. Although North Vietnam signed the Third Geneva Convention of 1949, which demanded "decent and humane treatment" of prisoners of war, they employed severe torture methods, including sleep deprivation, malnutrition, beatings, hanging by ropes, locking in irons, and prolonged solitary confinement.

POWs were repeatedly interrogated and tortured at the hands of their captors and suffered enormous levels of physical and mental abuse. The North Vietnamese guards strictly enforced no communication within the prison, but POWs found ways to communicate, including a tap code that could be heard through walls from one cell to another and a "Deaf Mute" code of hand signals, used when guards were not looking. Despite this limited communication, prisoners developed a code within their ranks to look out for and protect each other.

The deal would come to be known as Operation Homecoming and began with three C-141 transports landing in Hanoi on Feb. 12, 1973, to bring the first released prisoners home. From Feb. 12 to April 4, 54 flights took place, returning 591 POWs home.

Many of the flagpoles in America fly the POW/MIA flag with the American flag. The POW/MIA symbol has flown since 1973 to honor those who suffered through years of captivity and torture and those who never came home. Almost every day Okaloosa County residents can find something going on that shows appreciation for the military, and especially our POWs and MIAs.





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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. Named after "LJ Schooner" (the LJ is for Lazy Jack), a cherished fourlegged icon on Bluewater Bay Marina docks, the open-air oyster bar and restaurant offers a magnificent view of the water, marina and unparalleled sunset any time of year. There are, of course, oysters and a delicious varied menu with dinner specials such as blackened mahi and grilled shrimp with hollandaise, served over cheese grits.

Monthly: Sundays - Brunch 9 a.m.-1 p.m.; Wednesdays-Bartenders Cocktail Special

May highlighted events include Get Hook'd Academy May 1, 8, 15 and 22 with a fishing tournament at the end; live music all Memorial Day weekend with Catalyst Friday, May 26, 6-10 p.m., and Duchess, Saturday, May 27, 6-10 p.m., Gilligan's Island Sunday, May 28, 4-8 p.m., and Parker Willingham, Monday, May 29, 4-8 p.m.; Throwdown Paddle Board Races Thursdays, 6 p.m., Open

Wednesdays, Mic/Karaoke 6-10 p.m.

Dine-in, pick-up, to-go. Oyster bar hours: Monday-Thursday, 3-10 p.m.; Friday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-midnight; Sunday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Happy hour daily, 3- 6 p.m. Restaurant hours: Monday-Tuesday, Wednesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday brunch, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

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Ovide at Hotel Effie? Mondays, 5 p.m., enjoy some of Chef Hugh's favorite dishes with a seasonal prix fixe menu. Choose one starter, one entrée and one

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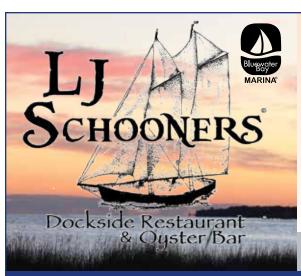




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 - Sunday Brunch 9am-lpm



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May 14: Mother's Day Brunch

May 14: Ronny Dean Garrett 4-8pm May 19: Autumn Poultry 6-10pm

May 20: Radio Starr 6-10pm

May 26: Catalyst 6-10pm

May 27: Duchess 6-10pm May 28: Gillerans Island 4-8pm

May 29: Jody Lucas 4-8pm

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Get Hook'd Academy Creates Lifelong Anglers

By Kenneth Books

Surrounded by the Gulf of Mexico and Choctawhatchee Bay, it's natural for local residents to take to the water and try to land that trophy fish. But there's more to fishing than baiting a hook and casting a line. No one is born with fishing skills. And, as the saying goes, give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and you feed him for life.

Into the breach steps Capt. Rob Hansill, an engineer who retired from the Marine Corps after 22 years, with a penchant for teaching.

Four times a year, Rob runs the Get Hook'd Academy at Bluewater Bay Marina, providing young people with techniques that will serve them for the rest of their lives on the water. The four-session classes take place in early spring, May, August and September. This will be the fourth year the Academy has operated. So far, there are 94 graduates of the Academy.

"We base it on school holidays, so we can get four consec-



utive Mondays in a row," Rob, 51, says.

Each class runs three hours, from 4 to 7 p.m., which Rob admits is "kind of a stretch for a kid who goes to school all day, but it works."

Rob's teaching method includes quick demonstrations followed by hands-on training. For example, he'll show a knot, then the students will work toward mastering it.

The students are provided videos of the classwork, which they can take home and review. "We give them as much information as possible to make them successful and confident," Rob says.

Rob is no stranger to the water or to fishing. Since 2018, he has run L4K Charters in the waters off Bluewater Bay. "The skills I learned in the Marine Corps help

me to manage my business," he says.

But he's not the only authority figure in the Academy. Volunteers are key personnel. Many are mothers, fathers, brothers or sisters, he says, most of whom don't fish. "A lot of times, they end up learning as well," he says.

The Academy tuition is \$200, and the necessary gear runs another \$410, Rob says. Half Hitch Tackle in Destin sells him the equipment at cost.

"We give the kids top-ofthe-line equipment," Rob says. "You can't go to Walmart and buy a little kit; it won't do."

The next class, which meets May 1, 8, 15 and 22, will include 16 students, Rob says, which is a larger number than he prefers. "I try to keep it at 12," he says, "but it's hard to keep up with demand." Students range in age from 7 to 12, all recruited through word of mouth.

The most difficulty the Academy runs into is bad weather. "We pray for the best weather and calm water," Rob says.

The fourth class is an actual fishing tournament, letting the students practice their newfound skills. And the tourneys sometimes have interesting aspects.

"The first tournament, we had two girls on the boat," Rob says. "One caught a fish, accidentally stepped off the boat

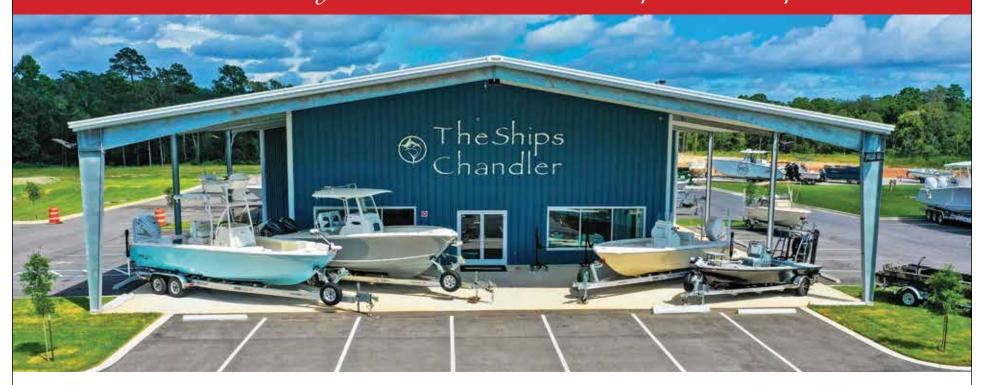
and went into the water. She handed me her rod and real and said, 'Don't lose my fish!' Then she went on to win the tournament."

Former students often stay in touch with Rob. "I've had kids run into me at Walmart, run across the aisle and hug my legs," he says. "I get emails with pictures of fish and captions that say, 'Look what I caught.""

Rob started the Academy after he spied a couple of little boys with big reels. They were casting but obviously didn't know what they were doing. "I talked to their mom and asked if I could take them fishing," Rob says. "We went four times. I didn't charge them anything. And they caught something every time."

While the emphasis is on fishing, Rob says the Academy has other long-reaching effects. "We're creating good environmental stewards and environmental protectors," he says. "They become responsible kids and leaders of the future."

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Off the Hook

Tips to Safely Co-exist with Alligators

Signs of spring – balmy weather, blooming flowers and nesting birds – are occurring. Warmer temperatures also mean alligators are more active and visible. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) recommends taking precautions when in and around the water:

While serious injuries caused by alligators are rare in Florida, the FWC offers the following tips about how to safely co-exist with them:

Keep a safe distance if you see an alligator and never feed one. When fed, alligators can lose their natural wariness and instead learn to associate people with the availability of food.

Swim only in designated swimming areas during daylight hours. Alligators are most active between dusk and dawn.

Keep pets on a leash and away from the water's edge and never let them swim in fresh or brackish water. Pets often resemble alligators' natural prey.

Call the FWC's Nuisance Alligator Hotline at 866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286) if you believe an alligator poses a threat to people, pets or property and the FWC will dispatch a contracted nuisance alligator trapper to resolve the situation. The FWC administers a Statewide Nuisance Alligator Program (SNAP) to proactively address alligator threats in developed areas, while conserving alligators in areas where they naturally occur.

Find more resources about living with alligators at MyF-WC.com/Alligator.

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has a healthy and stable alligator population, which is estimated at 1.3 million alligators of every size. They are found in freshwater lakes, ponds, swamps and slow-moving rivers in all 67 counties in Florida. Learn more about alligators at MyFWC. com.









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NWFSC National Championship Three-peat

By Doug Stauffer

Champs again! Crowning National Champions in Northwest Florida is becoming habit forming with the NWFSC basketball programs. The college's women's basketball team did it again, winning the 2023 National Junior College Athletic Association Division I Women's Basketball Championship. This is the second national championship for the Lady Raiders, having been crowned two years ago.

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The men's basketball team filled in the 2022 gap by winning the championship. That's the three-peat: Lady Raiders (2021), Raiders (2022), Lady Raiders (2023). Be sure to get your season tickets for 2024.

The Lady Raiders' two national titles are the first in program history. President Devin Stephenson congratulated the team and their coach, saying, "I couldn't be prouder of the Lady Raiders and coach Bart Walker.

It is an outstanding achievement and a testament to our commitment to excellence at Northwest Florida State College. The best truly is our standard."

The Lady Raiders defeated the dynasty-driven Trinity Valley Community College Lady Cardinals in a 66-63 nail-biter. The game started with Trinity Valley jumping out to a 9-0 lead in the first four minutes of the contest, but the Lady Raiders remained poised, resilient, and determined.



Photos courtesy NWFSC

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"We matured a lot and we had to match their physicality," Burt said. "That was the biggest thing was we got tougher as the season came on. We found our team's heart this week and that's

team's heart this week and that's why we won this."

In a game with nine lead changes and eight ties, neither team led by more than five points in the second half. Keeping the

game within reach helped Mya

Pierfax ice the game by making two free throws with 5.5 seconds in overtime.

The action took place at the Rip Griffin Center in Lubbock Christian University, Texas. The Raiders spotted their opponent 10 points in the first quarter before mounting a furious comeback. Their dominating defense along with an exceptional execution on offense made the winning difference.

Sophomore Sakima Walker was named the Most Valuable Player of the 2023 NJCAA DI Women's Basketball Championship. Her 23 points led the Raiders with Destiney McPhaul, Zayla Tinner adding 11 points each. Sakima recorded 80 points and 42 rebounds throughout the national tournament.

Fans can follow NWFSC's athletics on Twitter by following @NWFRaiders or by visiting NWFRaiders.com for more information.







Interview: Preserve Bluewater Bay

What is Preserve Bluewater Bay?

Preserve Bluewater Bay (PBWB) is a not for profit organization created by community members to save the greenspace in Bluewater Bay. PBWB is working to garner a true non-profit 501c3 status, but it is still in the works with the State of Florida and the IRS. The magnificent greenspace in Bluewater Bay is the defining characteristic of our community, and we want to keep it that way.

Why is this community ripe for development?

Bluewater was originally built as a golf community. The golf course has been slowly losing clientele over the years and is not as profitable as it once was. As the demand for housing increases and interest in golf decreases, residential and commercial development companies see an opportunity for profit and are interested in purchasing the golf course to build new homes and multi-tenant units. We've witnessed neighboring communities struggle with over-development and infrastructure



shortages (roads, schools, etc.) and we want to prevent this from happening in Bluewater Bay.

Are you trying to save the golf course?

Today, much of our greenspace is still primarily used as a golf course. The golf course helps pay for the maintenance and upkeep of these greenspaces. PBWB would like to continue to use the land for a golf course, because it is the most cost effective way to maintain the land. Although the golf course financial picture is improving, it is yet to be seen if it can return

to profitability. If golf gets to the point where it is no longer economically viable, we are happy to something else with the golf We've course. had some great suggestions, including walking trails. soccer fields, etc. All of those and more

are on the table if golf doesn't work. Our purpose is simply to preserve the greenspace in the most cost effective, sustainable way.

What are you hoping to accomplish with Preserve Bluewater Bay?

To save our community and the community's greenspace, we - the community - need to buy the land. If the community owns the land, the community can ensure that it remains green, free and open. We call our campaign to buy the land "The Capital Campaign." We need to raise \$2.4 million

through the Capital Campaign to purchase the 150 acres of land that is available. If PBWB doesn't purchase it, the current owners will look to develop the land or potentially sell it off to a different developer.

How do you plan to accomplish this goal?

PBWB is taking a multipronged approach to raising capital. **First,** and most importantly, we need the support of the Homeowner associations. We are working with each HOA board to appeal to the communities for support. Many have already financially supported the campaign.

Second, we will take individual pledges from individuals. We will not ask you to honor your pledge until we know there is enough interest to buy the land. But, if you pledge and donate money to the campaign, you will be granted voting rights when it comes time to make decisions about the land.

Third, and probably the most important, homeowners that have homes along the golf course will have the opportuni-

ty to purchase the land behind their home and expand their property line – under the condition that the land will remain open for golf or other community purposes until a time in which that is no longer viable.

Fourth, businesses are being offered sponsorship opportunities to bring visibility to the community through their support for our efforts. We owe a huge thanks to those businesses that are already supporting us!

Do you have any final remarks?

We want to be clear that our purpose is to buy the land for the community. It will be community-owned and community-operated. This is not a campaign for the golf course. All of the funds raised in the capital campaign will go towards buying the land, not towards golf!

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to own our land and protect our greatest investment! Please join us by pledging today!

You can find more details and pledge your support at www.preservebwb.com.



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Family Golf Membership \$279/mo. plus tax Includes Cart Fees

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Super Golf Membership \$315/mo. plus tax Includes Cart Fees

Super Family membership includes spouse, any children under the age of 18 (24 if a full-time student) living in the member's personal residence, 10 free rounds per year (not eligible for roll-over to the following year) for visiting family/close friends, and unlimited "guest of a member" rates. Requires a 6-month minimum commitment.

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Junior Members must be age 24 and under and enrolled full-time in high school or college. Registration must be in parent(s) name.

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Regret Avoidance vs. Living and Learning



By Stephenie Craig, Journey Bravely

I was a high school senior deciding between college in my home town or five hours away. I meticulously weighed the pros and cons and spun up scenarios of different directions my life might take if I didn't choose the exact right university. The back and forth had a deadline and I eventually decided to leave my home town. Five years later, I was 1 year into a job, married,

and moving forward in life when it hit me...it didn't really matter which school I chose. Either way, I would have chosen the same career path, likely married the same person (since he was a childhood friend), and my life would have been good. Some things would have been different, but it all would have turned out okay.

Do you ever find yourself immobilized in decision making because you fear regret? Maybe



you feel that every decision needs to be made perfectly in order for your life to progress well. Fear of regret can make it hard to choose a school, take a job, commit to a relationship, make a move, or plan a trip. Worrying that every decision might be the wrong decision can keep you from enjoying your life and creates a stuck feeling of anxiety.

What if there was a way to flip the script in your head about every decision being a chance for failure and regret? What if every decision is an opportunity to live and learn, to grow and become wiser?

I talk with hundreds of humans each year about various life decisions. Over time, I have observed and embraced the reality that most decisions don't have one right path. Most decisions have some flexibility and you could choose one of various options and still experience a positive outcome. Of course there are poor, unwise decisions and we all want to avoid those. But outside of that, most decisions aren't permanent, can be adjusted if needed, and produce growth and learning. It's possible to define a life well lived as one characterized by growth and learning rather than by a list of specific accomplishments. So, how do you shift from a regret avoidance approach to a living and learning approach to life?

5 Ways to Shift from Regret Avoidance to Living and Learning

- 1. Identify the decision at hand and notice any fear of regret thoughts surfacing in your mind and body. Name the fear of regret to yourself and gently release the thought rather than obsessing about worst case scenarios.
- **2. Brainstorm decision options.** Notice that most of the time, multiple healthy deci-

sion options exist. Narrow your brainstorm down to the top 2 or 3 decision options that seem wise and in line with your values.

3. Remember your decision history. Remind yourself of times when decisions have been flexible and could be adjusted over time. Remind yourself of times when decisions have produced growth and learning that resulted in positive change in your life. Remind yourself of times when even decisions you would make differently now taught you something important you might not otherwise have learned. Try journaling using the above reminders as prompts.

4. Watch for life's lessons. As you make decisions, watch for opportunities to learn, to pivot, to embrace a new skill or character quality. When something doesn't go like you planned, reach for the learning, notice the discomfort, then be open to growing. Our greatest times of personal growth tend to result from unexpected and hard circumstances.

5. Embrace the resulting freedom from letting go of fear of regret. Lean into the joy of knowing the vast majority of your decisions are able to shape you into a more mature and whole person if you don't resist the process. Try creating an internal message like, "I'm going to make a wise decision based on the information I currently have. I will make adjustments as needed. I will embrace all the growth and learning from the decision I'm making and choose not to regret it." It's okay if regret emerges from time to time. Gently dismiss it and move forward with your new approach.

As you seek to release fear of regret and incorporate joyful living and learning into your journey, you can connect with us at journeybravely.com.







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By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, HealthyDay HealthyLife

Gout is a painful form of arthritis that occurs when high levels of uric acid in the blood form crystals and accumulate in and around the joint. However, gout can still occur without high UA levels. The onset of gout is sudden with severe joint pain, redness (feels like the joint is on fire) and is tender to the touch. It often occurs at the base of the big toe, but can affect other joints as well. It is a type of arthritis which creates inflammation in the affected area. Men are more prone than women to have gout. The chances for women increase after menopause. Areas affected are the joints, bursae (sac between bones in joints), tendon sheaths and kidneys.

Gout arthritis increases bone fracture risk notably due to low vitamin D levels but also oxidative stress and inflammatory cytokines induced by hyperuricemia. Inflammatory cytokines and oxidative stress can increase bone resorption and decrease bone formation increasing the risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures.

Uric acid is produced when purines (a naturally occurring chemical in the body and some foods) are broken down during digestion. UA normally passes through the kidneys and exits through urine without issue. Higher levels due to excess production of UA or failure to eliminate properly triggers the condition.

Risk Factors:

- Family history
- Age and sex
- Diet
- Obesity (UA levels higher primarily due to lowered elimination)
- Medical Conditions: HBP, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, heart disease, kidney disease, kidney stones, heart attacks, congestive heart failure, psoriasis
- Any disease that increases UA levels
- Certain medications: Diuretics (helps body to eliminate fluid), low-dose aspirin, Cyclosporine (immunosuppressant), niacin-B vitamin (if taken in

Preventing and Dealing with Gout

large amounts).

A healthy diet (fruit, veggies, whole grains) can help alleviate or prevent this painful disease. Cherries have been shown to reduce symptoms. Foods to avoid due to their sugar content or purine levels are:

- Steak and organ meats
- Sweetbreads and other sugary food and sodas
- Seafood such as anchovies, shellfish, sardines and tuna are higher in purine than other types

but the health benefits of of fish may outweigh the risks

• Alcohol and beer (avoid during gout attacks), wine doesn't appear to increase risk

High quality supplements can play a positive role in treating gout. They can also improve metabolism, reduce inflammation, improve kidney function and filtration, and may help keep UA levels normal. Certain antioxidants also help to reduce inflammation as well as reduce frequency and severity of attack.

Vitamin D: High levels of UA inhibit vitamin D production. D deficiencies are common with gout.

Grape Seed extract with Vitamin C: Best supplement Dr. Ladd has seen to reduce symptoms of gout. Patients had great success reducing pain and recurrence of gout flare ups. Doses varied with patients.

Joint support with curcumin (turmeric extract) mixed with

vitamin C and several other important supporting ingredients creates a synergistic safe anti-inflammatory response that reduces pain effectively, while at the same time helps heal the tissues.

If you feel you may be at risk it may be time to take steps toward a healthier lifestyle. As we used to say in the olden days,"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

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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.

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Semaglutide - Weight Loss Magic



By Dr. Richard Chern, M.D.

If you haven't heard already there is a new weight loss medication available at a reasonable cost. semaglutide is a GLP-1 receptor agonist which means it activates the GLP-1 receptor. Still confused? It doesn't matter. It has several important actions in the body.

Semaglutide ultimately helps your body lose weight by improving the regulation of sugar levels and insulin levels in the body. If this sounds like a medication for diabetes instead of weight loss then you would be correct. This class of medications was developed to improve diabetes. Astonishingly, in studies, many of my patients lost significant weight. In fact, up to 30% of their body weight. And, much of the weight stayed off after stopping the medication.

This medication also slows the stomach. Food stays in the stomach longer so you feel full longer. And your stomach gets full faster so you eat less. These medications help people lose significant weight and you lose weight without feeling hungry!

Sounds like magic, right?

I have been seeing patients for over 30 years. I have seen so many weight loss drugs come on and go. This is the first time I have ever been excited to tell people about a weight loss medication.

So how is it possible this medication is available? Well, this medication was initially Ozempic. The FDA allows a new medication to have a patent, or monopoly, on the medi-





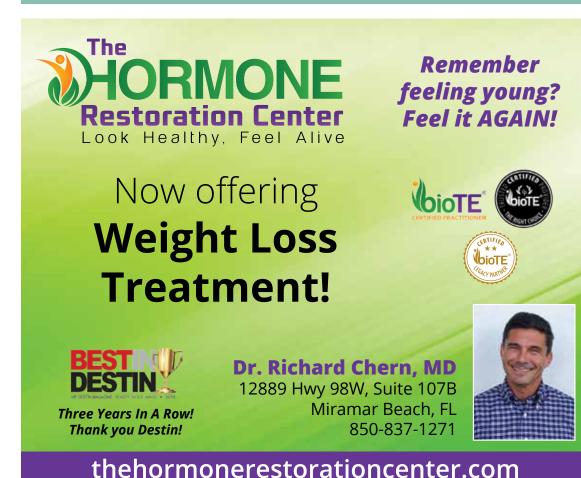
patients with diabetes.

Fortunately for us the drug company had no idea that the medication was going to be so popular and they essentially could not keep up with demand. They ran out of medication! So how is the medication available? The two ways branded medication can be manufactured by other companies is if the medication's patent has expired OR if the medication is no longer available from the manufacturer. So as soon as the company ran out, the other companies jumped in and started production of the generic equivalent semaglutide. It's possible this price break might end once the drug company gets production online but we just don't know.

If you're interested in losing significant amounts of weight and keeping it off, without feeling hungry you should give us a call at 850-837-1271. We still have appointments open.

Dr Richard Chern MD and Sue Griffin ARNP specialize in hormone therapy for both men and women and have been seeing patients in Miramar Beach for 10 years. Dr Chern also teaches hormone therapy to physicians across the county. Give them a call today at 850-837-1271 for your appointment

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By Maurice Stouse, Financial Advisor and Branch Manager

Should investing be about fear or should it be about optimism? And which is the greater motivator of behavior and action? We have often heard that perception without any confirmation indeed becomes reality. Investors are bombarded almost daily with messages of fear. As a result some may give up hope at the worst possible time and change their course of action or their plan. We are reminded of the coach and his or her team sticking to their game plan even if they are down early on in the game. What if however it is not early in the game, rather its midway or towards the end? We think, once an investor reviews objective, risk tolerance and time frame, then they compare that with their current strategy and make changes as needed or wanted.

Investors can become overly worried when one talking head after another speaks about capitulation and that things will go from bad to worse. We think it fair to point out that often the talking head may be the type of professional investor, a hedge fund manager for example, that often can profit in up and down markets and that it is the very volatility they speak to that creates opportunity (with extraordinary risk) for them.

We believe that the individual investor should focus on the greater picture, the entire game, not just a particular slice of it. We look at the long-term returns and see that stocks are one of the higher returning investments, over time. Over time.

Diversification is critical as well. Bonds can play a part in diversifying a portfolio or perhaps generating income. It is challenging for many to find a timing strategy that outperforms a well thought out buy, hold and adjust as needed strategy.

Many in the media speak of anything but optimism. Some

Insights for Investors April 2023

might easily draw the conclusion that it is over and that it is reconciliation time with the financial history of this nation. We don't understand how you can explain away that there is an entire generation (much greater in size) that is following the baby boomers. They are growing their careers, their family, and their lives and consuming. That might help explain why despite 9 straight interest rate hikes that there is still a housing shortage. And there is a worker shortage. Demand is growing or is resilient. Affluence and standard of living have never been greater. Innovation and competitiveness continue to fuel the engine for America and the world.

If a more optimistic, longterm view makes sense, we think investors can build toward and achieve their goals.

As investors contemplate their needs and objectives, we add that we believe that a portfolio should be diversified by security selection as well as asset class and that time frame, risk tolerance, tax status and ultimate objective should be the guiding light in a well-balanced portfolio.

There are special risks associated with investing with bonds such as interest rate risk, market risk, call risk, prepayment risk, credit risk, reinvestment risk, and unique tax consequences. Investments in municipal securities may not be appropriate for all investors, particularly those who do not stand to benefit from the tax status of the investment. Municipal bond interest is not subject to federal income tax but may be subject to AMT, state or local taxes. U.S. government bonds and Treasuries are guaranteed by the U.S. government and, if held to maturity, offer a fixed rate of return and guaranteed principal value. CDs are insured by the FDIC and offer a fixed rate of return, whereas the return and principal value of investment securities fluctuate with changes in market conditions. An investment in a money market fund is neither insured nor guaranteed by the FDIC or any other government agency. Although the fund seeks to preserve the value of your investment at \$1.00 per share, it is possible to lose money by investing in the fund. A fixed annuity is a long-term,

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By Sean Dietrich

It was our place. That's what it was. I grew up in a little fishing village, nestled in the Florida Panhandle.

This was long before the tattoo parlors, before the T-shirt shops, before Whole Foods and Bass Pro.

Today our little town is not even a shadow of its former glory. On any given month, Destin is inundated with 8 million tourists wearing thong bikinis. And those are just the men.

But once upon a time, we had

Pepito's. It was your quintessential Mexican dive restaurant. It was clean. The staff was friendly. They had ugly orange walls.

They served good food. The chips were always hot. The salsa was fresh from an actual tin can. They had ice-cold Tecate.

The joint was always packed.

You could order a "King Burrito," and you wouldn't be hungry again for the next three or four presidential administra-

My first kiss happened outside Pepito's. It was late. Her name was Teresa. She had red hair and she smelled like Head and Shoulders.

Do people name their kids Teresa anymore?

As a young man, all my friends went to Pepito's because it was where you went. We spent entire evenings in those booths, discussing who we were going to

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Sean of the South



grow up to become.

For a few bucks, you could fill your belly on queso dip that would turn your bowels into stone. If you had enough cash left over, you could take in a movie across the street.

Years later, I worked at the restaurant next door to Pepito's. We served cheap sirloins. I was a line cook. I worked in a dank kitchen until 1AM every weeknight, doing dishes.

They were long nights. Pepito's shared our same dumpster. So, whenever I took out the trash, there were always a few Latino guys out there smoking cigarettes, speaking in rapid-fire Español, drinking longneck Pacificos.

I learned to speak Spanish in that alley. I had no idea they were teaching me dirty words.

Before I married, I would

take my future-wife to Pepito's. On weekends, they had a mariachi trio. Three portly men played vihuelas, guitaelas and violínos, strolling between tables. If you didn't put money into their guitar soundholes, they would play louder.

One night, I requested the trio play "Besame Mucho" for my fiance. They actually let me sing a song with them. My musical performance was so impressive, all the people in the restaurant sprang to their feet and rushed for the exits.

After we married, my wife and I lived in a cheap apartment behind Waffle House. It was a horrible place. I got fleas. Twice. We were flat broke, so eating out was a luxury. Whenever we treated ourselves, we went to Pepito's.

But then, that was a long

time ago. Somehow I grew up. And so did our fishing village.

One by one, the mom-and-pop shops disappeared and became real estate offices or vape outlets. The post-war block houses were demolished so that homes shaped like the Sears Towers could be built in their places. They tore down the fishing rodeo docks and built Six Flags over Avarice.

But Pepito's was a mainstay. You could always count on Pepito's. You could walk inside, order an immobilizingly cold beer, eat lukewarm guacamole, and play the memory game with old friends.

Remember when we used to...?" "Remember when we were kids...?" "Whatever happened to what's-her-name...?

For a few bucks, you could eat mediocre Mexican that tasted the same as it did a lifetime ago. And you could remember things.

Such as the night, long ago, when you brought your widowed mother here and broke the news that you were getting married. She cried. And so did

Or the night your best friend brought you here and told you he was leaving for Afghanistan in the morning.

Today, they're vacating Pepito's. The property was owned by investors in Canada. But the good ole days are gone. It's been purchased. The new investors want to build a Publix. Tourists got to have their groceries.

Even so, I'll always remember the balmy evenings from the summers of my Florida youth. I'll remember the dim-lit booths of an average Mexican-American eatery, where the promise of my entire future hung in the air.

I'll forever remember how young we were. How smooth our faces looked. And how good it felt when, in that corner booth, a young woman once took my hand and said, "Yes, I'll be your wife."

You can tear down Pepito's. But keep your hands off my memories.



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By Pastor Doug Stauffer

Does society seem like it is constantly bombarding you with negative messages? These obstacles are intended to defeat us. Whether it's the media, societal pressures, or personal struggles, staying motivated and focused on your goals can be challenging. As a pastor, I am dedicated to helping others overcome these obstacles by finding the right path forward. I want to explore critical issues contributing to self-defeating behaviors and offer biblical encouragement for overcoming them.

Courage is a vital attribute that originates within the heart of an individual. The Bible states that courage comes from a strength of heart based upon faith, hope and trust in God. It teaches that godly courage is a righteous act blessed by the Lord, while ungodly courage hinders the work of God. As believers, we must exhibit godly courage in every aspect of life.

A Pastor's Ponderings: **Godly Courage in a Stressful World**

The first of 16 times the Bible uses the phrase "good courage" reveals the need for godly courage in every believer's life. Moses told the 12 spies sent to search out the land of Canaan to be "of good courage" while stressing the importance of completing the task set before them. Moses knew that it would take "good courage" to fully follow the will of God since most of these men were unaccustomed to showing courage in the face of overwhelming adversity. Courage must rely upon the power of God and not upon your wisdom or one's abilities.

The Bible also teaches that courage can be used for ungodly purposes. David described the fear he endured. His testimony provides insight into the dangerous nature of his enemies. David pointed out that they "encouraged themselves in an evil matter." Christians are to encourage themselves in the work of God. Unfortunately, friends and associates sometimes encourage those determined to work iniquity to increase their wicked behavior. Even David failed in this regard following the murder of Uriah when he told a messenger to "encourage" Joab.

Godly courage is a righteous act blessed by the Lord. On the other hand, ungodly is just the opposite. Therefore, as believers, we must exhibit godly courage in every area of our lives. Only courageous people can truly lead others during times when courage is necessary. When we lack courage, we can hardly admonish others to trust God and have great courage.

Let us strive to be courageous in all we do, relying on the strength and power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As a teacher and writer of Bible prophecy, I know what the Bible says about the future and the sinful propensity of one's nature. The Bible foretells that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). If you believe the Bible, people are going to get worse. If you don't believe the Bible, people are getting worse as a testament to its veracity. The key to success: stay encouraged in the Lord by looking to the Lord for your strength.

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").







The Healing Benefits of Music

Playing an instrument or listening to music has numerous benefits for our health. Music has the power to influence our mood, reduce stress and anxiety, enhance cognitive function, and even improve physical health.

Music Can Improve Your Mood and Focus.

Music has a profound impact on our emotions and can have a significant effect on our mental state. Listening to music that is happy, upbeat and energetic can help to lift our spirits and reduce stress and anxiety levels.

Music can also have a positive impact on cognitive function, such as memory and focus. Studies have shown that playing an instrument, even at a beginner level, can improve memory and executive function, as well as increasing brain plasticity. John Dan PhD, Chair of Neuroscience at Perelman School of Medicine says, "it engages every major part of the central nervous system. For example, playing the violin uses the peripheral nervous system, which controls movement of your fingers, as well as gross and fine motor skills.

The brain's executive function — which plans and makes decisions — comes into play as a musician plays one part but keeps focus on what's coming next. Couple that with the total sensory input all at the same time (visual, auditory, emotional) and playing a song becomes a total "workout" for the brain."

Music Can Reduce Stress.

Research has shown that listening to relaxing music before bed or during periods of stress can help to reduce cortisol levels, a hormone associated with stress and weight gain. Additionally, playing an instrument can help to reduce anxiety by bringing our minds into the present moment instead of focusing on our worries.

A 2020 study, found that 57% of Americans use music as a form of stress reduction, compared to just 40% who find exercise helpful, so the stress-relieving benefits of music are definitely no secret.

Music Can Improve Your Physical Health.

Music can have a positive impact on physical health, particularly in the areas of pain



management, sleep quality, and cardiovascular health. Listening to relaxing music before bed can help to improve sleep quality, which is important for optimum healing of injuries, and for muscle growth. Listening to up-tempo music (especially while exercising) has been shown to increase heart rate and blood flow, improving cardiovascular health and our motivation levels.

Many of us enjoy dancing to music at clubs or social events, and even more of us enjoy adding music to our jogging, weight training, or Pilates workouts, so it's incredibly easy to reap the physical benefits of music.

Music Can Help someone with Alzheimer's Disease.

Individuals living with Alzheimer's or other kinds of memory loss can find a sense of familiarity and comfort in music. The musical part of the brain is barely affected by the disease, so even those who struggle to remember names and faces of their loved ones can still enjoy singing along to their favorite songs.

Music therapy sessions are popular for those living with memory loss. These usually involve a fun and relaxed environment, singing, playing, or clapping along with the therapist either in a personal session or in a group. They provide an opportunity for social interaction and emotional expression, helping to reduce feelings of isolation and depression.

It's Time to Start Your Benefits.

So, playing an instrument and listening to music both have numerous health benefits that range from improving mood, reducing stress, enhancing cognitive function, to promoting physical health. Children are a great example of living a carefree life as they naturally enjoy music, singing songs, and dancing. Incorporating music into your daily life, whether it be through picking up an instrument or simply listening to music in your day-to-day activities, can help to improve overall well-being, a youthful mindset, and quality of life.

Studio 237 Music Lessons teachers are ready to help you discover, develop, and demonstrate music. Call Ray or Lisa Cyr at 850.231.3199, visit the website www.Studio237Music.com, gmail Studio237Music@gmail.com.



Arts & Music

Spring and Summer at ECTC

By Anna Fisher, Associate Artistic and Education Director

Spring is here and summer is right around the corner at Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC). I've already started humming along to all of my favorite Sound of Music songs in preparation for our May 5th-14th production. The hardest part for me is not humming along during the show! The excitement from our young cast members is palpable, not just for this production but for all of our upcoming summer camps as well. We're excited too because that means a whole lot of energetic students dancing, singing, acting, and bringing life to our space. We love providing a place where students can participate in creative, team-based activities that don't involve a screen. There are so many great skills that these kids build while having fun- like teamwork, literacy, confidence, communication, and voice and movement.

Our summer camps start at age 5 (rising Kindergarteners) and go through 12th grade. We offer week-long mini player camps throughout the summer for our youngest students to act, dance, sing, and create art while learning how to put on a production. Our elementary aged children have their choice of singing and dancing in our week-long Camp Showtime camps, or show their spots in our two-week musical theatre camp 101 Dalmatians. We also offer the one week, non-musical camp for our elementary aged students Alice in Wonderland at three different locations including ECTC, Defuniak Springs, and Gulf Coast State College in Panama City.

Our teens have a variety of choices as well with our one-



week Cabaret Comedy camp, Playwriting camp, and Film camp. We also offer a twoweek, non-musical production camp Puffs, a hilarious Harry Potter-esque play. We round out our summer with a fantastic three-week musical theatre intensive offering for the teens— Grease! Students sharpen their skills while working on a super fun musical that culminates in a fantastic full-length production. Whether you have a student or friend in the show, or you were just "born to hand jive baby," this show is a fun way to end the summer.

If that isn't enough theatre for you, our Broadway on the Boulevard summer spectacular is featured every Thursday night at 8:00pm in Grand Boulevard starting May 25th. You can also stay tuned for summer pop up shows in our air-conditioned space at 560 Grand Boulevard, upstairs. There's something for everyone at Emerald Coast Theatre Company this summer so be sure to check out our website and sign up for our newsletter at www.emeraldcoasttheatre. org. See you at the theatre!

Explore the Magnificence of Digital Graffiti



On May 19-20, experience Digital Graffiti at Alys Beach, a one-of-a-kind projection art festival where artists from throughout the world use the most recent digital technologies to project their original works onto the iconic white walls of Alys Beach.

Sometimes referred to as "Photon Bombing," "Guerilla Projection" or "Urban Projection," underground artists have been using the latest design, animation and projection technologies for many years to cast dynamic images onto skyscrapers and other urban structures as a means of artistic expression.

Digital Graffiti brings these artists together in one place to celebrate and showcase their unique talents on an amazing backdrop.

Attracting digital artists, film-makers, musicians, interactive designers, photographers, VJs, producers, celebrities, agency executives and fans of art, technology and architecture, digital submissions come from as far away as Israel, Austria, Canada, Germany, London, India, France, Italy and China. Thousands in cash prizes are awarded.

Purchase tickets at www.digitalgraffiti.com.







Tickets or Info, call 850.684.0323 or visit EMERALDCOASTTHEATRE.ORG











MKAF Showcases Range of Music with Spring Concerts!

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) kicks off its highly-anticipated 2023 Concerts in the Village Thursday, April 20. The area's first live concert series is held each spring on Thursday evenings at the MKAF Dugas Pavilion in Destin. This year's 28th annual family-friendly series will run from April 20 to June 22. The 10-concert live music series will feature premier regional and national musicians and bands performing every-

thing from classic rock, reggae and disco to modern pop.

Here's a closer look at the

The series kick off on Thursday, April 20, with mustnot-miss entertainers Postmodern Jukebox. One part celebration of vintage music and culture, one part Saturday Night Live for singers, a Postmodern Jukebox show is an unforgettable trip back in time. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 ac-



tive-duty military.

April 27 features the Roman Street Party Band. Hailing from Mobile, Roman Street delivers a lyrical amalgamation of acoustic guitar, classical, gypsy, contemporary jazz, Latin, and nuevo flamenco sounds. There is a reason this mesmerizing music group is a proven local favorite. Tickets are \$20 adults/\$15 active-duty military.

May 5 Ozomatl, cacophony of sounds melding salsa, jazz, funk, reggae and hip hop, takes the stage. This social-minded ensemble rock band formed in Los Angeles in 1995 to give voice to Latinos, fight for workers' rights and promote a global unity. After performing around the world, this Latin-pop infusion is ready to rock Destin. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

May 11 will feature Lucky Chops – New Day, New Tour. Lucky Chops has been unleashing high-energy brassy funk on the world since forming in NYC in 2006. The intensity of the band's energy is fueled by

their desire to share the healing and inspirational power of music with others. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

May 18, get ready to chill with Yacht Rock Revue: Reverse Sunset Tour. This top-notch group of musicians, presented by SiriusXM, trademarked the term "yacht rock," both metaphorically and literally (U.S. Registration Number 3834195). From humble beginnings in a basement, they've rocked onstage with John Oates, Eddie Money and now headline soldout shows across the country. Come chill to the smooth sounds of West coast-inspired '70s and '80s rock. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military.

May 25, don't miss Sinfonia Gulf Coast Feat: Morgan James in Symphonic Soul, with special guest Ryan Shaw. Morgan James brings the classic sounds of Memphis accompanied by Sin-

Continued on next page

Okaloosa County K-12 Student Art Show Set

The Okaloosa County School District and the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation will present the 2023 Okaloosa County K-12 Student hours are 9 a.m-77 p.m. Art Show April 19 and 20 at the C.H. "Bull" Rigdon Fairgrounds (a.k.a. Northwest Florida Fairgrounds) in Fort Walton Beach. This annual event exhibits more than 2,000

pieces of student artwork from more than 15 elementary and 17 middle and high schools. Admission is free; exhibit

A reception will be held on Thursday evening, April 20, 6 -7 p.m. Best of Show awards will be presented to middle school and high school artists for 2-D and 3-D works. For

the 23rd consecutive year, the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation has participated as a co-sponsor with the Okaloosa County School District in this annual student art show

For more information, contact the Okaloosa County School District at (850) 833-3100 or the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation at (850) 650-2226.











THURSDAY NIGHTS | APRIL 20 - JUNE 22

Annual Thursday evening concert live music series featuring family-friendly premier musicians and bands performing everything from classic rock, reggae and disco to modern pop.

May 4 | Ozomatli

May 11 | Lucky Chops

May 18 | Yacht Rock Revue: Reverse Sunset Tour

May 25 | Sinfonia Gulf Coast feat. Morgan James

June 1 | Gotta Groove Band

June 8 | Adam Ezra Group

June 15 | Journeyman: A Tribute to Eric Clapton

June 22 | Big Bad Voodoo Daddy



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BECOME A MEMBER

MKAF.org



Purchase Tickets at

MKAF.org/events



GROW YOUR GIFT

continued from page 6

sic as an instrument to change lives, Marlayna shares her own daughter's experience. Kilaya was struggling academically and had low self-esteem. When she started playing the trombone in the fifth grade, she blossomed, finding an outlet for her creativity and personality.

Marlayna says adult students

feel they are finally doing something for themselves and are proud they can learn something new later in life.

There are two major performances each year in the spring and at Christmas. There are other smaller performances throughout the community. Recently, the students were invited to perform at The International Festival and Military Appreciation Day. The most dedicated



students have the opportunity to participate in these performances

Grow Your Gift Conservatory of Music offers private lessons, group lessons, and summer camps. The Summer Music Camps include a Broadway production of The Little Mermaid, Jr. with a cast of kids from the Emerald Coast, an Irish fiddling camp, a drumline camp, a kids' piano camp, and a piano camp

for adults to learn to play during their lunch break. Registration is taking place now.

Growing the gifts of students of all ages and seeing the positive impact is a wonderful gift in itself for Marlayna Goosby. She isn't going to rest on her laurels. She has plans to expand even more and continue to grow your gifts.

For more information call (850) 483-0800 or go to https://www.growyourgiftmusic.com.

MKAF

continued from previous page

fonia Gulf Coast. This program is a love letter to one of the great American birthplaces of soul, featuring brand-new arrangements of Memphis classics by Al Green, Otis Redding, Ann Peebles, Sam and Dave, and, of course, Elvis. James rounds out the evening with her own Memphis soul originals and storytelling. Hear your favorite soul tunes come to life in a brand-new way that will have you dancing and singing along! Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military.

June 1 Gotta Groove Band will put a fresh spin on popular cover tunes from the '60s to today. With outstanding vocals and top-shelf musicianship, they feature their own arrangements and mix many

popular tunes together to create a fun flow of entertaining energy. You will not want to miss the party this Land O Lakes, Fla., band throws down. Tickets are \$20 for adults/\$15 for active-duty military.

June 8, Adam Ezra Group performs. Fusing folk intimacy and rock energy with soul power and pop charm, the band first emerged from Boston in the early 2000s and quickly garnered widespread acclaim for their bold, insightful songwriting and interactive, euphoric performances. Tickets are \$20 adults/\$15 active-duty military.

June 15, get ready to jam with Journeyman: A Tribute to Eric Clapton. At just 17, Shaun Hague was named "Best Young Blues Guitarist" by The House of Blues. By 21, he was sharing the stage with the likes of blues

phenoms such as Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Amos Lee, John Waite, Terra Naomi and John Fogerty. In honor of his biggest musical influence (Eric Clapton), he and his three-member band have been making waves with their powerful live music performance. Tickets are \$25 adults/\$20 active-duty military.

June 22, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy swings into Destin. With appearances from the Hollywood Bowl to Lincoln Center, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy continues its decades-long mission to celebrate and revitalize jazz and swing music — America's original musical art form — and bring joy to audiences around the world. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military. Enjoy a night under the stars at the most beautiful outdoor music venue on the Emerald Coast.

Bring a bottle of wine, your favorite craft beer and a blanket or chair. Food and drinks are available for purchase from a rotating list of local food trucks. Tickets are \$35 adults/\$30 active-duty military.

Gates open at 6 p.m. with concerts beginning at 7 p.m. for this come-as-you-are family-friendly outdoor concert series. Bring a lawn chair, picnic, wine, or purchase food and beverages on-site prepared by featured restaurants and food trucks.

New this year, patrons purchasing tickets in advance of concert day will save \$5 per ticket. Children (12 and under) are free. A limited number of VIP tables (reserved table for eight guests for the entire season) are available for \$2,250. Corporate VIP tables are \$2,750.

Proceeds will fund th

MKAF's community outreach mission to provide cultural outreach programs serving K-12 students, adults and children with special needs, at-risk youth, and active/veteran military suffering from visible and invisible injuries in our community.

Purchase tickets online at MKAF.org/events. For more information, call (850) 650-2226.

MKAF members enjoy early entry and free admission to every concert as well as discounted pricing to other MKAF events. For more information on MKAF membership, visit MKAF.org.

Concert lineup is subject to change. All sales are final; sorry, no refunds. Pets, tables larger than two feet, and drones are not permitted. Children 17 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

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