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Postal Customer Local

# Team Wegner Embarks on Ultra Paddle Event to Benefit Cystic Fibrosis

By Christopher Manson

Local anesthesiologist and paddleboard enthusiast Ryan Wegner is currently in the Bahamas for a massive 80-mile, approximately 16-hour paddle event benefiting Piper's Angels Foundation for Cystic Fibrosis. The Palm Beach Gardens-based nonprofit hosts its 10th annual Crossing for Cystic Fibrosis June 21-25.

Wegner, the father of twin Autistic 14-year-old boys, heard about the event from his cousin, who will join him for the Crossing. "I was aware of cystic fibrosis through my education and my involvement with kids with special needs," he says. "I feel like this is something I need to do. It's part of my nature to help other people."

Two hundred paddlers will participate this year. Wegner will be part of a relay team, paddling for three or four hours. He'll bring a 12-foot live watersports board, made by a Clearwater company and graciously provided by the



Gary Coram, Jessica Shuflitowski, Ryan Wegner, Matt Duncan and Tony Maganzini at Gulf Wind Paddle & Surf in Santa Rosa Beach. Wegner will be participating in the Crossing for Cystic Fibrosis event using the 12-foot LIVE Watersports board similar to the one pictured.

Month

owners of Santa Rosa Beach's recently opened Gulf Wind Paddle & Surf store.

"Tve only been using it for a month," says Wegner. "It's amazing." To prepare for the Crossing, he trains daily "whether it's in the gym or on the water." When we speak at Gulf Wind – "The Coolest Li'l Surf Shop on the Panhandle" – he tells me that each paddler must raise \$2,000 individually. He's been reaching out to locals – mostly through his job – and friends to meet or exceed his goal.

"Ryan came in and introduced himself, and we saw an opportunity for us to do some philanthropy," says Matt Duncan, who co-owns Gulf Wind with Tony Maganzini. "We're helping Ryan with the board and uniforms, and sponsoring his team." In turn, Wegner is raising awareness for the store and its top-of-the-line wares.

Wegner is the only Cross-

**RACE** continued on page 3

Ft. Walton Beach

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# Reigniting the Spirit of Freedom



By Doug Stauffer

America, the beautiful birthed in 1776,

Immediately the world their focus did affix.

Yet, with two hundred forty-six years now past,

It's time to be born again for America to last.

Through wars and tumults, patriots braved,

The voices against tyranny constantly raised.

An adage of old, from Benjamin Franklin's quill,

**FREEDOM** *continued on page 2* 

Destin

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Niceville

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Page 2

# Boggy Bayou Fireworks – a Go Through Trust Fund

works displays. One such op-

portunity is the sale of Boston

Butts for \$40 each or three for

\$100. Pickup for Boston Butts

is 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Friday, June

30, at the Mullet Festival site.

Tickets can be purchased on-

line at lightupthebayou.com/

boston-butts/ or at several loca-

tions throughout the communi-

ty, including the Niceville Pub-

lic Library, the Niceville Senior

Center, Valparaiso City Hall,

Niceville City Hall, or from any

Fireworks Trust Fund member.

In addition to the Boston

The Fireworks Trust Fund will fully fund the annual 4th of July Fireworks Show over Boggy Bayou through donations from the community this year. This cherished tradition has been a staple in the Niceville-Valparaiso area for many years, and the Fireworks Trust Fund is proud to continue to support it through the generosity of local businesses and community members.

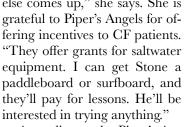
The Firework's Trust Fund also offers several fundraising opportunities to help further its mission of promoting safe fire-

# **RACE**

continued from page 1

ing participant from the area, but he'll be cheered on by Panama City Beach resident Jessica Shuflitowski, the mother of a 5-year-old boy with CF, Stone. Shuflitowski, Stone, and husband Gary Coram will trailer their boat down to South Florida for the event. For the first time in his life, Stone will meet other children with CF – from a distance of at least six feet, due to medical rules.

Stone's mom says treatment for CF patients is nonexistent in the immediate area. She and her son make the trek to Pensacola for treatments – blood work, breathing tests, etc. – every three months "unless something else comes up," she says. She is grateful to Piner's Angels for of



According to the Piper's Angels Foundation website, Cystic Fibrosis is a chronic disease that affects the lungs and digestive systems of about 30,000 children and adults in the United States. A defective gene and its protein product cause the body to produce unusually thick and sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and leads to life-threatening lung infections. The mucus also obstructs the pancreas and stops

Comforts and joy are not

Nor in treasures that mere

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values

found in fleeting gold,

philosophies aflame,

wisdom without shame.

Traditional family

hands can hold.

natural enzymes from helping the body break down and absorb food.

"It's a progressive disease," says Shuflitowski. "And it's a very invisible illness. My son looks completely normal, but at the turn of a hat, he can be hospitalized for a month."

She adds that there is zero

Butts, the Fireworks Trust Fund is also holding a 50/50 drawing. Suggested donation for the drawing is \$5 for each ticket or 5 tickets for \$20. Half of the proceeds from the drawing will go to the winner, and the other half will go to the Fireworks Trust Fund, Inc. The drawing will be held at 6 p.m.. Friday, June 30, at the Mullet Festival site.

"We are excited to offer these new ways for the community to support the annual 4th of July Fireworks Show," said Sheila Bishop, spokesperson for the

federal funding for CF, and that

any grants come from founda-

tions and sponsorships. "A lot

of CF patients are living longer

now, and more adults are living

with it than ever before." This is

largely due to the drug Trikafta,

which was approved by the

Food and Drug Administration

where you can either afford it or

not. My son will be eligible to

take it when he's 6." Currently,

the cost of Trikafta for a single

patient runs about \$80,000 a

ing for Cystic Fibrosis at cross-

pipersangels.org. Gulf Wind

Paddle & Surf is open Monday

ingforcysticfibrosis.com

Learn more about the Cross-

and

But, "it's one of those things

in 2019.

month.

Fireworks Trust Fund. "Not only can you enjoy delicious Boston Butts, but you can also potentially win big in our 50/50 drawing."

For more information, visit lightupthebayou.com. Don't miss out on your chance to support this beloved annual event and potentially win big.

For more information, contact Julie Mooney, City of Niceville at jmooney@nicevillefl.gov.

through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Visit it online at gulf-windpaddlesurf.com.



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# FREEDOM

continued from page 1

"Rebellion to tyrants remains obedience still."

In this era of idols of comfort and wealth,

The goal is destruction of America's spiritual health,



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proudly cast away, Beliefs that once guided our

nation every day. To the National Anthem,

stand with pride,

To those who kneel, my respect denied.

For the stars and stripes, my pledge rings true,

A show of allegiance, stead-fast and due.

I am an extremist, so they say, For I love God, and to Him still pray.

I stand for the flag, with heart and soul,

In defense of freedom playing my role. The 2nd Amendment, our

rights to cherish, Protection from tyranny must

never perish. I believe in the Constitution,

stand strong and true,

Not to be rewritten but upheld, though by few.

In the pursuit of progress, let's bridge the divide,

Finding common ground with love's true guide.

For in unity, we're strengthened, in division, we fall,

Let freedom's true spirit inspire us all.

Page 3

# **Area Independence Day Fireworks!**

### **Boggy Bayou Fireworks**

The Boggy Bayou Fireworks show brings locals and visitors together to delight in the beauty that our community offers, making lasting memories and celebrating America's freedom on the 4th of July with spectacular pyrotechnics at dusk. The show typically begins at dusk (approximately 8:45 p.m.) on July 4th. Fireworks are launched from a custom-made platform in the middle of Boggy Bayou and are visible from the shores of Niceville and Valparaiso. For the approximately 20-minute display, watchers gather at some of the most popular vantage points for public viewing at Lincoln Park, Lions Park, Kiwanis Park, Niceville Landing and Shipyard Point Park. But be sure to get there early as many folks set up earlier in the day to save their spots! A large boat with loudspeakers anchors in the bayou and plays patriotic music beginning at roughly 6 p.m. which can be heard throughout the bayou and much of the surrounding community. (The map represents some of the best public vantage points.)

### **City of Freeport**

The City of Freeport will be having its annual 4th of July parade and fireworks event on Tuesday, July 4. Beginning at 4 p.m., the parade starts at Freeport Middle School, heads up Kylea Laird, then turns onto SR 20 towards City Hall. It then proceeds down Bay Loop to the Regional Sports Complex and ends near the football field concession stand. SR 20 will close to traffic at 3:45 p.m. Fireworks begin shortly after sundown. Before the fireworks, there will be a



band playing, two bounce houses and three food truck vendors.

### **Red, White & Baytowne**

Celebrate Independence Day at the Village of Baytowne Wharf, July 4, 7-9:15 p.m. After a day of fun in the sun, come out for an evening that lights up the sky. Join Baytowne Village merchants for a spectacular free 4th of July Red, White and Baytowne 2023 celebration with live music on the Events Plaza Stage from 7-9:15 p.m., followed by a patriotic fireworks display at 9:15. The kids will love activities, including kids' crafts, face painting and balloon sculpting, too.

### Stars & Stripes Celebration at AJ's on the Bayou

Join AJ's on the Bayou, 200 Eglin Parkway NE, Fort Walton Beach, Sunday, July 3, for the Stars & Stripes celebration. Enjoy bounce houses, stilt walkers, face painting and live music with Black Eyed Blonde, 6-10 p.m. Fireworks begin at 9 p.m.

### **Fort Walton Beach**

The Fort Walton Beach 4th of July Fireworks show will take place on Tuesday, July 4, 8:45 p.m. Fireworks are set off from a barge over the Santa Rosa Sound. You can see them from anywhere along the water downtown. The best place to watch them from is the Landing Park downtown where other July 4 festivities will take place earlier in the day.

### The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island

Fireworks continue at The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island each Wednesday at 9 p.m., and over the Destin Harbor directly behind HarborWalk Village every Thursday throughout the summer at 9 p.m.

### **City of Destin**

Fireworks are set off from the West Jetties Beach and can be

seen over the East Pass beginning at 9 p.m. Tuesday, July 4. Tune in to Z96 (96.5 FM) for the simulcast music. In case of inclement weather, the fireworks show will take place Wednesday, July 5, 9 p.m. Norriego Point is a great place to watch the fireworks if you want to be as close as possible to the launch spot or if you just prefer a more quiet beach spot. Parking is limited to a small lot or street parking on Gulf Shore Dr. though so get there early. You can also take Destin Water Taxi to Norriego Point from any restaurant, condo or house on the Destin Harbor.

# 4th of July Celebration at HarborWalk Village

HarborWalk Village's Independence Day fireworks will be held over the Destin Harbor at 9:30 p.m.

### **Smoke on the Coast**

The Annual Smoke on the Coast BBQ and Fireworks Festival is set for July 3 at Destin Commons, with live music 5-9:30 p.m. At 5:30 p.m., enjoy \$1 samples from 18 area restaurants and barbecue groups and vote for your favorite. Fireworks extravaganza begins at 9:30 p.m.

### **Sandestin Hilton**

The Sandestin Hilton July 4 fireworks are set off right on the beach directly in from of the hotel Tuesday at 9 p.m.

### Destin Commons Star-Spangled Food Truck Festival & Fireworks Show

Celebrate Independence Day at the Star-Spangled Food Truck Festival on July 3rd. From 5 to

Continued on next page





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# () Community

# Leadership Okaloosa Graduates Next Wave of Community Leaders

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Leadership Okaloosa, a well-respected leadership training and development program with a 30-year history, held its annual graduation ceremony at the Northwest Florida State College. The ceremony brought together the college and its partners, including the Crestview, Destin, Niceville-Valparaiso and Fort Walton Beach Chambers of Commerce. Together, they honored the graduates who had completed the rigorous nine-month program designed to enhance their leadership skills and expand

their community awareness.

As one of the program graduates, I can attest to the transformative power of Leadership Okaloosa. The curriculum administered by Brenda Robinson is exceptionally well-crafted, taking us beyond mere theory and immersing us in practical, handson experiences. The blend of inclass training sessions and on-theground community engagement gave us a first-hand understanding of how our local government, businesses and community organizations operate.

Meeting and interacting with



Leadership Walton Graduates Congratulations to our Leadership Walton Class of 2022-23! The group of professionals have accomplished so much in the past nine months and we look forward to seeing them in our community! Thank you to all the companies who have invested in their

employees through the program.



key community leaders across sectors was enlightening. Our conversations provided insights into the inner workings of our county that would not be otherwise accessible. This deep dive into the county's pulse - its challenges, strengths, and opportunities - was instrumental in forming our outlook. One of the most noteworthy aspects was the two-day trip to Tallahassee for the Legislative Day meetings, which exposed the participants to the legislative process and offered a unique perspective on statewide matters.

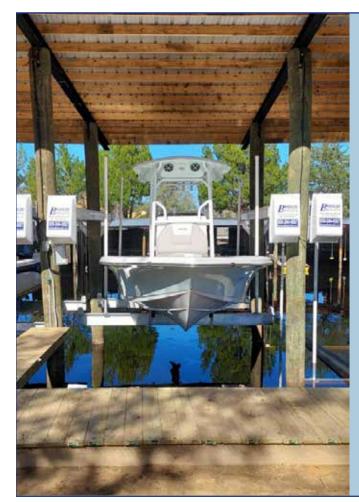
However, the heart of the Leadership Okaloosa program lies in its dedication to fostering a sense of community among participants. The group projects not only honed leadership skills but also created strong bonds within the group. It was a chance to learn from one anothers' diverse experiences and perspectives and appreciate the richness this diversity brings to the community.

Northwest Florida State College hosts the program in conjunction with the local Chambers. With a mission to "Develop, educate and connect individuals to lead and bring value to our diverse community," Leadership Okaloosa has been steadfast in shaping leaders for a thriving Okaloosa County for three decades. Dr. Devin Stephenson, President of NWFSC, said, "Leadership development, in my opinion, is one of the most important initiatives we can undertake to improve effectiveness and efficiency within our organizations. Leadership is an art, and leaders can improve their skills and

abilities through programs like Leadership Okaloosa."

Leadership Okaloosa is now accepting applications for the 2023-2024 Leadership Okaloosa program. The tuition fee for the program is \$975, which includes training materials, instruction, coffee, and lunch during training days at NWFSC, hotel, transportation, some meals during Tallahassee Legislative days, and a graduation celebration. Applications are due by Aug. 25.

Through Leadership Okaloosa, the participants learned how to lead and why leadership matters in driving the county's progress. The connections built, the knowledge gained and the lessons learned are invaluable resources carried forward into the community. As alumni, we proudly join a long line of community leaders shaped by Leadership Okaloosa, ready to play our part in the continuing growth of Okaloosa County. For more information, contact the program at (850) 729-4956 or email Leadership@ NWFSC.edu. To apply, visit https://www.nwfsc.edu/leadership-okaloosa/.



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### **AREA FIREWORKS** *continued from previous page*

9:30 p.m., 25 food trucks will line the streets of Destin Commons where you can indulge in scrumptious Thai food, mouthwatering grilled cheese and everything in between. Enjoy live music from Duchess and Tobacco Road Band and top off the evening with the grandest fireworks display on the coast. Destin Commons, 4100 Legendary Drive, Destin. www.DestinCommons.com.

# **Grayton Beach 4th** of July Parade

Come join in the fun for the annual July 4th parade in the wonderful and funky town of Grayton Beach. Line up on Holtz Ave next to The Red Bar starts at 8 a.m. with the parade starting at 8:30 a.m. Decorate your cars, jeeps, boats, bikes, scooters, etc. No registration needed and everyone is welcome! Parking available at AJ's. The Red Bar, 70 Hotz Ave., Grayton Beach.

### Seaside Independence Day Celebration & Fireworks Spectacular

Tuesday, July 4, 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Seaside's Independence Day Celebration & Fireworks Spectacular will take place Tuesday, July 4th in the Seaside Amphitheater. A favorite among locals and visitors alike - the day is filled with patriotic spirit, music, and fun! The Block Party begins at 9 a.m. featuring face painters, Uncle Sam Stilt Walker, caricaturists, balloon twisters, a juggler and ventriloquist. Enjoy live music by a roaming brass band throughout the day followed by a Sinfonia Gulf Coast Pops Concert at 6:30 p.m.. At 8:30 p.m., a spectacular fireworks show takes place over the Gulf.



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# Community

### NWFSC Collegiate High School Student Selected for Hites Transfer Scholarship

Northwest Florida State College's Collegiate High School Student, Sean Arbuckle, has been selected to receive Phi Theta Kappa's 2023 Hites Transfer Scholarship. Arbuckle is one of only 15 students to receive this scholarship and was up against more than 2,700 applicants. This is the Phi Theta Kappa Society's most prestigious and largest scholarship offering at \$10,000. Hites Scholars are selected based on outstanding academic achievement, leadership and engagement in college and community activities. "Sean has earned this recognition with his exemplary service, leadership, and academic achievements," said NWFSC President Dr. Devin Stephenson.

### Walton County Names Buddy Wright Public Works Director

"I am so honored and blessed to serve as the next Public Works Director," Buddy said. "I sincerely enjoy coming to work every morning, exploring new and better ways to serve the community and continually striving to make Walton County a better place." He has worked with Walton County for



20 years, most recently serving as Deputy Public Works Director for 13 years. Earlier, Buddy worked with Code Compliance and the Planning Department. Before joining the county, he was employed by CHELCO and CSI for 13 years. For more information about Public Works, visit, www.co.walton.fl.us

### Remembering Longtime Water and Sewer Director

Okaloosa County is mourning the recent loss of the long-serving Water and Sewer Director Jeff Littrell, who died surrounded by family. He was 72. Jeff began his career with Okaloosa County in 1996 as the Utilities Administrative Manager for the Water and Sewer Department (OCWS) and was promoted a year later to the director position. His colleagues remember him as a rock star in his field who led with vision and flair and helped create the modern robust utility it is today. Jeff's accomplishments include creating a 30-inch diameter water transmission main from Crestview to Fort Walton Beach and

# Bay Buzz

the demolition of the Garniers Wastewater Treatment Plant in Ocean City, to construct the \$65 million state-of-the-art Arbennie Pritchett Water Reclamation Facility. Through Jeff's leadership, OCWS partnered with Eglin AFB to construct approximately 50 miles of sewer pipelines across the reservation. "Jeff's passion and work ethic truly made this county better," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman

Trey Goodwin. "His dedication to public service is an example for all of us and he will be greatly missed."

### Heritage Museum History Summer Camp Registration

The Heritage Museum of NWF is taking Summer Camp registrations for July. The first week will be for grades K-2 and will run from Monday, July 10-Friday, July 14. The second week will be for grades 3-6 and will run from Monday, July 17-Friday, July 21. Both weeks run from 9:45 a.m-1 p.m. Participants can expect classes like art, aerospace, archaeology and more. \$85 per student for the week or \$80 for Members. Space is limited to 20 Students. Call (850) 678-2615.

Continued on page 8

# Walton County Offers Complimentary Day-Use Admission to State Parks

Summer visitors to Walton County will once again be able to enjoy complimentary day-use admission to Grayton Beach State Park and Topsail Hill Preserve State Park from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

The Walton County Tourism Department is paying the cost of entry for day-use visitors to increase available parking for beachgoers during the peak visitation season, as well as raise awareness of the variety of eco-tourism activities South Walton offers. This year marks the ninth year of admission coverage for Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and the seventh for Grayton Beach State Park.

"We all recognize that our state parks are incredible assets to Walton County, so this program is an opportunity to encourage our residents and visitors to explore what the state parks have to offer," said Matt Algarin, tourism director for Walton County. "From



the trails to the sugar-white sand beaches and the variety of activities and amenities available, the state parks are truly remarkable."

Complimentary day-use admission is available during normal operating hours, generally 8 a.m. to sunset, and this year's program will begin on Memorial Day weekend, starting Friday May 26, and run through Labor Day, Sept. 4.

For more information on Topsail Hill Preserve State Park visit www.visitsouthwalton.com/listing/topsail-hillpreserve-state-park.

For more information on Grayton Beach State Park visit www.visitsouthwalton.com/ listing/grayton-beach-statepark.



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# **Apex Design Center Focused on American Brands**

BY CHUCK HALL

"We love the "darlings" of Main Street, Not Wall Street," said Apex Senior Partner Chuck Hall. "Our team at Apex Design Center is devoted to finding 'Apex Premiere' products for our home improvement clients emphasizing high quality American Made Brands." From countertops and cabinets to flooring and wall paint, American Made is well represented throughout the Apex showroom at 4641 Hwy 20 East in Niceville. American Made Cambria®, a family-owned Quartz manufacturing business based in Minnesota, is very representative of its mission. To walk through the Cambria state-of-the-art facility is to witness a wonder: It is where science meets craft, where passion meets expertise and where the commitment of American workers meets the legacy of a proud American family. When we say Cambria quartz surfaces are American made and family owned, this is what we mean. From slab production to countertop installation, every Cambria purchase invests over 95%

of costs back into the U.S. economy. Cambria combines superior American craftsmanship and innovation with the purest materials to create stunning natural quartz surfaces with unmatched beauty, durability and performance for life. All backed by first-class customer service and the industry's strongest warranty, American pride and craftsmanship are the cornerstones of Cambria. Despite remaining a family-owned brand, it has established itself as a dominant national leader in the quartz industry. Strong family values, hard work and a dedication to excellence has driven the company focus for decades.

What makes Cambria "Premiere"? Every Cambria surface begins with the finest natural quartz from the best sources including Cambria's own mine. The purest materials enable Cambria to create designs with unmatched depth and clarity. Proprietary technology allows Cambria to create a vast and diverse design palette. It offers industry-leading finishes and, because Cambria is only craft-



ed in Minnesota, it controls the quality from start to finish. Extensive testing ensures flawless performance creating a product that never needs sealing, polishing or reconditioning. Quartz is one of the hardest minerals on Earth; this strength, along with rigorous testing, makes Cambria a superior choice and is backed by a transferable full lifetime warranty. No other quartz manufacturer offers a stronger warranty.

From Minnesota to Montgomery, Ala., we discovered another family-owned business offering a high-quality line of

American made kitchen and vanity cabinets in Jim Bishop. While most regional and national cabinet companies are now owned by large conglomerates, Bishop cabinets remains family owned and operated. In addition to direct family members, many co-workers, dealers and vendors have been a part of this extended business family for years. In addition to another great American family legacy, they are also devoted to superior quality and the subsequent value that comes with producing an "Apex premiere" product. That said, in only a few minutes with a small display, we can demonstrate the superior quality of Bishop's "ultimate box" construction as well as their great styles and finishes compared to other brands in the industry. We are very proud of the Jim Bishop line and our customers have raved about the impact on their renovations with the installation of new Bishop cabinets.

Complimenting these great legacies is Mannington Mills

Continued on page 26



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### Community

## **BAY BUZZ**

continued from page 6

### ECTC Celebrates New Signage

Theatre Emerald Coast Company (ECTC) recently celebrated its new sign with a ribbon cutting attended by the Destin and Walton Area chambers. Visible from Hwy. 98, the new sign marks ECTC's Grand Boulevard location. ECTC's mission is to enrich and entertain the Emerald Coast through professional and educational theater. For more information, to view upcoming shows or to purchase tickets, visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

The Walton County Republican Executive Committee will meet Monday, July 17, at the Hammock Bay Clubhouse, 1850 Great Hammock Bend, Freeport. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m., with the meeting at 6 p.m. and is open to registered Republicans in Walton County. Find out about becoming a Precinct Committeeman/woman. If you want to know what the various Republican clubs in Walton County are doing, to include speakers and events, this is the place to find out. The WCREC meets the third Monday of each month at the same time and location.

### Cook Team Registration Open for Annual "Eggs On the Beach"

Bay Breeze Patio announces the cook team registration is now open for the ninth annual "Eggs on the Beach" EggFest Cooking Competition Saturday, Oct. 14, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. at Seascape Resort in Miramar Beach.

Cook Teams are invited to create bite size portions of their favorite recipes to be judged by the public as well as honorary judges. Tasters vote for their favorites, as teams vie for bragging rights and prizes, including the grand prize, a brand new large Big Green Egg. Cook Teams may also compete for Judge's Awards, and Non-profit Teams Awards, which include a donation toward their cause.

New this year, Eggs on the Beach will include a Junior Chefs Competition. The category will allow chefs ages 8-14 an opportunity to compete for the grand prize — a Mini-Max Big Green Egg. Second- and thirdplace runners up will receive a grilling tool set and all winners will be recognized with a medal and bragging rights. The family-friendly event benefits two local charities—the Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Food for Thought.

Tteam registration is \$50 for a team of six and each member will receive a welcome bag, including a commemorative T-shirt and Wayne's Get Grillin' Rubs. Youth Cook Team registration is

\$25 and includes a welcome bag for each participant. Cook team fees are waived for non-profit cook teams, which are competing for a cash donation toward their cause. Teams can register online at EggsontheBeach.com, or to avoid online fees, register in-person at Bay Breeze Patio (32 Forest Shore Drive, Miramar Beach).

The **Sand Dunes Chapter of Embroiderers' Guild of America** celebrates various forms of hand embroidery. July Stitch-ins are July 9 and 23, 1:30-4:30 p.m., at the Religious Education Building, Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, 1200 Valparaiso Blvd., Niceville. Visitors are welcome. Call (850) 496-3466 with any questions.

### Okaloosa County Emergency Management Info

Sign up to receive emergency notifications via the county's alert system at AlertOkaloosa. com or by texting "OKALOO-SAFL" to 888777.

Okaloosa County maintains a complete online resource, including its Hurricane Guide, at https://myokaloosa.com/ps/ emergency-management.

In the event of an emergency and if the Emergency Operations Center Activates, up-todate information can be found at myokaloosa.com/eoc/home.

You can also stay up-to-date via traditional social media by following facebook.com/OkaloosaCounty.

Gov. Ron DeSantis and the Florida Cabinet recently approved the investment of more than **\$103 million** to conserve nearly **40,000** acres across the state through the Florida Forever and Rural and Family Lands Protection programs. Nearly all of the projects approved are within the Florida Wildlife Corridor, a designated network of connected lands that creates crucial linkages for wildlife habitat.

The governor and the cabinet also approved the acquisition of permanent agricultural land conservation easements over more than 18,000 acres of working agricultural lands through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Rural and Family Lands Protection program.

### Dog-Harmony Launches "Love is in the Air" Calendar Contest

Show dogs how much you adore them by entering the 2024 Dog-Harmony calendar contest, themed "Love is in the Air." World-renowned photographer Jane Shirek will capture winning dogs looking their most "fetching" at the Hotel Effie Sandestin.

To be a canine calendar girl or boy, a dog must fetch enough money to be ranked in the top 12. It also must be available to strut its stuff at the photo shoot July 16-19. The contest runs through June 30.



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Happenings Around the Bay

**JULY 2023** 

04	Live Music: The Friskeys 18 4 pm   Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar   Fort Walton Beach Movies on the Beach: "Captain America: First Avenger" 8 pm   The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island   Fort Walton Beach			18	12:45 Lean	ercolor Techniques with Theresia McInnis 5 pm   Artful Things   Niceville n to Talk Dog   Comfort Inn   Niceville	
05	Preserve Bluewater Bay Community Briefings 6 - 7 pm   Bluewater Bay Clubhouse   Niceville				Live Music: The Friskeys 4 pm   Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar   Fort Walton Beach		
06	Al's Luau Beach Party 5 pm   Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar   Fort Walton Beach				8 pm	es on the Beach: "Sing 2"   The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island   Fort Walton Beach	
07	Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee 7 am   Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church   Fort Walt	ton Beach		20		erve Bluewater Bay Community Briefings pm   Bluewater Bay Clubhouse   Niceville	
	Kids Night Out 6 pm   Flip and Fun Gymnastics   Freeport			21		Night Out   Flip and Fun Gymnastics   Freeport	
08	Women's Climbing Circle 9 am   Rock Out Climbing Gym   Destin			22	10:30	lic Pour with Debi Profeta ) am   Artful Things   Niceville	
	Encaustic Wax with Corina Zalace 10:30 am   Artful Things   Niceville Classic Car Club				6 pm	Music: Sicktight Band   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville Musics Dumba Maglacy	
	11 am   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville Live Music: Shades of Blue				6 pm	Music: Purple Monkey  LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar   Niceville	
	6 pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville Dissonance			25	10 ar	Shredding Event n   Niceville Recreation Center   Niceville es on the Beach: "Raya and the Last Dragon"	
	3 pm and 7 pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Center   Niceville					The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island   Fort Walton Beach	
09	Dissonance 3 pm   Mattie Kelly Arts Center   Niceville			29	Summer Open to the Public Day 9 am   E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center   Freeport		
11	Oils and Acrylics with Rosalyn O'Grady 10 am   Artful Things   Niceville				10:30	mer Florals with Jeanette Herron am   Artful Things   Niceville	
	Live Music: The Friskeys 4 pm   Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar   Fort Walton Beach					on County Sheriff's Office Back to School Splash Bash n   Freeport Regional Sports Complex   Freeport	
	Movies on the Beach: "Sing" 3 pm   The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island   Fort Walton Beach				Live Music: Duchess 6 pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville		
12	Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber Second Wednesday Breakfast       30         7:30 am   Niceville Community Center   Niceville       30			30	Sunset Shrimp Boil 4 pm   LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar   Niceville		
13	Patterns in Nature Kids' Painting with Linda Routson 10:30 am   Artful Things   Niceville	HERITAGE MUSEUM HISTORY SUMMER CAMP				E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center: Summer Public Days 9 am - 2 pm   Thursdays & Fridays   4956 State Highway 20 E, Freeport	
	Al's Luau Beach Party 5 pm   Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar   Fort Walton Beach	Burger Bar   Fort Walton Beach	Grades K-2		ENTS	Pirate Show 5 - 8 pm   Mondays   Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar, FWB	
14	Build-A-Gnome with Linda Routson 10:30 am   Artful Things   Niceville	-14 17	9:45 am -1:00 pm	pm			
15	TruFest 11 am   Fort Walton Beach Landing   Fort Walton Beach	-21			ONGOING	Open Mic & Karaoke Night 6 - 10 pm   Thursdays   LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar	
	Live Music: Shenanigans 6 pm   3rd Planet Brewing   Niceville	STUDE		LL		Broadway on the Boulevard 8 pm   Thursdays   Grand Boulevard at Sandestin	
S S	Niceville Community - Saturdays	Hamm	nock Bay - 1st	& 3rc	Sund	ays Grand Boulevard - Saturdays	
FARMER'S MARKETS	July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	July 2, 16 8 am   Victory Blvd   Freeport				July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29	
μ	9 am - 1 pm   Palm Plaza   Niceville	8 am   V	nctory Bivd   Free	port		9 am - 1 pm   Grand Boulevard   Miramar Beach	



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# Seeing Bears In Unexpected Areas? Here's What You Should Do

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reminds us that juvenile black bears are starting to leave their mothers' home ranges in search of new homes of their own. Between the ages of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years, juvenile or yearling bears start dispersing in spring and summer, with spring marking a return to activity for bears after limited movements in winter. During this time, juvenile bears may be seen in unexpected areas as they travel across a wide range of areas in search of a new location to settle down.

In recent weeks, bears have wandered into Orlando, Tampa, Jacksonville and on the beach in Destin!

"The most important thing people can do to help these bears is to leave them alone," said the FWC's Bear Management Program Coordinator, Mike Orlando. "Give them plenty of space and let them move along on their own."

Black bears are generally not aggressive. But, like any wild animal, if they feel threatened, they can become defensive. Dogs have been involved in more than half of the incidents of people getting injured by bears in Flor-



On Sunday, June 11, a black bear was spotted swimming in the Gulf of Mexico near Silver Dunes condominiums in Destin.

ida. When walking dogs, keep them close to you – preferably on a non-retractable leash – and be aware of your surroundings, which is good practice for preventing conflicts with both bears and other wildlife. Before letting your dog out at night, flip lights on and off and bang on the door to give bears and other wildlife a chance to leave the area.

As bears become more active this time of year, they cross more roadways. For your own safety and to avoid hitting bears and other wildlife, remember to slow down when driving, particularly on rural highways at dawn or dusk. Watch for road signs identifying bear crossing areas. Each year in Florida, an average of 250 bears are killed after being hit by vehicles.

If you have bears in your area, follow these additional BearWise® Basics to help prevent conflicts with bears:

# 1: Never feed or approach bears

Feeding bears can make them lose their natural fear of people.

It is illegal in Florida to intentionally feed bears or leave out food or garbage that will attract bears and cause conflicts.

Getting close to a wild animal is dangerous.

# 2: Secure food and garbage

Store garbage in a sturdy shed or garage and then put it out on the morning of pickup rather than the night before.

If not stored in a secured building, modify your existing garbage can to make it more bear-resistant or use a bear-resistant container.

Secure commercial garbage in bear-resistant dumpsters.

Protect gardens, beehives, compost and livestock with electric fencing.

Pick ripe fruit from trees and bushes and remove fallen fruit from the ground.

# **3: Remove or secure bird and wildlife feeders**

Remove wildlife feeders. If wildlife feeders are left up, only put enough food out for wildlife to finish eating before dark and make feeders bear-resistant.

# 4: Never leave pet food outdoors

Feed pets indoors. If feeding pets outdoors, only put food outside for short time periods and bring in leftover food and dishes after each feeding.

### **5: Clean and store grills**

Clean and degrease grills and smokers after each use.

If mobile, store them in a secure shed or garage.

# 6: Alert neighbors to bear activity

If you see a bear, let your neighbors know. Share tips on how to avoid conflicts with bears.

Encourage your homeowner's association or local government to institute bylaws or ordinances to require trash be kept secure. Having conflicts with bears? Call one of the FWC's five regional offices. Go to MyFWC. com/Contact, and click on "Contact Regional Offices" to find the phone number for your region. If you want to report someone who is either harming bears or intentionally feeding them, call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at (888) 404-FWCC (3922).

More information is available at MyFWC.com/Bear, where you can access the "Guide to Living in Bear Country" brochure. Find additional ways to be BearWise at BearWise.org. Thirty-eight states, including Florida, support BearWise®, an innovative program that helps people learn ways to responsibly live around bears. Help it help bears and other wildlife by purchasing the Conserve Wildlife license plate at WildlifeFlorida. org/CWT.

The Florida black bear is a conservation success story, increasing from a population estimated to have been as low as 300 bears in the 1970s to more than 4,000 bears statewide to-day.



🀞 Community

# **Celebrating 20 Years Helping Children in Crisis**

By LISA WOODRUM

For 20 years, Children in Crisis has answered the desperate need for foster care through its group homes at the Fort Walton Beach property. It has provided stable and consistent home environments for a multitude of displaced children in the midst of severe circumstances. CIC originated from a small grass-roots group of individuals; supporters of the mission have grown to more than 200 members, including CPAs, architects, attorneys, educators and builders.

Ken Hair, CEO and president, and his loving, capable staff have established CIC as a haven where TLC is given to the littles, in a safe, healing atmosphere - physically, emotionally and spiritually. To gird up this mission, a network of caring community organizations, businesses and citizens have partnered in assisting CIC's mission to "Provide Homes...Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together."

There is a severe shortage of foster homes in this area. DCF contacts CIC when it has children who need to be placed.



Sarah Traver, Operations Director, tells of the foster care dynamic: "When a child is taken from its home, it is asked to pack a few things in a backpack, then are transported to wherever they find a placement (within four counties). A child in Okaloosa county, for example, may be transferred to an open bed in Escambia County. Oftentimes, they have to say goodbye to siblings who are placed in another home and county. This child will meet new people, will be

enrolled in a new school, etc. (When they come to CIC,) there is only a trash bag with their belongings. I can't imagine how scary it is to be in a home you have never been in before!"

CIC provides a home to an average of 100 children per year. Since opening its doors in 2008, CIC has been called "home" by more than 1,033 children, providing them with 123,857 days and nights of a safe, loving environment to grow and thrive.

As foster parent Kristilyn





Cash shared, "We all know that it takes a village to raise a child, and that is exactly what CIC is for us as foster parents. CIC is our village!"

In reality, this "village" expands beyond the borders of the CIC neighborhood; it is this community that has and will continue to provide the funding, resources, giftings and volunteers needed. To note a few needs: financial support (ie. monthly utilities \$8,333); non-perishable foods and gen-

tly used clothing, volunteers to fundraise, helping hands in homes sporadically, landscaping. They are seeking to hire respite couples (singles too) to intermittently care for children a few days at a time giving houseparents a break. Further needs can be found on the website: www.childrenincrisis.org or call (850) 864-4242.

Says houseparent Jowie Rodgers, "Every kid is one caring adult away from a success story. Even though the kiddos are here for a season or two, they will be in our hearts forever. No matter what the fight that we houseparents and staff have to go through, we are passionate about the souls of our children. They are our future."



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Page 12

# Mid-Bay Rotary Awards Multiple Individual Scholarships and Donates to Take Stock in Children

During Mid-Bay Rotary's May 24 meeting, President Dave Wolcott and Mid-Bay Rotarian Steve Himber awarded three of its six \$2,000 scholarships to deserving students. In addition, Mid-Bay donated \$3,234 to Okaloosa County's Take Stock in Children Program. During Mid-Bay's May 31 meeting, Mid-Bay awarded two more of its six \$2,000 scholarships. Scholarship recipients provid-



Annastasia Wilson

ed their future plans as to what college they plan to attend and what major they will pursue.



Kendra Belton

Recipients attended the Collegiate High School.Not pictured is Emma Crumbaugh who was



Trista Bennett

awarded her scholarship at the Niceville High School Awards Assembly.

Gabi Farris





# **A Superior Honors Vets/First Responders**

In April, A Superior Air Conditioning Company held its second quarterly Veterans & First Responders Appreciation Lunch of the year at Faith Assembly Christian Church, aka The Rock n Roll Church in Miramar Beach. Veterans and First Responders are encouraged to apply online at ASuperiorAC. com for the Free HVAC Giveaway each quarter.

One First Responder nominated a fellow teammate from the Walton County Sheriff's Office for the giveaway. "He has worked with our agency for 20-plus years," the application began. "In 2009, he was involved in an on-duty shooting



where he and other deputies apprehended a man who succumbed to his injuries and was responsible for two Okaloosa Deputies' murders, Burt Lopez and Skip York. After this traumatic incident, he transferred as lieutenant over the Communications Division, where he flourished in his career. Working now with more than 40 women can be quite challenging, but he has created a fantastic team of unsung heroes who rarely get the credit they deserve. He takes on many tasks, including our county's latest radio

tower project, which is a huge undertaking.

"While he is no longer on patrol and in the background, I assure you if he were gone for a week, the ripple effect would be felt all over the agency. I appreciate all he does and cannot think of anyone more deserving of this than him and his family. He lives in a modest home with his wife and 17-year-old son, and there is no central air conditioning unit for their home. They have a window unit in one area of their house to bring some relief from the heat. Thank you for considering this selfless man for your HVAC giveaway."

With that, Jimmy Dallas from A Superior announced the Q2 HVAC Winner, Jason Hall, who stood as all applauded. Sometimes these events get emotional, and this lunch was no exception. When a hardworking individual puts his life on the line to keep others safe – whether safe in our communities or safe in our country – he deserves recognition, appreciation and big thanks from the community. That is why A Superior Air Conditioning Co. started this appreciation event eight years ago. That is why we choose to give away eight units a year to first responders and veterans in need. That is why this event is not only still going strong, but it also continues to flourish and grow as word of mouth spreads and more members of the community join us to give their appreciation.

Will you join us? Our next lunch takes place on Tuesday, July 11, at Faith Assembly Christian Church, 306 S. Geronimo St. in Miramar Beach, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please help us spread the word to every veteran and first responder you know!



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# Florida: America's Promised Land

By Doug Stauffer

In "The Courage to be Free," Gov. Ron DeSantis delivers a masterful portrayal beginning with his blue-collar upbringing to his journey from Yale and Harvard, through the Navy and Congress, to become the 46th governor of Florida. This gripping narrative offers more than just an insider's view of his path; it encapsulates the embodiment of a true Reagan Conservative. Despite the political dogmas these Ivy League institutions propagated, he resisted their influence, emerging even more firmly committed to his conservative principles.

His resistance to institutional indoctrination further crystallized his belief in upholding the Rule of Law instead of bending it to fit preferred political narratives, a trend he noted while studying at these institutions.

DeSantis's book goes far beyond a personal memoir. It's a blueprint for others looking to resist the prevailing winds of leftist ideologies and navigate the landmines of contemporary American politics. His experiences provide a robust counterargument to the increasingly prevalent view that one must subscribe to liberal ideologies.

DeSantis's choice to pass on a lucrative career path after earning his law degree from Harvard to take an ensign's salary in the Navy reflects the depth of his commitment to service and the principles of self-sacrifice. With considerable student debt, he



chose service to the country over personal financial gain, becoming a member of the Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG).

His tenure in Congress is a study of disciplined commitment to principles over convenience. He slept in his office when the House was in session, maintaining a certain distance from the seductive D.C. culture, avoiding the "Swamp" he had promised to resist. He honored his campaign promises, resisted becoming a part of the professional ruling class that he believed Congress evolved into and upheld his commitment to serve as a citizen legislator.

His commitment to ethical leadership also extended to his finances. He declined the Congressional pension, opted out of the Congressional Health

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Care plan and stopped trading stocks. This d e t e r m i n ation was also evident in his opposition to the "Gang of Eight's" amnesty legislation and his push to hold Congress accountable. His book is

a book; it's a clarion call for a recommitment to the founding principles of our

great nation. In these pages, De-Santis reveals his blueprint for leading the "Great American Comeback," starting from the shores of the Sunshine State.

His pivotal role in 2015 with eight other members of Congress in forming the House Freedom Caucus has had far-reaching political impacts, including paving the way for Donald Trump's election to the presidency. This vision of establishing a caucus of the most conservative Republicans exemplifies his strategic acumen and unwavering commitment to the cause of conservatism. As re-

cently demonstrated, the House
 Freedom Caucus forced robust
 concessions from Congressman
 Kevin McCarthy before his installation as House Speaker.

One of the most compelling sections of the book centers on DeSantis's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. His resolute opposition to draconian restrictions, despite severe criticisms and a wave of opposing views, not only held sway but also preserved the freedoms of Floridians and maintained the state's economy. He resolutely refused the medical authoritarianism perpetrated on the world.

The book isn't merely a story of DeSantis's life and career. It's an insightful critique of the current American political landscape. From his debunking of the "Russian Collusion Delusion" and media's "Click-First, Facts-Later" ethos to his passionate defense of Trump against unfounded allegations, DeSantis offers a critical examination of the biases and malpractices that have controlled the political landscape for far too long.

"The Courage to be Free" is a testament to his unflinching commitment to conservative principles, steadfast leadership, and enduring resolve to make Florida-and by extension, America-the Promised Land for all its citizens. DeSantis's leadership exemplifies the art of the possible when politicians dare to stand by their principles and the conviction to serve selflessly. His book does more than tell a story - it delivers a roadmap for those with the vision to "Make America Florida." We do not know the future, but hope seems brighter after reading this treatise.



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# **Congressman Waltz's Call to Action:** Unity and Security

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Congressman Mike Waltz, representing Florida's 6th Congressional District, has taken the reins from Gov. DeSantis in the continued fight for national security, veterans' affairs and economic growth. This former Green Beret serves on several House committees, including Armed Services—a natural fit, given his Army Special Forces experience. This committee has jurisdiction over the Department of Defense, including military research and development, nuclear energy and construction.

Waltz recently visited Okaloosa County. The congressman took to the stage at the Air Force Enlisted Village, a luncheon that was anything but ordinary as he began by reminiscing. Picture a young Waltz in training, kneedeep in swamp water, shivering in the freezing Florida night. "You'd never think you could get that cold in the Sunshine State," he said, "but I did." Fortunately, this memory has long since faded, replaced with his love for his constituents.

Now, fast-forward to a world where the Federal government's number one priority is no longer keeping its citizens safe. Waltz



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passionately declared, "I am trying to get Washington to do less and focus on the right things." With fire in his eyes, he warned us that "the Big One is coming."

The formidable Chinese government, he explained, is locked in an economic struggle with the U.S., seeking to outmaneuver and overpower us. With a navy now larger than ours, outbuilding our ships at an astonishing 5:1 ratio, and launching more into space than all other nations combined, the Chinese threat cannot be ignored. "They control the U.S. supply chains," Waltz warned, "including antibiotics, with 90% of computer chips made in Taiwan, a nation China seeks to control."

Waltz also criticized the Green New Deal, claiming it would merely replace one dependency with another, as China controls much of the world's cobalt, manganese and other essential minerals in battery production." Arming Taiwan and Japan in advance is crucial," he declared, "I am 100% focused on that, and it gets me up in the morning."

Yet, he explained that the challenges our military faces aren't just external. The Congressman lamented the worst recruiting crisis since Vietnam, misguided strategies for electric tanks, and an unnecessary focus on differences rather than unity. "Unit cohesion in combat is life and death," he argued. "I have called in every plane in the Air Force for close air support, and no one ever asked what color or sexual orientation the pilot was."

Waltz emphasized the importance of supporting our troops and their families, who sacrifice so much for our nation. "The last thing they need," he said, "is to return to a moldy barracks or concrete chunks falling from the ceilings in the hangers." With that, the audience was left to ponder the gravity of the situation and the responsibilities we must all bear in the face of these challenges.

As a House Armed Services Committee member, Waltz has been involved in oversight of Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field, which are both critical to America's national defense. Waltz has been a strong advocate for these installations in Congress, securing funding for important programs and infrastructure projects and advocating for policies that support military readiness and strengthen America's defense capabilities. Additionally, as a veteran, Waltz understands the sacrifices and contributions of the men and women who serve in uniform. He has been a strong advocate for their needs and priorities.

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# Honoring the Fallen: The 54th Annual EOD Memorial

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Sunday morning, while preparing my sermon, I received a call from Lt. Kearns about a death in Niceville that required my attention as a police chaplain. A retired EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) technician had passed away in his home. After arriving, I comforted the grieving widow and met another retired EOD officer and his wife. He invited me to attend the 54th annual EOD Memorial Ceremony taking place that Saturday.

The EOD community is tight-knit, and the Kauffman EOD Training Complex memorial service was both humbling and emotional. Assembled military personnel, civilians, and Gold Star Families were present, along with distinguished guests like Congressman Matt Gaetz and Congressman Brian Mast. Capt. Beall, USN, welcomed everyone and expressed gratitude to the Gold Star Families, emphasizing the EOD community's commitment to remembering their fallen heroes.

The memorial walls bear the names of 343 EOD men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service of their country. This year, the 344th name was added: Lt. JG Aaron Paul Fowler. Gen. Poole described him as "a man of faith who lived it out and exemplified it every day of his life."

The most moving part of the ceremony was the reading

of the 344 names, starting with the Army, followed by the Navy, Marines and Air Force. The atmosphere was solemn as the crowd listened to each name being read, honoring the memory of those who served, and sacrificed their lives.

I flew to Washington two days later to meet with 20 Congressmen and women, including Congressmen Gaetz and Mast. In addition to other subjects, I wanted to get their impression of the memorial and ceremony. As I stood with Congressman Mast, I asked him about his perception of the memorial and ceremony. The Congressman is a member of the EOD community who lost both legs while serving in Afghanistan.

Congressman Mast stated, "I knew many of the names personally, along with others not mentioned with life-altering injuries. The memorial is a testament to the fact that the job is inherently dangerous and often deadly." It was a surreal experience standing with him in his office, knowing that his name was not on that wall but that he, too, paid dearly for his sacrificial service to our country.

EOD graduation ceremonies traditionally take place at the memorial, a solemn reminder of the sacrifices made. Brig. Gen. Poole addressed the gathering, emphasizing the impor-

wreath-laying, three-volley salute, and playing of taps were a moving tribute to those who gave their lives.

Supported by the EOD Warrior Foundation, the ceremony reinforced the bravery and

tance of honoring the fallen. A dedication of these heroes. As I left, the profound impact of the event stayed with me. The 54th EOD Memorial Ceremony was a stark reminder of the selfless service and ultimate sacrifice of these brave individuals.



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still start each morning with the sound of "Reveille" and end your day with the sound of "Retreat."

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### **WCSO Captain Graduates** from FBI National Academy



A Walton County Sheriff's Office captain has graduated from the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy in Virginia. Capt. Dustin Cosson is now one of 54,366 law enforcement officers who have completed the FBI National Academy since its inception in 1935. The graduation took place at the National Academy in Quantico, Va., Thursday, June 8, in front of family and friends.

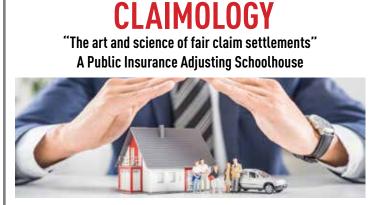
Known around the world for its academic excellence, the National Academy is a 10-week course offering advanced communication, leadership and fitness training. Participants must have proven records as professionals within their agencies to attend.



From front left: Chapter DH president Anna Skelton, scholarship winners Whitney Walker (DH Memorial) and Bailey Tate (STAR); chapter members

Dona Charlton, Jeannie Farmer, Mike Baugh, Marianne Haberbusch, Janice Lacefield, Melissa Pearce, Linda Evans; guests Stephanie Tate and

Angila Walker; chapter members Candace Foster and Karen Kraus.



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,

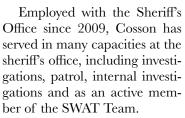
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The Walton County native has received numerous accolades, including a Florida House of Representatives Commendation in July 2012, Deputy of the Quarter in July 2013 and August 2016, and Walton Area Chamber Young Professional of the Year in 2022.

Cosson also volunteers as a board member for non-profits such as Shelter House of Northwest Florida and Mainstreet DeFuniak Springs and participates in the South Walton High School Criminal Justice Advisory Council.

"It was a humbling experience to have the opportunity to learn and train with the top law enforcement executives from around the world," said Cosson. "I am honored to represent Walton County and my agency at such a respected program. I'm excited to get back to work to implement everything I've learned while at the academy."



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### **Sisterhood Awards** \$3,500 in Scholarships

Local members of the P.E.O. Sisterhood gathered in early June to celebrate two local young women who have won scholarships sponsored by their women's organization.

Bailey Tate, a 2023 graduate from Niceville High School, has won a \$2,500 P.E.O. STAR Scholarship for 2023. She was chosen from among thousands of applicants nationwide, based on excellence in leadership, activities, community service, academics and her potential for future success. Bailey will major in industrial engineering and systems engineering at the University of Tennessee this fall.

Whitney Walker, a 2023 graduate from the Baker School, has been awarded the Florida Memorial Scholarship by Chapter DH of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, a philanthropic educational organization which promotes increased educational opportunities for women. Chapter members from Okaloosa County have raised the money for this \$1,000 scholarship, which is decided locally and awarded to a young woman from Okaloosa or Walton County based on excellence in leadership, activities, community service, and academics. She will travel to Uganda to participate in a mission trip this summer. Whitney will study elementary education this fall at Northwest Florida State College.

These young women and their mothers were celebrated at luncheon held by Chapter DH members on Monday, June 5, at Boathouse Landing restaurant in Valparaiso.

Honoring the P.E.O. STAR Scholarship winner are, from left, Stephanie Tate, mother of the recipient; scholarship winner Bailey Tate; and Chapter DH President Anna Skelton.

Gathered to celebrate the Chapter DH, Florida Memorial Scholarship are, from left: Angila Walker, mother of the recipient; scholarship winner Whitney Walker; and Anna Skelton, Chapter DH president.

For more information on the P.E.O. Sisterhood, visit www. peointernational.org. For more information, contact Melissa Pearce at ChapterDHFL@cox. net 850-428-4186 (cell)

🌸 Dining

# **Props Craft Brewery in Hammock Bay has Opened**

Props Brewery has opened its brand-new facility next to the General Store in Hammock Bay in Freeport.

The new location will brew its own beer with additional options for wine and soda. There is also a permanent food truck onsite for pub-style food whenever the facility is opened. The new location is also already hosting many events and offerings such as Paint & Sip events, live music, trivia nights, farmer's market, karaoke and more.

At the time of this article, owners Nathan Vannatter and Mike Kee, co-founders and business partners, were looking to hire folks for multiple food truck offerings. To apply, email Propsbreweryjobs@gmail.com.

On Thursday June 8, a 2/3 model of a P-51 Mustang was

Destin native Trent Wallace

recently celebrated the opening

of T's Catch Seafood Market.

While looking to fill a niche in

Freeport, Trent discovered the

need for places to eat and espe-

cially a place to buy fresh, local

seafood, steamed fresh shrimp,

Hammock Bay, and the options

for dining are limited," said

Trent. "We wanted to position

ourselves so that people com-

ing home could swing by T's

Catch and grab dinner for the

whole family. The location is also perfect for visitors coming

into town."

"We live in Freeport, in

steaks and grab-n-go items.



hung from the rafters above the runway design to the Great Hall by contractors from Jay Odom Group. "We have partnered with the Jay Odom Group over the last year to build the most amazing microbrewery I could have ever imagined," said Nate in a Facebook post. "We can't wait to add additional outdoor seating to accommodate all of our customers."

Props Craft Brewery was founded originally in Fort Walton Beach by Nate and Mike, who were, at the time, both

T's Catch Seafood Market

**Opens in Freeport** 



USAF Special Operations pilots with a passion for brewing beer (and drinking it). With its expansion into Freeport, it has grown into a regional brewery known throughout our area.

Prior to opening their successful beer brewing business, Mike and Nate spent most of their lives serving in the USAF. "I enlisted in the Air Force when I was 18 years old," said Nate. "I

used the GI Bill and an ROTC scholarship to get a commission. Ten years after that commission, my partners and I used a VA/ SBA loan to start our business in Fort Walton Beach."

Props in Freeport is open from 11 a.m.- 9 p.m. Sunday –Thursday and open until 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Visit propsbrewery.com/hammock-bay and check the Facebook page for music lineups and daily/monthly events.



Breakfast: Bakery - Quiche - Breakfast Sandwiches Lunch: Chicken Salad - BLTs - Paninis - And MORE Inside & Outside Seating Available 7:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Tues. - Sat. Worried about getting out? NO CONTACT pick up still available. Looking for event space? Give us a call!



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stocked for business, Trent envisions even more for the market. Currently, T's Catch offers fresh Gulf fish, shrimp and scallops,

steaks, sauces, dips, and homemade products such as crab bisque, shrimp slaw, gumbo and a key lime pie named "best in town" by many customers. Sushi is freshly rolled Tuesday through Friday and always sells out, confirming the need for grab-n-go meals. T's Catch also offers beer and

as well as prime

wine and is in the process of expanding the selection as the need grows.

» Ovide «

by celebrity Chef Hugh Acheson.

Voted Best Restaurant in Walton County by Emerald Coast Magazine, send your taste buds on a culinary adventure at Ovide. Led by James Beard award-winning Chef Hugh Acheson, indulge in delectable dishes inspired by the Gulf Coast. Reservations accepted (844) 422-2923.

Located at Hotel Effie Sandestin

# Local Diving, Drinks and Coffee

### **JoJo's Coffee** and Goodness



Owner and operator Angela "JoJo" Stevenson invites you to enter a cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere for a daily dose of "goodness." Feel free to work on site (free WiFi) or meet up with friends or family. Stop in for cinnamon rolls, scones (cranberry orange, chocolate caramel

and cheddar thyme, strawberry coffee cake), cranberry orange muffin, red velvet cookies, brownies with espresso ganache or caramelitas. Try a breakfast special with a piece of quiche or kolache-hashbrown casserole. Breakfast burritos are rolled and ready daily. Choose from an-



douille, bacon, chorizo or veggie. Or tantalize your taste buds



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with a made-to-order breakfast sandwich on croissants or bagel with two eggs and cheese and then choose if you want to add Jojo's homemade smoked jalapeño beef bologna, bacon, house smoked barbecue or ham. Cinnamon rolls and kaloches still hold the top spot for sellouts. Stop in for featured muffins, coffee cake or pound cake-great with maple cinnamon latte or caramel macchiato. In summer, some of Jojo's most popular coffees are cold: Nitro, Cold Brew, fruit smoothies and frozen affogatos are the way to go. Of course, there's always freshly roasted coffee every morning, even all day. Order ahead and pick up some for all your celebrations.

Hours 7:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Tuesday - Saturday (850) 737-6194

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### 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.

Spend your July 4 holidays at LJ Schooners with Open Oyster Bar and live music from Duchess at 6 p.m. July 1; July 2 is Sunday Brunch and live music from Jared Hezog at 4 p.m.; July 3 is a Food Truck 3 - 9 p.m. and live music from Ronny Dean Garrett at 4 p.m.; and celebrate July 4 with open oyster bar, Food Truck 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. and live music from Ken Baker at 4 p.m. July 1-4, bucket special: Buy 4, Get 5!

July: Live Music Every Friday and Saturday.

Sundays - Brunch 9 a.m.-1 p.m.;

Beach Madness Mondays 4-7 p.m., extended Happy Hour 4-7 p.m.

Tuesdays - Kids Eat Free (with adult purchase)

Wednesdays - Sailboat races 6 p.m.

Thursdays - Throwdown Paddle Board Races, 6 p.m.; Open 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, closed. Wednesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday brunch, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

(850) 897-6400 bluewaterbaymarina.com/schooners 290 Yacht Club Dr., Unit 200, Niceville in Bluewater Bay

### **Ovide at Hotel Effie**

With celebrity chef Hugh Acheson bringing his award-winning culinary skills to the table, you will want to pull up a chair and savor every bite, from an intimate meal for two to a get-together for 10 or more. Ovide embraces the local food and cherished flavors of the Gulf Coast and presents them with a sophisticated, refreshing French influence and southern flair. Chef Hugh is no stranger to the spotlight. The James Beard award-winning Georgia chef owns several acclaimed restaurants, including Five & Ten, Empire State South and the National, has been a Top Chef Masters competitor, a Top Chef judge and is a celebrated cookbook author. Have you tried the Seasonal Special at 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 dessert for \$50. Ask your server about the wine pairing option. Visit Hoteleffie.com for more information.



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# NWFL Regional Aquatic Center Set for Huge Economic Impact Locally

A new, regional Aquatic Center, a state-of-the-art aquatic facility, is set to be constructed in Niceville, which would include a 50-meter, Olympic-sized pool. The center aims to provide a wide range of aquatic programs for locals and promote community well-being as well as stimulate economic growth.

On June 13, the NWFL Regional Aquatic Center presented its highly anticipated Economic Impact Analysis to the Niceville Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) at the Niceville City Council meeting. It was an opportunity for community members and local businesses to learn about the Economic Impact Analysis findings and participate in the discussion.

The analysis, conducted by expert economists and consultants, brought forth the economic benefits the Center could bring to Niceville, including an impact of \$235 million on the local economy and the creation of more than 450 jobs. Evaluating the direct and indirect effects of the project on local businesses, job creation, tourism and overall economic growth, the analysis highlighted local benefits such as increased visitor spending and job boosts in the hospitality and service industries with the increase of tourists to the area, employment opportunities and tax revenue generation, all key factors that would contribute to local economic impact.

One advantage of the new aquatic center of this size in the Southeast Swim Region is the impact from visitors and tourists. Even though there will be ample opportunity for local swim teams, military and colleges to use it, early projections show that there could be as many as 12 events per year to start. If increased by two per year, by 2035, the Center could see up to 32 major events annually.

The proposed Regional Aquatic Center project does indeed feature a wide range of amenities for all ages and skill levels. It is slated to offer comprehensive aquatic programs including swimming lessons, water aerobics, competitive swimming

Shalimar Pointe Golf Club Reopens After \$1.7 Million Renovation



Shalimar Pointe Golf Club has reopened its golf course after an extensive renovation that took more than a year to complete. On Father's Day weekend golfers were able to get on the greens!

Golfers can expect to experience the challenging Finger-Dye layout with all new TifEagle Bermuda greens, updated irrigation system, bunker renovations, restored cart paths, added tee boxes and a new fleet of golf carts. The renovation also included some tree removal for enhanced turf conditioning. New Callaway rental clubs are available, and a membership program is available with no initiation fee.

General Manager and Head

Professional Jacob Hill commented, "This renovation has been an extensive process. It's fantastic seeing the results of this renovation come to fruition with incredible greens and great turf conditions. I believe we've taken the first step toward making Shalimar Pointe Golf Club one of the top courses in the panhandle. Club members and the golfing public have eagerly anticipated this re-opening and will be very pleased with the great golf experience when they play Shalimar Pointe."

Shalimar Point Golf Club is located at 302 Country Club Drive, Shalimar. For tee times visit www.shalimarpointe.com or call 850-651-1416. and training. Indirectly, it will provide intangible benefits such as improved community well-be-

ing, enhanced health and fitness opportunities and a hub for social gatherings and events. The

facility will foster community spirit, sportsmanship and athletic achievement.



Sports

# NWFSC Women's Softball Play in National Championship Journey



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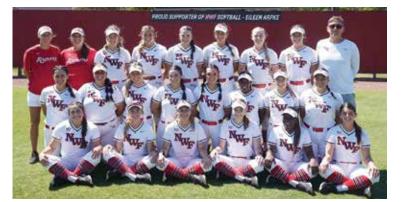
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By Doug Stauffer

Another championship-caliber team from Northwest Florida State College, the women's softball team earned a spot in the NJCAA National Championship. The sun shone bright and hard on a high-stakes diamond at Oxford, Ala., as Northwest Florida faced off against the spirited Florida SouthWestern Buccaneers. The Raiders fell short, falling to the Buccaneers 10-6 in a truly epic showdown, but not before posting a record-shattering year.

Layla Thompson, one of the dazzling stars of the Raiders, ignited the early momentum, smashing a two-run home run off the scoreboard, thrusting the Raiders into the lead. However, the Buccaneers quickly responded, showcasing their might and mettle. Feline Poot delivered a resonating equalizer, tying the game at two in the bottom half of the opening inning.

The second inning unveiled a dramatic twist as the Buccaneers, with a fierce appetite for victory, seized a commanding lead, striking six runs to vault ahead 8-2. However, the Raiders wouldn't fade into the shadows, demonstrating the same tenacity they had all year. Sydney Stewart capitalized on a Brilee Broussard ground out, bringing the score to 8-3, while Riley Gibson steered Layla Thompson home, trimming the deficit to four in a thrilling third inning. But, as the game of softball often proves, one swing can



change the narrative, and in the bottom of the fourth inning, Poot catapulted her third tworun home run of the game, finishing with a staggering six RBIs. As the game

progressed, the Raiders continued to swing valiantly. In the fifth inning, Gibson homered to center field, bringing home Broussard and narrowing the gap to 10-6, but despite their gallant efforts, the Raiders' championship hopes ended.

Layla Thompson was deservedly crowned the Most Outstanding Offensive Tournament Player in a tournament full of exceptional performances. Meanwhile, Julia Petty, Gyvan Hammons and Thompson were honored on the All-Tournament team.

Northwest Florida ended a monumental season, finishing National Runner-Up with an impressive 57-11 record. This record-breaking season will forever be etched in the annals of the Raiders' history with these records: most wins (57), highest team batting average (.352), most runs scored (515), most RBIs (472), most doubles (129), most home runs (92), most total bases (1015) and most hits (646). This record-setting season will be hard to match, but NWFSC student-athletes keep the faithful fans coming back for more.

Individual accolades were also aplenty, with Sydney Stewart setting a record for doubles with 22 and Gyvan Hammons leaving opponents in the dust with 39 stolen bases this year.

# Three Rocky Bayou Students Named to Academic All-State Team

For the first time in Rocky Bayou Christian School history and since its membership with the FHSAA began in school year 2002-2003, three senior athletes, Jackson Mallick, David Om and Elizabeth Pruitt, were each named as three of the 24 members of the statewide FHSAA 2023 Florida Dairy Farmers Academic All-State Team, announced on the FHSAA website (https://fhsaa. com/news/2023/4/4/aboutus-fhsaa-announces-2023-florida-dairy-farmers-academic-all-



state-team.aspx).

This honor is based upon their academic and athletic accomplishments in their junior and senior years. All three students were honored along with 21 other Florida student athletes at the banquet in Gainesville on June 5, with Jackson additionally honored to read the essay component of his applications. Each of the 24 state received a \$1,700

winners received a \$1,700 scholarship and an FHSAA Medallion commemorating their achievements.

# Divers Set New Records at World's Largest Lionfish Tourney

By Nick Tomecek, Okaloosa County PIO

Divers participating in the 5th Annual Emerald Coast Open Lionfish Tournament set a new record with the successful removal of 24,699 lionfish! Last year's total was 13,835. Divers from throughout the country competed for prize money totaling more than \$100,000 in an effort to eradicate this invasive species in the Gulf of Mexico. Lionfish have few known predators due to their venomous spines.

"Okaloosa County continues to be a leader in helping to create sustainable marine ecosystems," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. "We are thankful for all of the divers and sponsors who helped make this event so successful."

The Emerald Coast Open, hosted by Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism and Florida Fish and Wildlife was held May 19-20 with an award ceremony at AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar on May 21. The tournament had 144 divers participate, competing in a variety of categories. The largest lionfish was caught by a diver from the team Dibs on Bottom and measured 17.95 inches while the diving team Deep Water Mafia caught the most lionfish at 2,898. In addition to the main tournament over the weekend, the event also set a pre-tournament

record of 5,139 lionfish caught.

The tournament coincided with the 5th Annual Lionfish Removal & Awareness Festival along the HarborWalk Village in Destin. The festival included Lionfish & Libations, an event



where the public tried samplings of various local brews paired with food provided by participating vendors. Various educational booths were also set up for a crowd of about 5,000 to learn about the species. Leading up to the tournament, Emerald Coast Open Restaurant Week offered the public unique lionfish dishes prepared by chefs at local restaurants that both satisfied their customers while also informing them of this beautiful, yet invasive species. Judges selected La Paz as this year's winner who served Filete de Lionfish Empapelado. Ingredients included lionfish, epazote, calabacitas, carrot, potato, and peppers.

"Every year this event gets bigger and bigger and wouldn't be possible without the community's support," said Alex Fogg, Coastal Resource Manager with Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism. "We know that lionfish removal events have significant positive impacts on the local ecosystem. Hosting the Emerald Coast Open in Destin – Fort Walton Beach at the beginning of the season really does help our local fishery that is so important to our destination."

More results and information can be found at www.emeraldcoastopen.com or for local information, visit www.destinfwb. com.

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# 🐞 Wellness

# **Experience the Benefits of Hormone Therapy**

By DR. RICHARD CHERN, MD Are you seeking to regain your energy, improve your well-being, and reclaim your zest for life? If you're a man or woman over 40, and some as young as 30, the Hormone Restoration Center in Miramar Beach offers a transformative opportunity through hormone therapy. Step into a world of renewed vitality and optimal health with advanced treatments.

In today's fast-paced world,

hormonal imbalances can often disrupt our lives, leaving us feeling fatigued, experiencing mood swings and struggling with various symptoms. The Hormone Restoration Center specializes in personalized hormone therapy programs that cater to the unique needs of individuals suffering from these symptoms.

The cornerstone of our approach is bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT). Unlike synthetic hormones,

bioidentical hormones are derived from natural sources and mirror the hormones naturally produced by your body. This enables a seamless assimilation process and enhances the effectiveness of the treatment with minimal side effects. The expert providers at the Hormone Restoration Center will conduct a comprehensive evaluation to create a customized treatment plan tailored to your specific needs and goals.

The advantages of hormone therapy are clear. Patients frequently report increased energy levels, improved mental clarity, enhanced mood stability, and an overall sense of well-being. Furthermore, hormone therapy can aid in weight management, boost libido and help maintain muscle tone and bone density. The experienced team at the Hormone Restoration Center will guide you through the process, ensuring you experience a transformation that extends beyond symptom relief, empowering you to live your life to the fullest.

Your safety and well-being are of utmost importance at the Hormone Restoration Center. It adheres to the highest standards of care, utilizing stateof-the-art diagnostic tools and evidence-based treatments. The expert physicians and staff closely monitor your progress, making adjustments as necessary to maximize results and minimize potential risks. Rest assured, you will receive comprehensive care that is tailored to your unique needs and guided by a commitment to your health and satisfaction.

Conveniently located in Miramar Beach, the Hormone Restoration Center offers a warm and welcoming environment. The compassionate and knowledgeable team will provide the support and guidance you need throughout your journey. Complementing the hormone therapy program, the center offers weight loss options including the newest semaglutide to optimize your long-term success in maintaining your newfound vitality.

Take charge of your well-being and rediscover the joy of life. Experience the transformative power of bio-identical hormone therapy at the Hormone Restoration Center in Miramar Beach. Embark on a journey towards enhanced wellness, irrespective of your age. Schedule your consultation today and embrace a life filled with energy, vitality, and renewed purpose by calling us at (850) 837-1271.

Dr. Richard Chern, MD provides hormone therapy to men and women across the country and treats many of the doctors and nurses in the area. Call him for an appointment at The Hormone Restoration Center at (850) 837-1271.

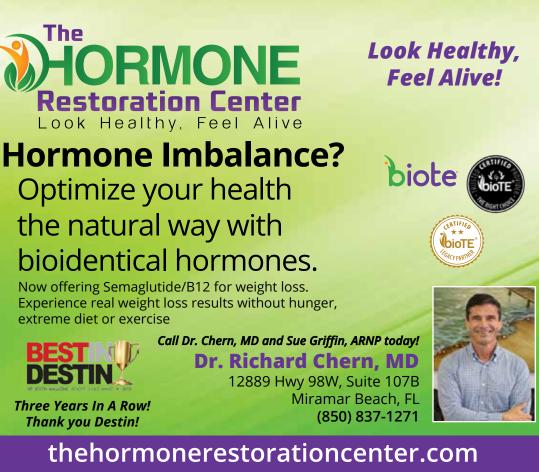


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By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, HealthyDay HealthyLife

Even if you don't have asthma, having knowledge about it can help someone you know or who you may run into some day.

Did you know that asthma is a disorder of the bronchial airways with no known cure? The airways react to certain types of stimulus by swelling and narrowing along with producing excessive mucus. It is the most chronic disease among children and some of these children experienced improvements as they aged. The highest percentage of deaths occur in adults over 65 years of age. Severe attacks, if left untreated, can also cause death.

Throughout the 2022-2023

### There are four classifications for asthma:

Mild Intermittent (1-2 days/wk)
Mild Persistent (+2 days a

• Moderate Persistent (dai-

ly+night)

• Severe Persistent (throughout the day and frequent nights)

Risk factors for developing asthma can be genetics (parent or sibling), allergies or an allergic condition – especially hay fever (allergic rhinitis) – being overweight, smoking or being around second-hand smoke, high levels of air pollution, household chemical irritants, molds or dust mites and occupational chemicals (farming, hairdressers, mfg.).

### **Triggers:**

• Exercise, especially in cold air

- Emotional stress
- Air pollution
- Cigarette smoke

- Learning About Asthma
  - Seasonal allergies, pollen
  - Pet dander
  - Exposure to airborne chemicals

Viruses such as cold and flu
 Sensitivities to food preservatives such as sulfites

• Acid reflux (GERD)

• Medications such as beta-blockers, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen)

There are several treatments that help in controlling or minimizing the attacks through medications and/or high quality nutritional supplements. Supplements should not be removed from their choices as they can improve the quality of the person's life.

### **Medications:**

• Inhaled Corticosteroids – The inhaled options have a much lower risk of side effects and are generally safe for long time usage vs oral options. Examples: Flonase, Flovent HFA, Pulmicort Flexhaler, Rhinocort, etc. Leukotriene Modifiers – These are uncommon and control attacks for about 24 hours. Side effects include depression, aggression, agitation, anxiety, hallucinations and suicide. Examples: Singulair, Accolade, Zyflo.

• Long Lasting Beta Agonists – These can increase the risk of a severe attack which is why they are used in combination with inhaled corticosteroids. Examples: Serevent, Fordil, Perforomist.

• Combination Inhalers – Mentioned above, examples include Advair Diskus, Symbicort, Dulera.

### **Nutritional supplements:**

• Magnesium and Vitamin D deficiencies are associated with increased incidence in asthma attacks as well as an increase in the severity of attack.

• Omega 3 (DHA & EPA) are associated with reduced incidences (frequency and severity)

and support for mental illness

or to improve their mental well-

ness. For more information, visit

of attacks. It exerts specific anti-inflammatory effects, including a reduction of eosinophils, specific white blood cells seen in allergies and asthma.

• Antioxidants, besides A, C, & E, such as grape seed extract, resveratrol, curcumin, quercetin, green tea extract and many others are all associated with improved lung function in human and animal testing. Example: Gamma tocopherol is a sub-type of vitamin E. It has been shown to reduce the inflammatory response and help maintain asthma remission.

The nutritional information above is only a sample of the spectrum of supplementation that has shown sound benefits to those suffering with asthma. To Learn more about a doctor's recommended protocols send me an email with ASTHMA in the subject.

Here's to Health succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

# **OCSD Highlights Mental Health**

school year, the Student Services Department and its mental health providers developed a monthly Mental Health Matters focus. Each month the Okaloosa County School District's (OCSD) mental health team, along with school administration, faculty, staff, and students, focused on one specific component of mental wellness and practiced self-care activities and resources to develop that area of focus for the month. "Our District's commitment to promoting mental health extends far beyond what the State of Florida requires. Currently, we have 21 mental health counselors, nine social workers, and eight CDAC counselors on staff. As we look ahead to the 2023-2024academic year, we plan to expand our team by adding three more CDAC counselors and two additional mental health counselors," stated Superintendent Marcus Chambers. We also plan to have a full-time Mental Health Counselor available on campus at each middle and high school." In addition, each school is proud to have HOPE Squad, a peer-to-peer suicide

prevention and awareness program.

The District joined Mental Health America's nationwide recognition of May's Mental Health Awareness Month where each school participated in activities to promote mental health for students and staff. Knowing what mental health resources are available in our community is "key" to accessing those resources," stated Teri Schroeder, Student Services Program Director. Families can reference OCSD's Student Services Counseling Resources to find a myriad of resources in our community to assist in accessing treatment, counseling



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### > Wellness



By Stephenie Craig, Journey Bravely

Have you ever gone through a day only to realize you interacted with people and don't remember it? Perhaps you were

# Leave People Better Than You Found Them

glazed over as you went through the grocery store checkout or you nodded and talked to your kids while looking at your phone not really paying attention. Or, have you ever gotten to the end of a day and realized you were not a great version of yourself at some point during the day? Maybe you were short with a server at a restaurant or you took out your frustration on someone else. In the midst of busy, hectic lives, it's easy to be lulled into believing many of your daily human interactions don't matter. However, there are no throwaway human interactions. You are either leaving people better or worse than you found them based on how you engage.

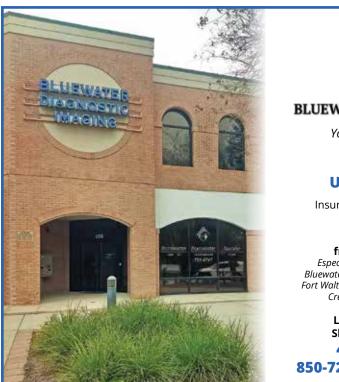
I was driving through a business recently and was struck by the friendly, kind, and enjoyable nature of the drive through employee. We chatted at the window and I drove away having a great conversation with my kids



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Located In The Merchants Walk Shopping Area in Bluewater Bay 4536 East Highway 20 850-729-6747 (p) 850-729-7279 (f) about how positive it is to interact with someone who cares about their job. The simple engagement brought joy and important conversation to our day. On the other hand, I was in a different store and was treated poorly by an employee. The interaction left me feeling angry, discouraged, and like I would avoid returning to the store.

How you treat people matters. Your engagement has the power to shape how people view themselves and the world. How do you want people to feel when they have spent time with you? Would you like them to say they feel small, belittled, ignored, unimportant and unvalued? Or, would you like them to say they feel encouraged, seen, understood, and valued?

### 5 Ways to Leave People Better Than You Found Them

1. Listen more than you talk. Most people spend more time talking about themselves than they do listening to others. You don't always need to fill the space with your words. Try slowing down and intentionally leaving space for others to speak. Then listen intently to what they are saying and to the feeling and meaning behind what they are saying.

2. Ask meaningful questions and listen carefully to the answers. Go beyond questions like "What do you do?" and try questions like, "What made you want to go into that field?" or "What feels most meaningful to you about your work?" Ask open ended questions rather than yes/no questions. Listen with interest to the answer and then ask follow up questions. Allow yourself to become truly interested in the other person.

3. Put away distractions and be fully present in the moment. Put the phone away, turn off the screen, stop scanning the room for the more exciting, popular person you'd like to engage. Make eye contact and pay attention fully

4. Notice the good and give genuine compliments. Criticism is cheap. Genuine compliments are valuable. All people have positive qualities. Try noticing specific positive attributes and speaking them kindly to the person. We all want others to see the good in us.

5. Treat others as though they are as important or more important than yourself. Take a moment to reflect on ways others have treated you that left you feeling valued and seen and important. Now practice doing those things for as many people in your path as you can. Send a thoughtful text or note, hold a door, do something kind without being asked, give generous encouragement.

Leaving others better than you found them can feel easier when the people look like you, talk like you, dress like you, have similar beliefs, and don't get on your nerves. However, all people are human and worthy of being treated with dignity and kindness. The deeper work is in the practice of leaving people better than you found them when they are difficult for you in some way. This is certainly more work for you, however, it leaves both your soul and the world around you more beautiful. As you walk along your journey of leaving people better than you found them, connect with us for counseling and coaching at www. journeybravely.com.

# The Importance of a Local Agent when Insurance Premiums are Rising (Part 1)

### A Local Agent Is Crucial When Insurance Premiums Are Rising

Premiums are going up all over Florida right now, and have been on the rise for the better part of the last three years. Last year saw the downfall of 11 carriers and the swift withdrawal of four others. This year already, two carriers have gone out of business and into receivership. It is not a soft market by any means. The best way to ensure that you are able to find the best plan for your needs is to find a local independent agent to help you, so that you don't have to go it alone.

Property and casualty insurance is an essential type of insurance that covers an individual or a business against financial losses resulting from damage to property or liability claims. Property and casualty insurance provides coverage for losses that arise from unforeseen events, such as theft, fire, storms or accidents that may result in property damage, injury or death.

Having property and casualty insurance is essential for anyone who owns a home, car or business. However, choosing the right insurance policy and carrier can be a challenging and time-consuming task. This is where a local agent can come in handy.

A local agent is an insurance agent who operates in your local area and has a deep understanding of the insurance market in your region. Local agents are an excellent resource when you need help understanding your insurance policy or filing a claim. They can also help you find the right policy and carrier to meet your specific needs.

### The Value of your Agent Being Truly Independent

One of the benefits of having local agents is that they can act as your advocate when dealing with insurance carriers. Your local agent can help you negotiate with your carrier when it increases the price of your premium or tries to deny your claim. They can also help you find a new carrier that offers the same level of coverage at a more affordable price.

It is essential to note that

your local independent insurance agent represents you and not one carrier. An independent agent can help you find the right carrier that offers the best coverage and premium rates for your specific needs. They work with multiple carriers and can provide you with unbiased advice and guidance when it comes to choosing the right insurance policy.

Property and casualty insurance is an essential aspect of protecting your assets and providing financial security in case of unexpected events. Property insurance provides coverage for your home and personal belongings, while casualty insurance covers liability claims against you. With insurance premiums rising, it is more important than ever to have a local insurance agent and work with him to find the right insurance carrier for your needs.

While it is important to have property and casualty insurance to protect your assets, it can be frustrating when insurance premiums rise unexpectedly. This is where having a local insurance agent can be invaluable.

### What Can You Do When Your Carrier Increases The Price Of Your Premium?

If your carrier increases the price of your premium, there are a few things you can do to help find the right insurance carrier and keep your costs down.

First, speak with your local insurance agent, who can help you understand why your premium is increasing and can provide you with options for reducing your costs. From changing your deductible to reviewing your current discounts and finding discounts you may be eligible for are just a few of the things your agent can help you accomplish.

If you have recently replaced your roof, you may not be getting all the wind mitigation discounts that you are now eligible for. Always have a new wind mitigation completed after replacing a roof, and also submit either paid in full roof invoice or finalized re-roof permit to your agent for submission to the underwriting department of your



insurance carrier. The carriers generally apply new credits effective the day they receive the new inspection, rather than the day the new inspection was completed. All wind mitigation inspections must be signed by both the inspector and the insured.

Next, consider shopping

around for a new insurance carrier. Your local insurance agent can help you identify other carriers in your area that may offer better rates. They can also help you compare policies and coverage options to ensure you get the coverage you need at a price you can afford.

Finally, consider making changes to your policy to reduce your costs. For example, increasing your deductible can lower your premiums, as can bundling your policies. Your local insurance agent can provide you with advice on which changes to make to help you save money while also helping you to understand what your insurance needs actually are. Most HO3 home insurance policies allow policyholders to choose the percentage of the dwelling coverage in contents they prefer to carry.

Some carriers allow only 50 percent, 25 percent or 0. Those are not good choices, but that is what that carrier allows. Some carriers allow anywhere from 10 to 70 percent of the dwelling in contents, and that is useful to know when you are collecting quotes from different carriers, which ones will allow you the flexibility to choose the level of contents coverage that most closely matches what you have in your home.



### Business

# Meet Our Local Pros: Heroes Lawn Care

### By Lori Leath Smith

Niceville local Brad Buinicky's mantra is, "Learn from the past and cling to good memories. Plan for the future and hope for the best. But live in the present and maximize your potential there."

As the local Emerald Coast area owner of Heroes Lawn Care, Brad has definitely started a business with maximum potential; Heroes Lawn Care is fulfilling a great need in our area and Brad says he's excited to serve our local communities. For example, "Many people don't realize they need to set their soil up for success. But, with the proper soil structure and fertilization, the lawns we care for reap benefits such as higher water retention, soil nutrition permeability  $\Box$  and improved drainage. We provide the specific structure for your grass roots to grow strong."

The company, based in Valparaiso, launched locally with a Grand Opening event at 3rd Planet Brewery in March, attended by as many as 200! It provides lawn care services such as fertilization, "Doody Duty" and Irrigation.

Fertilization programs include an 8- or 10-step system with seasonal pesticides and pre-emergent fertilizers scientifically selected to be applied at



the correct times of the seasons, customized to our area to make the biggest difference towards a green lawn.

Irrigation services include yearly and mid-season inspections, turn on, sprinkler and irrigation repairs, winterization, and system and controller upgrades.

Eco-Conscious Lawn Conservation can include pet waste packages such as monthly, onetime, weekly or bi-weekly service, Doody Deodorizer Plus brown patch treatment and brown spot repair.

Providing instant estimates through the website, on-site consultations or over-the-phone estimates, Heroes serves Valparaiso, Crestview, Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Navarre, Niceville, Santa Rosa Beach and

Shalimar.

Brad says he plans for Heroes Lawn Care to be a part of vital local support. "Being an active presence within our community and pushing programs centered around eco-friendly sustainability and support for local troops and veterans is part of what makes Heroes a stand-out community leader," says Brad. "It is our aim to provide assistance to local community events, charities and more in the hopes that we make our neighborhoods a little safer, our futures a little brighter and provide our friends and family with an abundance of opportunities for communal growth."

Brad holds a special tie to the Heroes brand – he's served in the military as an Air Force Officer since 2004. Through his operations training, he's built the skillset and know-how to coordinate teams with efficiency and quality at the forefront. "We take a special interest in initiatives that involve making our community clean and helping out our local and active-duty military families with lawn care and access to holistic health resources," says Brad. When Brad isn't leading the charge for clean, green lawns, you'll find him enjoying the salt life, watching his daughters participate in Taekwondo and soccer, or cheering on his alma mater's football program.

A family business, Brad's wife Fernanda, a Brazilian native, has been a veterinary technician and hospital head technician by trade since 1996, with experience in the restaurant and education industries. Fernanda is passionate about serving others and values hard work, sacrifice, honesty and a good laugh. She also enjoys spending time with Brad, her mom and two daughters.

General Manager Lloyd Young retired from the HM Forces of Great Britain where he served several tours of Armed Conflict. Lloyd has a BS in Hotel and Catering Management and an Associate in Golf and Turf Science. For Lloyd, joining Heroes was a natural step for him. "I have been working in the Turfgrass industry for over 20 years and moving from golf courses to domestic and commercial properties just seemed right." His professional background includes construction of more than 16 golf courses, plan operator/plant operator instructor and chief instructor of the Royal Aerospace Establishment. He and his wife having moved to our area just last October, Lloyd says he desires the ability to affect the jobs and lives of the Heroes' customers, taking proposals from conception to completion. And apparently he is having a huge impact; he was just awarded Employee of the Month for the entire nationwide franchise organization in March! Lloyd's main interest? Golf, Golf and Golf-from watching it to playing it!

Having lived on the Emerald Coast since 2017, Brad says he takes great pride in Heroes Lawn Care and he can't wait to help you with your lawn care needs. Give Brad and the crew a call at (850) 495-7829 or fill out a short contact form at HeroesLawnCare.com to learn more or schedule a personalized lawn assessment! Have a charity, event or donation drive that you think would be a great fit for Heroes? Be sure to let them know. And check them out at facebook.com/heroes.emeraldcoast.



### APEX

### continued from page 7

flooring. This great American company has survived and thrived, through two World Wars, The Great Depression, 16 recessions and three devastating fires. How unique is it for a family-owned company to survive into the fifth generation? Only 3% make it past the third generation. Truly one in a million, Mannington Mills has not only survived for 100-plus years, it has grown, evolved and thrived. The company was founded, and is still headquartered, in Salem, NJ. In 1915, John Boston Campbell wanted to start a business with his sons. Now, generations later, the company is led by Chairman of the Board Keith Campbell (John Boston Campbell's great-grandson). Mannington associates, over 3,500 of them across the globe, comprise

the larger Mannington family, all of whom still operate under the same mission that was set forth generations ago: to be the best people to do business with in the flooring industry. While operating around the world with production aboard, they remain very committed to American Made products maintaining significant production in the USA.

While we have other historic and accomplished brands in our line up including PPG paint the largest paint producer in the USA, we remain relentless in the pursuit of other American Premiere Brands. We do carry some imported products, but continue the relentless pursuit of superior American Brands to offer many great values in our lineup to meet the various needs of our clients. "When Only the Best Will Do," we have the perfect solution— Apex Premiere Brands!

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# Sean of the South

### By Sean Dietrich

I had a dream about him last night. It has been nearly three decades since he died, but there he was. Alive. We met in some kind of diner. A breakfast joint. Maybe this was heaven?

He was running late, I was already sitting in a booth, sipping coffee. When he arrived, his first words were: "Did you miss me?"

"No," I said.

He studied my face to see if I was joking. He could tell I wasn't.

I couldn't quit staring at him. My God, it really was my father. He looked good, too. Slender, red hair, tucked-in shirt, slacks. I'd gone so long without seeing him that I'd forgotten what he looked like.

But it only takes a moment to bring it all back. I could even smell his trademarked hair oil. The day after he died I confiscated his pillow and it was covered in this same scent. I slept on that pillow for five years.

'You really didn't miss me?" he said. There was that easy smile of his. He wasn't offended.

"No, I really didn't miss you." He ordered a Coke. And I suddenly remembered that

he always drank Coca-Cola. He never was a coffee drinker. Hated the stuff. Just one of the many things I'd forgotten.

Then I started thinking about the differences between us. There were hundreds of them.

For example: he was always well-dressed, whereas I always looked like I crawled from beneath a Chevy. He was a hard worker; I sleep in on weekdays. Everyone called him "handsome;" nobody has ever ascribed that word to me. He was a planner; there is nothing I love more than canceled plans.

When he was alive, he expected great things from me, but I failed to deliver. From a young age I knew within my kid brain that I would never accomplish the things he hoped for me.

I'm not saying I disappointed him, but I don't think I ever made him so proud that he wanted to shout publicly, "That's my boy! That's my boy!'

The waitress approached our table. She removed her notepad and said to him, "You want the usual, John?"

I couldn't believe it. They knew him by name in this heavenly place. They even knew

what he ate. He had lived a whole lifetime without me.

After we ordered we didn't speak much. He was in a good mood, but I felt myself clamming up. Maybe I was mad.

Throughout breakfast I kept remembering the day after his suicide, when I was a boy. Back then I had this horrible notion that he wasn't really dead. I don't know why. It was some kind of denial thing. It used to keep me up at night.

To put my mind at ease, my mother finally called the sheriff's department and asked the deputy to assure me that he was indeed dead. The deputy — God bless him — sighed and gave it to me straight.

He said, "We used dental records to identify the body. Your dad's teeth were about all that was left of him. So yeah, he's definitely dead."

My insides turned to water. I hung up the phone and cried. But in the back of my mind I always wondered, what if he'd kept on living? What kinds of things would he be doing? Would he have new hobbies? New friends? Would he still read novels? Would he still go out for breakfast on Saturday mornings?

Maybe that's what this place was. Maybe this was his perpetual Saturday morning.

He finished his breakfast and said, "I got something I wanna show you." He was already sliding out of our booth. "C'mon, it's in the parking lot."

Parked outside the cafe was a huge flatbed trailer attached to a truck. On the trailer was a disassembled 1957 Cessna 172 Skyhawk airplane. The wings were removed, the fuselage was strapped to the trailer, the propeller was red.

"I'm gonna restore it," he said, slapping the wing. "Gonna take flying lessons." He looked like a little kid.

He always wanted to learn to fly. Flying was his frustrated dream. But the dream never materialized. When he died, his garage workshop was plastered with posters of jets, biplanes, F/A-18 Super Hornets and A-10 Warthogs.

He kicked the landing gears of his new prize. "So do you like the plane?'

I refused to show approval because no matter how old I get, there is still a little piece of me that wants to punish him for what he did. What did he

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want me to do? Throw a party? Congratulate him? He ruined my life and now he's playing Charles Lindenberg?

He obviously noticed my hardened face.

After a few moments, he said, "You know I don't blame you for not liking me anymore. I get it. But, gosh, it's so nice seeing you again."

I said nothing.

At first I was struck by the tenor of his words. Because, oddly, they contained no sadness, no apologetic undertones. Then I realized that here in this holy place there was no sadness or guilt.

Here, he was free. Here, a man was unencumbered by the weight of his crimes. Even the worry lines on his face had disappeared. This truly was heaven. I was sorry I ever hated this beautiful man.

He took one step toward me. He didn't ask permission, he simply enfolded me in his two skinny arms, just like when I was a child. My tear stained face was soon buried in my father's shoulder. There was that smell again.

"I was lying," I said into his shirt. "I do miss you."

"That's my boy," he said.

Sean was born in Missouri. But, after his father's suicide, when he was 12, he moved with his family to our own Walton County at age 14. He dropped out of school and worked construction and other jobs, then became a professional musician. After going back to school, he discovered writing. He has published 10 books (some of them self-published), and has written columns for many publications including appearing in Life Media. Since 2014, he has written a daily blog called "Sean of the South."

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merely a buzzword but a call to

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action of missionary endeavors.

# Musing



By Pastor Doug Stauffer

In the annals of world history, no nation since ancient Israel has borne a mission as profound as the United States of America. From the crucible of revolu-

# A Pastor's Ponderings: **America's Global Mission as Pilgrims, Patriots and Pioneers**

tion to establish a land of liberty, America was founded on principles echoing a divine intent. It was to be the beacon of hope and the spiritual light in a world darkened by sin and burdened by oppression. It is essential to recognize that as America goes, so goes the world.

This nation, under God, was painstakingly crafted by the Founding Fathers, whose wisdom and foresight set into motion a divine mandate. A mandate where liberty is not

Get the Smile You Deserve Smile with Confidence Again

- Are you embarrassed about smiling in front of people?
- Do you ever put your hand up to cover your smile?
- Do you dislike your smile in photographs?

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

If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, you may be a good candidate for A Smile Makeover. The resonating words of the Declaration of Independence
serve as a constant reminder
to that we are "endowed by our
creator with certain unalienable Rights," namely "Life,
Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." This best conveys my
sentiments:
Mountains to prairies, to

oceans white with foam, God, please bless America,

our beloved home. This Independence Day, let

every American vow,

A return to righteousness for the time is now.

Consider one and all as the star-spangled banner does wave, Over the land of the free, the

home of the brave. In God's grand design, a

choice remains,

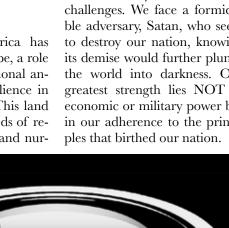
To accept His influence or bear sin's chains.

For centuries America has been the beacon of hope, a role emphasized in our national anthem, a tribute to resilience in the face of adversity. This land owes its birth to the seeds of religious freedom, sown and nur-



tured by the sweat and sacrifice of pilgrims, patriots, and pioneers who dared to dream of a land free from tyranny.

Beyond our borders, America's mission spread, driven by churches sharing the Gospel's light to remote villages and urban metropolises. This mission has a dual purpose: saving souls and discipling Christians. America's role is crucial in an era marked by turbulence and challenges. We face a formidable adversary, Satan, who seeks to destroy our nation, knowing its demise would further plunge the world into darkness. Our greatest strength lies NOT in economic or military power but in our adherence to the princi-



Remember, where the Spirit of the Lord resides,

There, indeed, true freedom abides.

Biblical freedom does not bind,

To political institutions, it isn't confined.

Recognizing this spiritual threat is paramount. We face an enemy intent on sowing discord, stoking division, and causing us to deviate from our divine path. As we pay tribute to our nation's founders, we must recommit ourselves to America's divine mission. We are the torchbearers of their vision, tasked with preserving America's blessings for future generations. As we navigate these trials, we hold steadfast to our faith, trusting in God, who has guided us since our nation's birth.

Freedom to enjoy God's blessings are vast,

In Spirit-led liberty, our souls remain steadfast.

True independence, in Christ we stand,

In this truth, we discover unity so grand.

Indeed, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). Let this liberty echo from our mountains to our valleys, reaching every corner of the earth. Such is the calling, the blessing, and the destiny of the United States of America. We are "one nation under God," and shall find refuge under His wings. God bless the U.S.A., and Happy Independence Day.

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



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# **Emerald Coast Theatre Company's 10 Years of Magic Continues with Season 11 on the Horizon**

By Anna Fisher, Associate Artistic and Education Director

We just closed our 10th season with a sold out run of one of my absolute favorite musicals, "Sound of Music." It was a little bit magical to end 10 years of incredible shows with such a profoundly beautiful story. I look forward to Season 11 with such excitement and anticipation for what another year of great theatre will bring!

We launch Season 11 next fall with Million Dollar Quartet in September/October. This smash-hit musical tells the story of legendary music icons Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins as they come together on Dec. 4, 1956, at the famous Sun Studios. This show has so many great songs including "Blue Suede Shoes," "Sixteen Tons," "Great Balls of Fire" and "I Walk the Line" just to name a few. Elvis will be in the building y'all!

We follow that with the timeless holiday classic A Christmas Carol in December. This fastpaced stage version is so fun and includes all of your favorite characters like Tiny Tim, the Fezziwigs, all the ghosts and, of course, the original grumpy old man, Ebenezer Scrooge. This show is a mug of warm wassail on a cold winter's night and just the right thing to get you into the holiday spirit. Our favorite Scrooge, Bruce Collier, will be returning to the stage as well in this production.

There's plenty of chances to catch The Marvelous Wonderettes: Caps and Gowns throughout the winter months with shows in January, February and March. This is the delightful sequel to The Wonderettes and follows our favorite girls as they graduate in 1958. With songs like "Rock Around the Clock," "At the Hop," "Dancing in the Street" and "River Deep, Mountain High," you will find yourself tapping along to this gem of a musical!

Another offering we have during those winter months is The Play That Goes Wrong. I absolutely adore the humor in this show! If you want a good laugh while trying to solve a murder mystery, this is the perfect night out. It was a smash hit on Broadway and we are thrilled to produce the show at

of ECTC!

If you liked Steel Magnolias, you will love Crimes of the Heart premiering in late February. This is a deeply touching, funny play about three eccentric sisters in a small southern town who deal with the fallout when Babe, the youngest, shoots her husband. This story serves up humor and pathos along with a large glass of sweet tea! And since everyone loves a mystery, we're keeping the final musical of our season under wraps! Just plan to come on out to ECTC for a fantastic show in May 2024.

If Season 11 can't get here fast enough for you, make plans to catch "Broadway on the Boulevard, Dancin' in the Street" outdoors in the Grand Park at Grand Boulevard every Thursday during the summer through the end of July. We also have a fantastic group of teens performing Grease at the end of July at 560 Grand Boulevard, upstairs in our theatre. I hope no matter how busy life gets, you always make time for the joy of a well-told story and the richness of a night out with friends and family. See you at the theatre!



# BIG Orange House Designs Create

**July 1:** Open Studio Pottery 10,2 \$20+

- July 4: CLOSED TO CEL-EBRATE with our Family!
- July 6: Kidz Art Camp, Paint a door hanger/paint
- rocks 9:30-2, \$50 July 7: Kidz Art Camp,
- Weaving and Felt 10-2, \$45 July 11: Kidz Club w/
- Reiko, Strawbee Challenge 9:30-11, \$18.50 **July 11:** Sea Creature
- Paintings w/ Donna 12-2, \$25 (MAKE IT A CAMP, buy both July 11 tickets and pack a lunch or purchase the "Camp Lunch" special @ JoJo's!)
- July 13: Kidz Color Mixing and Paint Pouring w/ JoJo, 9:30-2, \$50
- **July 14:** Kidz Glass Art Camp w/ JoJo, 9:30-2, \$80
- July 18: Kidz Club w/ Reiko, Chain Reaction Course w/ Strawbees 9:30-11, \$18.50

July 18: Zoo Animal Paintings w/ Donna 12-2, \$25 (MAKE IT A CAMP, buy both July 18 tickets and pack a lunch or purchase the "Camp Lunch" special JoJo's)

- July 19: Pottery Camp w/ Laurel 9-12, \$45 July 20: Open Studio Pot-
- tery 10-2, \$35+ **July 22:** Open Studio Leather
- & Pearl Jewelry 12-2, \$20+ **July 25:** Kidz Club, Build a
- Strawbee Robot, 9:30-11, \$18.50 July 25: Paint a Palm Tree
- with Donna 12-2:30, \$45 July 26: Star Wars Art
- Camp w/ Donna 10-2, \$50 July 27: Kidz Art CAT
- Camp w/ JoJo , 9:30-2, \$50 **July 28:** Dog Days Kidz Art Camp w/ JoJo , 9:30-2, \$50

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# Beat the Heat: Fun Musical Activities for Summer Break

As the school year comes to a close, summer break offers a fantastic opportunity for students to explore their creativity and passion for music. Whether they are aspiring musicians or simply enjoy a good tune, engaging in fun music activities can enhance their skills, provide a creative outlet, and make their summer memorable. Here is a variety of exciting music-related activities that will keep young minds entertained and inspired during their summer break.

### 1. Make a Music Video:

Choose a favorite song or piece of music and become an actor/actress for the day. Kids can work together to write a creative story that goes along with the song, complete with characters, costumes and props, and then turn it into a video. Ideas could include acting out the lyrics to a song, dressing up as a famous pop star or creating a short film and adding some music to the background, silent movie-style.

### 2. Form a Band:

If your child already plays an instrument, encourage him to gather a group of talented friends, form a band and prepare a set list of their favorite songs or even write new ones! They could even host a backyard concert one evening for friends, family, and neighbors. This activity is a little challenging but can do wonders for encouraging teamwork and confidence.

### 3. DIY Instruments:

Engage in some arts and crafts for a hands-on experience. Even everyday items like buckets, spoons and trash cans can be used as performance props, just like the entertainment group Stomp, who use ordinary objects to create amazing performances with rhythm, dance and a bit of comedy. Check out one of their performances on YouTube.

# 4. Music-themed Movie Night:

Host a music-themed movie night, where kids can enjoy films that revolve around music and musicians. Choose iconic movies such as "The Sound of Music," "School of Rock," "La La Land" or "Coco." After the

Art News

movie, encourage a discussion about the music, themes, and characters, so they can work on their understanding and appreciation of music in different contexts and cultures.

### 5. Try a New (Or Old) Instrument:

If you have an old instrument sitting in the closet, now is the perfect time to dust it off and experiment with it. Music lessons are over for the summer, so there's no pressure! If instructions are needed, it's very easy to find tutorials around the internet for all different kinds of instruments. A visit to the local music shop can also be a fun experience and you might even find something new to take home with you.

### 6. Campfire Sing-Along:

Thinking of organizing an evening campfire party on the beach? It wouldn't be complete without a little singing. You might consider hiring a guitarist to lead your group of friends and family in singing some old favorites.

This summer break, let the power of music fuel the creativity, curiosity, and passion of your kids. By adding a few musical activities into their day, they can nurture their talents, explore new ideas, and create lasting memories. Give these activities a go and hopefully you'll make this summer an unforgettable one!

### Local Clarinetist Will Attend Renowned Interlochen Arts Camp

Sophia Cafarelli, 16, of Niceville, will attend Interlochen Arts Camp, the nation's premier multidisciplinary summer arts program for aspiring artists in grades 3-12, this summer. She will participate in Interlochen's week-long Clarinet Intensive Program June 16-23.

Sophia just completed her sophomore year at Niceville

High School and has already earned numerous awards for clarinet performance, including her selection to the Florida All-State Band in grades 7 and 8, and the Florida All-State Orchestra in grades 9 and 10. She also served as first chair clarinet of the Okaloosa All County Band, was selected as the single clarinet for Florida State University's Wind Ensemble Summer Program (Grades 9-12) in 2022, and has received the Choctaw Bay Music Club's Summer Band Scholarship (\$300) each year from 2019-2023. In addition, Cafarelli has performed at multiple churches

Continued on next page





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.



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



Series of wine dinners throughtout the year at various fine dining in Destin benefiting MKAF's ArtsReach.



ArtsReach is a creatively curated array of performing and visual arts inspiring K-12 students, children and adults with special needs, and the military community along the Emerald Coast.

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### **ART NEWS**

continued from previous page

in the local area, including First Presbyterian Church of Niceville, of which she is a member. Cafarelli is also active in NHS theater and chorus, performing in lead roles in Niceville's productions of "A Curious In-



cident" and "A Chorus Line," and being selected for Florida All State Choruses grades 7-10, culminating in her selection and participation in the Florida All State Reading Chorus in Jan 2023

Artistic students ages 8-18

from throughout the world convene at Interlochen to expand their capacity in music, theater, dance, creative writing, visual arts and film. Through daily classes, enriching electives, and frequent performances, Interlochen students explore the full breadth of the arts, pursue creative breakthroughs, and forge

> lifelong cross-culfriendships. tural With а global alumni base that includes creative leaders in the arts and many other fields. Interlochen Arts Camp has been at the forefront of arts education for nearly a century. The Camp's distinguished alumni include Norah Jones, Josh Groban, Martha Graham Dance Company Artistic Director Janet Eilber, painter Laura Owens, New

York Times theater critic Jesse Green, Google co-founder Larry Page, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver, Olympic ice dancer Naomi Lang, actor Anthony Rapp, cartoonist Cathy Guisewite and many more. Approximately 17 percent of the nation's professional orchestra musicians have roots at Interlochen, and the alumni community has been awarded nearly 100 Grammy Awards.

### Musical Pizzaz In Grand Park This Summer

Get on your feet and dance at Grand Boulevard this summer with Emerald Coast Theatre Company's production of "Broadway on the Boulevard." This high-energy 45-minute show features some of Broadway's best-known songs and dance numbers from a talented cast of performers on stage in Grand Park.

Part of Grand Boulevard's Coastal Culture series, "Broadway on the Boulevard" is a FREE, family-friendly show that performs every Thursday night, Now-July 27, 8- 8:45 p.m. Seating is first come, first serve. In case of rain, "Broadway on the Boulevard" will be performed at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, located upstairs in the 560 building. "We at ECTC love Shakespeare but we also love sparkles, sequins, and musical pizzaz!" said Nathanael Fisher, Co-Founder and Producing Artistic Director of ECTC.

Summer fun continues every day as Tommy Bahama provides live music and libations



for sale while lawn games take place Monday- Sunday, 4-8 p.m. throughout the summer in Grand Park. Enjoy connect four, corn hole, giant chess games and more.

Grand Boulevard's Farmers' Market is open year-round Saturdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. in Grand Park. This outdoor market features dozens of unique vendors offering mostly locally sourced food-based items such as produce, eggs, olive oils, crab cakes, meats, pickled vegetables, sweets, gourmet jams and even homemade doggie treats. Specialty soaps and lotions are also sold.

Part of the Coastal Culture

Series, these events are made possible by the Grand Boulevard Arts & Entertainment Program. Visit GrandBoulevard. com.

# The Seaside REP Theatre presents: Cinderella

Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., May 24 - August 9, at North Barrett Square in Rosemary Beach. Presented by The Merchants of Rosemary Beach, a group of traveling actors create much onstage merriment by presenting their own version of the classic children's story, Cinderella. North Barrett Square, Rosemary Beach.







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