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# BAY Life

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Postal Customer Local

## Golf in Niceville's Bluewater Bay

BY BARBARA PALMGREN

When I think about the beauty of the golf course at Bluewater Bay, and look at its blue and white logo with boat sails and golf clubs, I have to borrow a few lines from Roy Orbison's famous song and change the lyrics:

*I'm going back someday,  
Come what may,  
To Bluewater.  
Where the golf is fine,  
And the world is mine,  
In Bluewater.  
With marina fair,  
And the salty air,  
Yes, I can only see,  
The familiar sunrise,  
With a par putt there,  
On hole number three.*

I once lived on Prestwick Drive in Bluewater Bay and watched golfers hit their approach shot to the Par 4 green. Bluewater Bay was a magical place back in the mid-80's as it is today. There is a special legacy that this golf community brings to the Florida Panhandle. Located in Niceville, this sprawling community contains friendly, enthusiastic, sports-minded residents of all



ages. The roads, roundabouts and cul-de-sacs are filled with walkers and joggers who pass by the marina, tennis courts, pools, pickleball courts, and yes, in the heart of it all, the golf center.

The golf course layout has changed off and on during the 39 years when golf began in Bluewater Bay. Now, golfers play 18 holes, the Bay and the Marsh. One designed by Tom Fazio. One designed by Jerry Pate. Art Jean, a director on the board of Preserve Bluewater Bay C Corporation, says his favorite hole is a Par 3 on the Marsh course. Par 3 overlooks the blue waters of Choctawhatchee Bay...hence my referral to his scenic hole in the lyrics above. Imagine watching a sunrise or being

distracted by dolphins breaking the water as if to applaud a rare hole-in-one.

The Golf Club at Bluewater Bay boasts a well-stocked pro shop where the public can rent clubs if necessary to enjoy a golf round. General Manager, Christian Castrodad, and staff welcome tourists and the public to play year-round. Memberships for singles, family, juniors, active military and other categories are available at reasonable fees. Members are well organized with both a men's and ladies golf group that want to include new members and expand weekly play for golfers.

Food and beverage availability? No worries. Food at the Pro Shop bar and grill is provided daily. The Tap

Room operates Thursday through Saturday from 3 to 10 p.m. Relaxing with friends and recalling a special birdie or two is always the perfect end to a golf match. Is there a special event where you need to plan a birthday, a wedding or a charity golf tournament? Bluewater Bay staff will work with an organization, providing a win-win for the club and the group as everyone experiences the joy of being in the heart of the Bluewater community.

So, what can the golfer expect? Dennis Stein, golf course superintendent, arrived in March 2022 to see greens that needed attention.

**GOLF**

*continued on page 3*

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## Talking Turtles

with Marine Biologist Jessica Valek

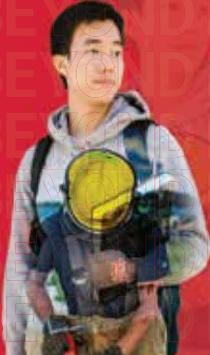
BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

In January 2022, a partnership between Okaloosa Island's Gulfarium and the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism Department was launched. "C.A.R.E."ing for Turtles takes place at the Gulfarium every Wednesday through the end of July; then every other Wednesday in August. The hour-long program is \$15 for ages eight and up.

Jessica Valek, Coastal Resource Coordinator for the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism Department, is very involved in the program. "We teach everyone about sea turtles in general, the ones we

**TURTLES**

*continued on page 2*



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 Community

**GOLF**

*continued from page 1*

The PBWB board reports that Dennis “brought them back to life.” Any golfer knows that the key to a good golf round is having excellent greens and fairways. As for the rough...let’s not discuss those troublesome areas that I try to avoid at all costs! This 18-hole golf course has yardage tees that vary according to golf skill and ego. Challenging Par 4-, 5- and 3-holes wind through community, wetlands and beautiful natural surroundings.

So, as the song says, “Come back today, to Bluewater Bay... where the golf is fine and the world is mine, at Bluewater.” I recommend teeing up your next



golf shot at this special course and hitting it straight down the middle of a pristine fairway or over a scenic marshland.



Brett Stuart after his epic HOLE in ONE on Bluewater Bay Golf Course’s Marsh 4 in August 2022.

**TURTLES**

*continued from page 1*

see along the Gulf of Mexico,” she says. “I do a lot of our turtle nesting work. I go out every day and look for nests. This is a good partnership.”

Attendees (locals and tourists) learn about the nesting process, how to protect turtles on the beach, and the different threats turtles face on our beaches and fishing piers. In addition, guests get a behind the scenes look at the C.A.R.E. turtle hospital and what they do there. “It’s really cool, because they always have new turtles,” says Ms. Valek.

“At the end of the program, we do a mock intake of an injured sea turtle.” The attendees assess the turtle and determine

whether it should go into rehab or be released. “They get to be a turtle biologist for a day, and they get a little goodie bag with turtle-friendly items to take home. It’s a good time.”

Ms. Valek’s coastal resources team includes two other marine biologists. “I focus on sea turtle conservation and do the morning nest surveys from May to August assessing the nests. I also do outreach and education and assist with anything turtle-related.”



ter on Miracle Strip Parkway,” she says. “We give you as many as you want.”

Be good environmental stewards. “Recycle. And don’t litter!”

most rewarding? “The impact the program has on other people and them registering how they can make a difference not just for turtles, but for the environment in general.”

Ms. Valek’s team is involved with more than just sea turtles. “Our department is helping fund environmental-related projects,” she says. “We do beach re-nourishment, invasive species removal and artificial reefs. We monitor anything related to the coast and the water.”

Learn more about “C.A.R.E.”ing for Turtles at [gulfarium.com](http://gulfarium.com).

**Turtle Tips**

“When you go to the beach, fill in your holes,” says Ms. Valek. “Flatten your sandcastles when you leave. Remove umbrellas, chairs and trash. Those are obstacles for sea turtles.”

Refrain from using white light on the beach at night. “We are giving away turtle-friendly flashlights at the Welcome Cen-

She has been in her current position for almost three years. Prior to that, the University of West Florida graduate had other marine biologist jobs throughout Florida. Originally from Minnesota, Ms. Valek says, “I’ve always been interested in marine biology, so I packed up and moved. And I haven’t regretted it!”

She currently lives in Navarre with her dogs Luna and Jim, as well as four cats. “I enjoy scuba diving, paddleboarding, hiking – anything on the water or anything I can do with my dogs.”

“C.A.R.E.”ing for Turtles is limited to approximately 15 people, and Ms. Valek says they usually reach that number. “We’ve gotten really positive feedback,” she says. “Most people seem to enjoy the information and getting to see the turtles. It just keeps getting better and better.”

Among the things she finds

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# Hometown Pet Heroes:

## Shelter Dogs Find Loving Homes After Lengthy Waits

In a heartwarming turn of events, two resilient shelter dogs, Red and Gunner, have found their forever homes after enduring lengthy stays at Alaqua Animal Refuge. Red, with an astonishing 593 days of waiting, and Gunner, with 582 days, captivated the hearts of staff and volunteers during their time at the refuge. Their stories shed light on the challenges faced by larger black dogs in shelters, often leading to their overlooked sta-

tus despite their lovable nature.

Red, a lovable bulldog, and Gunner, a big goofball over 100 lbs., entered the care of Alaqua Animal Refuge with tales of abandonment and longing for a place to call home. Despite their captivating charm and endearing personalities, these two remarkable dogs faced extended stays due to common biases against larger black dogs.

Staff trainer Ashley Englehart explained, “Gunner’s size



tirelessly promoted their profiles through social media campaigns, community events, and collaborations with local businesses.

On separate occasions, fate intervened when compassionate individuals met Red and Gunner while visiting the facility. Captivated by their endearing faces and tales of resilience, these individuals recognized the true potential and companionship that Red and Gunner could offer. The magical unions formed between the dogs and their new families transcended words, capturing the essence of unconditional love.

The joyous occasions of Red’s and Gunner’s adoptions were celebrated at the Refuge,

*Continued on page 8*

### Stay Safe During Excessive Heat

Tips from Okaloosa County and the National Weather Service:

- **NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN OR PETS IN A PARKED CAR:** The temperature can raise to 135 degrees in less than ten minutes, which can cause death to children or pets. If you see a child or pet left unattended in a parked car, you should call 9-1-1 and alert authorities.

- **Slow down.** Strenuous activities should be reduced, eliminated, or rescheduled to the coolest time of the day. Individuals at risk should stay in the coolest available place, not necessarily indoors.

- **Dress for summer.** Lightweight, light-colored clothing reflects heat and sunlight, and helps your body maintain normal temperatures.

- **Drink plenty of water or other nonalcoholic fluids.** Your body needs water to keep cool. Drink plenty of fluids even if you don’t feel thirsty. Persons who (1) have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease, (2) are on fluid restrictive diets, or (3) have a problem with fluid retention should consult a physician before increasing their consumption of fluids.

- **Do not drink alcoholic beverages.**

- **Do not take salt tablets unless specified by a physician.** Persons on salt restrictive diets should consult a physician before increasing their salt intake.

- **Spend more time in air-conditioned places.** Air conditioning in homes and

other buildings markedly reduces danger from the heat. If you cannot afford an air conditioner, spending some time each day (during hot weather) in an air-conditioned environment such as malls and libraries affords some protection.

- **Minimize direct exposure to the sun.** Sunburn reduces your body’s ability to dissipate heat.

- **Eat light, cool, easy-to-digest foods** such as fruit or salads. If you pack food, put it in a cooler or carry an ice pack. Don’t leave it sitting in the sun. Meats and dairy products can spoil quickly in hot weather.

- **Use portable electric fans** to exhaust hot air from rooms or draw in cooler air.

- **Do not direct the flow of portable electric fans** toward yourself when room temperature is hotter than 90°F. The dry blowing air will dehydrate you faster, endangering your health.

- **Take a cool bath or shower.**

- **Check on older, sick, or frail people** who may need help responding to the heat. Each year, dozens of children and untold numbers of pets left in parked vehicles die from hyperthermia. Keep your children, disabled adults, and pets safe during tumultuous heat waves.

- **Don’t leave valuable electronic equipment**, such as cell phones and GPS units, sitting in hot cars.

- **Make sure rooms are well vented** if you are using volatile chemicals.

and being a black dog over 100 pounds were factors that often caused him to be overlooked. However, among the staff and volunteers, he was an absolute favorite and just a big goofball, full of love and playfulness.”

Undeterred by the passing

of time, the dedicated team at Alaqua Animal Refuge showed Red and Gunner with love, care and attention, providing them safe havens amidst the uncertainty of shelter life. Their tireless efforts to find them loving homes never ceased, as they

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 Community

# A Passion for Caring: Careers in Post Acute Care Settings

By TERESA HALVERSON

*“The demand for healthcare professionals with expertise in long-term care is growing rapidly. The U.S. will need between 5.7 million and 6.5 million nurses, nurse aides, home health and personal care workers to care for the 27 million Americans who will require long term care by 2050.” (FHCA)*

Long-term care is a vital part of the health care system. A career in long-term care is a great stepping stone for individuals who would like to get their foot in the door. This is also an opportunity for recent high school

graduates to enter the health care work force along with individuals who are ready to re-enter the workforce. Do you know someone that has an interest in working in health care? Not sure where to get started? Almost every area facility offers entry-level positions to get you started. During COVID, Florida implemented a program called “Personal Care Attendant” (PCA) which allows non-licensed health care workers to enter the health care workforce. Facilities offer in-house training and, after four

months of employment, PCAs are allowed to sit for the State CNA Licensure exam. This is a perfect way to enter the health-care workforce, get paid for on the job training and be prepared to take the State Certified Nursing Exam.

Interested in becoming a nurse? Need assistance for college? Several facilities offer tuition reimbursement to assist you in furthering your career. While a career in long-term care offers opportunities for professional growth, it can be very reward-

ing and provide a great sense of purpose by caring for others. Consider a career today and help make a difference in the lives of others.

When you work in a long-term care or skilled nursing center, you become a hero for residents and their family members. PCAs and CNAs spend time helping residents with their activities of daily living, building a trusting and caring relationship, and letting them know someone cares. Often, these valuable team members are the first to notice tiny

changes that can make an impact on the care residents receive.

Residents and their loved ones will appreciate your care, energy, patience and attention. Consider a career in long term care and start making unforgettable connections with residents and create lifelong memories. Get ready to make a difference in someone’s life every single day.

~ Teresa Halverson, Director of Business Development, The Manor at Blue Water Bay, 1500 N White Point Road, Niceville, FL 32578. [www.manoratbwb.com](http://www.manoratbwb.com)

## The Little Black Dress Party Returns

The White-Wilson Community Foundation (WWCF) will host the return of its award-winning fundraising event, The Little Black Dress Party, on Saturday, September 16. Guests will gather at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort to help raise funds to provide critical health services for individuals in Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton Counties.

The Little Black Dress Party is an evening dedicated to celebrating good health and raising funds for community members in need. This will be the event’s

11th year and will feature dinner, dancing, live and silent auctions and entertainment. Dr. Patrick and Mrs. Sandra Anastasio of Emerald Coast Infectious Disease will serve as the evening’s honorary chairs.

“Funds from The Little Black Dress Party directly help us achieve our mission,” said Teresa Halverson, Chair of the Board of Directors. “The last several years have been nothing short of challenging, so we are bringing the event back to help continue maintaining and building upon support for our local

systems of well-being.”

Halverson continued, “We are thrilled to have the support of Dr. and Mrs. Anastasio, after being two of the greatest advocates for our community during the pandemic, we couldn’t think of a better pair to honor at this year’s event. We are counting down the days until we can come together once again to positively impact the lives of those here who need it most.”

First introduced in 2010, The Little Black Dress Party has been a longtime staple on the Emerald Coast. All proceeds from

the event benefit the WWCF, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, to help increase access to life-changing health services for underserved people in the community.

Through the event’s success in previous years, the WWCF has been able to fund health education and prescription drug programs, provide free physical screenings, generate additional grant opportunities and encourage an extensive focus on local health deficits and collaborative efforts to solve them.

Individuals interested in supporting this event can become

a sponsor, donate an auction item or purchase tickets to attend. Supporter opportunities for The Little Black Dress Party are available now. For more information on the event or to purchase tickets, visit [LBDParty.com](http://LBDParty.com).

For more information about The White-Wilson Community Foundation and to stay up to date on future events, visit [WhiteWilsonCommunityFoundation.org](http://WhiteWilsonCommunityFoundation.org) or its Facebook page.





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 Community

# Happenings Around the Bay

## AUGUST 2023

- 01** | Movies on the Beach: "Aladdin"  
8 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach
- 02** | Okaloosa Island Fireworks Show  
9 pm | The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island | Fort Walton Beach
- 03** | Camp Day with JoJo  
9:30 am | Big Orange House Designs | Niceville  
Al's Luau Beach Party  
5 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach
- 04** | Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee  
7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | Fort Walton Beach  
Live Music: Kyle Lamonica  
6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 05** | Niceville Monthly Cruise In  
7 pm | Landsharks Pizza Company | Niceville
- 06** | Bluegrass Jam  
12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 07** | Pirate Show  
5 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach  
Chess Night  
7 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville
- 08** | Preserve Bluewater Bay Community Briefings  
6 - 7 pm | Bluewater Bay Clubhouse | Niceville  
Movies on the Beach: "The Lego Movie"  
8 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach
- 09** | Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber Second Wednesday Breakfast  
11 am | Fort Walton Beach Landing | Fort Walton Beach  
Okaloosa Island Fireworks Show  
9 pm | The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island | Fort Walton Beach
- 10** | Greater FWB Chamber Nothing But Networking  
11:30 am | Career Source of Okaloosa Walton | Fort Walton Beach  
Al's Luau Beach Party  
5 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach
- 11** | OneBlood Blood Drive  
10 am | Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce | Niceville  
Live Music: Parker Willingham Duo  
7 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach
- 12** | Women's Climbing Circle  
9 am | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin  
Intro to Italic Calligraphy with Elia Saxer  
10:30 am | Artful Things | Niceville
- 14** | Live Music: James Renshaw  
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach
- 16** | Teens' Drawing Basics  
3:30 pm | Artful Things | Niceville
- 18** | Pickleball Social Fundraiser  
5 pm | Bluewater Bay Tennis Center | Niceville  
Niceville High School football vs. Bay High School  
7 pm | Niceville High School | Niceville  
Live Music: The Friskeys  
7 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Fort Walton Beach
- 19** | Live Music: Mechanical Lincoln  
6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 24** | Preserve Bluewater Bay Community Briefings  
6 - 7 pm | Bluewater Bay Clubhouse | Niceville
- 25** | Rocky Bayou Christian School football vs. Snook Christian Academy  
7 pm | Rocky Bayou Christian School | Niceville  
Niceville High School football vs. North Miami Beach  
7 pm | Niceville High School | Niceville
- 26** | Rally 4 Rest  
4 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 27** | Sunday Sunset Shrimp Boil  
4 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville
- 29** | Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours  
5 pm | Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center | Fort Walton Beach

**ONGOING EVENTS**

**Open Mic & Karaoke Night**  
6 - 10 pm | Thursdays | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar | Niceville

**Okaloosa Island Fireworks Show**  
9 pm | Wednesdays | The Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island | Fort Walton Beach

<b>FARMER'S MARKETS</b>	Niceville Community - Saturdays August 5, 12, 19, 26 9 am - 1 pm   Palm Plaza   Niceville	Hammock Bay - 1st & 3rd Sundays August 6, 20 8 am   Victory Blvd   Freeport	Grand Boulevard - Saturdays August 5, 12, 19, 26 9 am - 1 pm   Grand Boulevard   Miramar Beach
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# Talent Has No Color

## The Story of Ruby Elzy and Our Local Connection to Black Diva of the Thirties

By JENÉ McCracken

### Part 1: Meeting Opportunity

“She was a member of the family,” Ed McCracken, founding President of Okaloosa-Walton Junior College (now Northwest Florida State College) said to his visitor, David Weaver. They sat at Ed’s dining room table in his historic house in Valparaiso. The reflection of Tom’s Bayou shimmered through the windows. Before them lay Ed’s collection of memorabilia, photographs, clippings and signed programs of the long forgotten, African American soprano sensation, Ruby Pearl Elzy, who was discovered by Ed’s father, Dr. Charles C., “C. C.,” McCracken in 1926.



Ed McCracken and David Weaver at their meeting in 2000.

David Weaver is a professionally trained singer, performer and broadcaster from Ohio. David had come to visit Ed and his surviving siblings (Janet and Bill) to see if there was material for his new project – a biography of Ruby Elzy.

There was.

Among Dr. C. C. McCracken’s cherished cache of materials that laid dormant for nearly 50 years, were research notes, report cards, letters from the Elzy family, a fateful telegram and, a surprise to Ed, a 50-page, unfinished manuscript written by his father. The manuscript began: “In the beautiful, old, typically Southern town of Pontotoc, Miss., a little Negro girl with the throat of a songbird was born in a small, unpainted lean-to on a raw February day in 1908.”

Well known in her day, Ruby Elzy’s professional career spanned a brief 13 years. She appeared in the original cast of Porgy and Bess. George Gersh-

win added the role of Serena specifically for her after hearing her sing just one brief song. Her signature song was “My Man’s Gone Now” which she performed more than 800 times.

Ruby was a radio personality

performing on CBS and NBC. She was known from coast to coast. Ruby sang at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem and at the Hollywood Bowl. She loved to sing. She excelled at singing all kinds of music – opera, classical,

hymns and her beloved spirituals. Ruby’s great grandmother, an ex-slave, constantly sang to Ruby as a child. Ruby loved those songs and the deep cultural heritage they embodied.

Ruby performed many con-

certs in Mississippi and at Methodist youth camps nationwide. At a concert at the Hollywood Methodist Church, she sang before eminent members of

*Continued on page 31*



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- The Pacific Air War
- Tech Trends: ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence
- The Magic of the Memoir

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- Race Matters in the Supreme Court 1787-2023
- Immigrants Stories of Jazz, Rock and Popular Culture
- Write, Speak, Listen to French for Regional Travel
- Goya: The Birth of a Modern Artist

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 Community

# Reunification: The Primary Goal of Foster Care

BY RAMSEY LAWRENCE,  
EMBRACE FLORIDA KIDS

For many of us, remembering our childhood brings back happy memories: holidays spent with family, playing outside with siblings and friends, field trips, summer camps and home-cooked meals with parents. For thousands of children in Florida, this is not the case.

June was National Reunification Month, a designation created to shine a light on the goal of foster care – reuniting children with their families – and to celebrate the successes of families who have alleviated conditions in the home to prevent foster care altogether. Many people understand how foster care works and the support it provides for families across our communities. However, most people do not realize the primary goal of fostering is reunification, not adoption.

While there are many organizations across Florida doing great work to support our families in need, few have the history, reach and impact of Embrace Florida Kids. We provide services across the Florida Panhandle as a nonprofit ministry



dedicated to providing homes, healing and hope to children coming from families in crisis.

Embrace Florida Kids is caring for kids in Northwest Florida from the cradle to college – and our impact keeps growing. In 2022, we supported nearly 1,000 children and families throughout Florida suffering from neglect, abuse, or abandonment.

One of the core services we offer is family preservation. Keeping a family intact can often be an intensive program that does not happen overnight. So, how does it work?

Our staff supports family unity by working closely with parents and children before reunification whenever possible.

When a parent or primary caregiver begins working toward reunification, we provide them with customized support to ensure a safe transition process for children and youth coming out of foster care back into the home of their parent or primary caregiver. This includes parenting skills and education, community resources, recovery support from addiction and targeted intervention to resolve stressors.

Once a child's safety is ensured, our goal is to reunite them with their family. By working proactively with parents and primary caregivers, we strive to prevent future abuse or neglect.

Federal law requires every state to work toward reunifica-

tion for 12 months in most cases for children entering foster care. During this time, Embrace Florida Kids' staff are available 24/7 to offer crisis intervention. We offer all services directly inside the family's home and community, ensuring we treat all family members with empathy and compassion.

In 2022, our family preservation program generated a 92 percent success rate for keeping families intact. But there is still much work to be done to ensure the health and well-being of Florida's children and families in crisis. We need financial support from individuals, businesses and organizations who are committed to uplifting Northwest Florida's children.

The funds we receive go directly toward providing homes, healing, and hope for families to safely raise their children. The single greatest investment we can make in our communities is caring for children by equipping their parents through family preservation.

I encourage you to learn how you can make a difference for Florida's families by supporting our mission at Embrace Florida Kids. The children we serve need advocates who will take notice and act on their behalf. Together, we can be a true difference-maker in their lives.

For more information, visit [embraceflkids.org](http://embraceflkids.org).

## SHELTER DOGS

*continued from page 3*

as staff and volunteers witnessed the transformative power of

compassion and perseverance. The collective cheers, tears of joy, and overwhelming sense of accomplishment filled the shelter walls, affirming the belief that every shelter animal deserves a chance at a fulfilling life. The staff and volunteers lined up along the sidewalk to celebrate their freedom walks out of the refuge doors.

Red's and Gunner's journeys serve as poignant reminders of the countless shelter animals patiently awaiting their second

chance. It is a testament to their unwavering spirits, resilience, and the transformative power of adoption. Through these heartwarming stories, we hope to inspire the community to consider opening their hearts and homes to shelter animals in need.

Alaqua Animal Refuge extends its deepest gratitude to the adoptive families of Red and Gunner for their decision to change lives and offer these dogs the love and stability they deserve. Their acts of compassion

have forever altered the course of Red's and Gunner's stories, from ones of uncertainty to tales of triumph.

If you are interested in adopting a shelter pet like Red or Gunner, or supporting Alaqua Animal Refuge's mission to provide care and find forever homes for animals in need, please visit [www.alaqua.org](http://www.alaqua.org) or contact Alaqua Animal Refuge at 850-880-6399.

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# \$50 Million Project to Electrify the Region

BY DOUG STAUFFER

Central Moloney, Inc., a transformer manufacturer headquartered in Pine Bluff, Ark., unveiled a new venture, “Project LS2.” The project’s cornerstone is a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility that will find its home in Okaloosa County, focusing on producing pad-mounted electrical transformers.

This facility, sprawling more than 302,000 square feet, will be on a 48-acre parcel within the 10,500-acre Shoal River Ranch Gigasite, owned by Okaloosa County. The construction cost and equipping of this advanced facility is projected to be around \$50 million. It will create 350 advanced manufacturing jobs as it reaches its full production capabilities.

Unveiling the project, Nathan Sparks, Executive Director of One Okaloosa EDC, emphasized the project’s fundamental tenets: Vision, Commitment, Perseverance, and Partnership. “Our first encounter with Central Moloney in early 2021 was through our partners at Florida’s Great Northwest,” said



Sparks. “From our initial meeting, followed by a visit to their Arkansas headquarters, it was clear that this company treasures its people and the communities it serves.”

County Commission Chairman Trey Goodwin echoed these sentiments. “When we initiated efforts to extend infrastructure to the Shoal River Ranch Gigasite years ago, advanced manufacturing was a priority,” he said. “We’re elated that Central Moloney chose to construct their new transformer

manufacturing facility here, becoming the site’s first tenant. Its presence here sets a promising standard for future opportunities.”

“Home is where your heart is, and ours is firmly with our employees,” said company president/CEO Chris Hart. “We are committed to treating our employees like family, fueling our passion for what we do and the value we bring to this community. As a company known for ‘bringing power to the people,’ we’ll bring that power to



Okaloosa County, along with numerous benefits, a substantial payroll, and an empowering work environment.

“We deliver you the power; someone else delivers your bill. But remember, we need you to pay them so they can pay us. We can’t wait to begin, and it feels good to be home.”

Jennifer Conoley, President & CEO of Florida’s Great Northwest, mentioned the new facility’s advantages. “This second location in Northwest Florida will have a significant impact on

job seekers, suppliers and community partners. Our collaboration with Central Moloney Inc. is projected to create more than 468 direct, indirect and induced jobs, injecting more than \$27 million in new salaries, due to this high-impact industry’s ripple effect.”

Central Moloney plans a groundbreaking ceremony at Shoal River Ranch in late 2023 or early 2024. To know more about Central Moloney, Inc., visit [www.centralmoloneyinc.com](http://www.centralmoloneyinc.com).

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Community

# Business After Hours: A Great Time!

Bay Life's and LJ Schooners' Annual Chamber After Hours was held in June in conjunction with the Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce. A great time was had by all! Thank you to our great community for supporting and contributing to Bay Life these past four years. Bay Life gains exposure for your business, connects you with the local community and tells your story. And gets it into the mailboxes of thousands of residents and businesses! It is an honor



to provide our area's positive and informational newspaper designed to foster a connection within the Niceville, Bluewater Bay, Hammock Bay and Free-

port communities and highlight the activities, businesses and residents.



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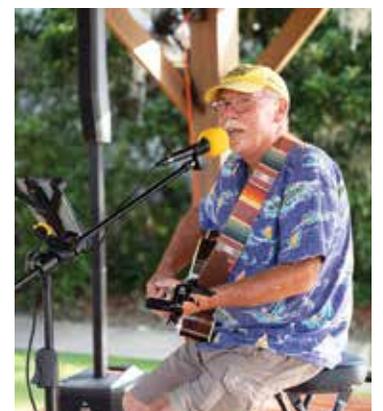
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PHOTOS BY SAVVY LEIGH PHOTO

# Bay Buzz



## Taylor Haugen Foundation Celebrates New Niceville Location

In June, The Taylor Haugen Foundation opened its new location at 1145 John Sims Pkwy. The local non-profit organization will continue its mission of building and recognizing youth leaders and the promotion of youth sports safety to honor the legacy of Taylor Haugen. It will continue to provide awareness, education and abdominal injury protection to secondary aged schools and leagues in contact sports, through its YESS© Program (Youth Equipment for Sports Safety). It will also continue the recognition and support of outstanding scholar-athletes with six annual scholarships and the prestigious Taylor Haugen Trophy. For more information, call (850) 842-9093 or visit <https://taylorhaugen.org> online.

## Niceville Republican Women Federated 2023 Scholarships

2023 graduates Savannah Martin of Crestview High School and Whitney Walker of Baker High School each received scholarships from Niceville Republican Women Federated (NRWF). They met members



L-R: Lana Wood, Jane Stevens, Whitney Walker, Savannah Martin, Lourdes Adams, Diana Gilbert and NRWF President, Jan Howard

at the June meeting and read their essays on "Why I Am a Republican." Savannah will be attending Florida State University and Whitney will be attending Northwest Florida State College. NRWF meets the first Monday of the month at Eglin Golf Clubhouse in Niceville at 5:15 p.m. (Social) and 6 p.m. (Dinner). For more information, contact President Jan Howard at [jmbrhoward@gmail.com](mailto:jmbrhoward@gmail.com).

## EggFest Returns!

The 9th annual Big Green Egg EggFest Cooking Competition returns to Seascapes Resort in Miramar Beach on Oct. 14, 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., celebrating the delicious results of cooking on the Big Green Egg. Benefiting Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and Food For Thought, Eggs on the Beach features unlimited bites, 5 votes, live music, a cash bar, a chance to win a Mini-Max Big Green Egg and more. Top college football games will be aired over the Tiki bar while cook teams will compete for votes. Call 850-269-4666 for more information or to participate!



## Step One's Festival of Speed

Step One Automotive Group delivered an electrifying and unforgettable experience to all attendees at the highly anticipated Festival of Speed held in June at the renowned Five Flags Speedway. Two esteemed racing drivers, Chris Walsh, GT4 America Porsche, and 718 Cayman GT4 Driver, and Juan Manuel Correa, Formula 2 and WEC Driver, both motorsport icons. The adrenaline-pumping Hot Laps left spectators on the edge of their seats as they witnessed firsthand the raw power and precision of these exceptional drivers. "We are thrilled with the overwhelming success of the Festival of Speed," said Maureen Bierman, Director of Marketing, Step One Automotive Group. "It was truly a day filled with excitement, adrenaline, and unforgettable moments. We are grateful to all the racing drivers, partners, and attendees who made this event a roaring triumph." Visit [www.steponeautomotive.com](http://www.steponeautomotive.com) for more information!

## Impact100 NWF - 410 members, Four \$100,000 Grants to Local Nonprofits

410 women signed up for Impact100 Northwest Florida during its recently concluded membership drive, which will make possible four \$100,000 grants to nonprofits serving Okaloosa and Walton Counties this year. Grants are awarded in the following five focus areas: Arts and Culture, Education, Environment, Recreation & Preservation, Family and Health and Wellness. Local nonprofits have submitted grant proposals, and Impact100 Northwest Florida's Focus Area Committees will review them and hold site visits this summer. Finalists will be announced in October 2023, and recipients announced at the Annual Meeting in November.

## Leadership Okaloosa Applications Available

Leadership Okaloosa is an esteemed leadership training and development program with a 30-year history of the growth and development of Okaloosa County's leaders. This 9-month experience enhances the participant's leadership skills and creates community awareness.

Apply here: <https://www.nwfsc.edu/leadership-okaloosa/>.

The **Heritage Museum of NWF** had a great and successful 1st week of Summer Camp, including a K-9 demo. Thank you to the instructors. Week 1 filled up fast and 20 students ex-



Officer Nathan Chapin and K-9 Partner Odin, Fort Walton Beach Police Dept., and Dr. Marie Hallion Ph.D., Chair of the Heritage Museum of NWF.

perienced a range of hands-on classes.

## Call to Artists for Mid-Bay Rotary's 29th Annual Oktoberfest

The 29th Annual Oktoberfest and Arts & Crafts Festival at Winn Dixie Plaza in Bluewater Bay is looking for artist and craftsman interested in selling their work. The festival, sponsored by the Mid-Bay Rotary Club, will be held on Fri., Sep. 29th from 5 to 10 p.m. and Sat., Sep. 30th from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Cost for a booth for the 2-day event is \$125. Call Bert at 897-3190 to obtain an application.



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**BEST DESTINY** 2019 BEST



By JULIE A. MARTIN

There are two types of personal primary flood insurance in the State of Florida. One is FEMA Flood insurance, in which a standard carrier will offer you up to \$250,000 on the Dwelling and up to \$100,000 in Contents. Those are the maximum flood limits that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will allow on a policy issued under the National Flood Insurance Program.

If you have a FEMA flood policy, you have two deductibles, one on the Dwelling and one on the Contents. FEMA has a standing rule that if you go more than 30 days without flood coverage, and you wish to purchase a new flood policy through NFIP, there will be a 30-day wait after binding until the coverage becomes effective.

What if the total insurable replacement cost of your home is more than \$250,000? What happens if there is a flood and you have only the \$250,000 with which to cover your home in the event of a flood loss, such as happened last year with Hurricane Ian? FEMA also has excess flood insurance available, but it's not easy to get. Several carriers have stopped writing excess flood in certain areas of the state, and those with NFIP policies have a coverage gap that may cost them in the event of a flood.

Private flood insurance offers more comprehensive coverage and is specifically designed to give you the amount of insurance you need in order to protect your home, which is one of the most important, and expensive assets, you will ever have. Private flood will often offer limits as high as \$4 million on the Dwelling and up to \$500,000 in Contents.

There is one deductible for the loss itself, rather than sep-

arate deductibles for Dwelling and for Contents. Private flood also offers an endorsement for Additional Living Expenses, which National Flood Insurance policies do not offer. Private flood coverage may also be more expensive than NFIP flood insurance, but it covers more of your home than NFIP does. Another advantage to Private flood is that if you don't have flood insurance right now, but you need to get insurance quickly, Private flood has only a 10-day wait, rather than the 30-day wait required by FEMA when there is a lapse in coverage.

Which option is the best for you depends on the size, quality and total insurable replacement cost of your home. Your agent is best suited to help you determine the total insurable replacement cost of your home by performing a Replacement Cost Estimator, using your square footage, year built, roof type, roof shape, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, flooring types, etc. If your replacement cost is more than \$250,000, you may wish to consider Private flood as a viable option in order to avoid a gap in coverage. If your home is smaller, the National Insurance Flood program might be the best option for you.

Whichever option you choose, it is important to have flood insurance in Florida, as we live on a peninsula surrounded on three sides by the ocean or Gulf of Mexico. If you believe your home is not in a flood zone, I must remind you dear reader, water doesn't know that.



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# FPL's Efforts to Improve Storm Resiliency, Overall Service Reliability in Okaloosa County

In 2023, FPL plans to make a number of upgrades in Okaloosa County as part of an ongoing effort to enhance day-to-day reliability and improve resiliency in the face of severe weather. These investments include moving more power lines underground, strengthening overhead lines and installing more intelligent devices along the energy grid to help detect potential problems and restore power faster when outages do occur. The investments have the added benefit of improving day-to-day reliability for customers as well.

**FPL plans to make the following improvements in and near Okaloosa County this year:**

1. Strengthening six main power lines, including those that serve critical services and are necessary for communities to recover faster after major storms.
2. Maintaining trees and vegetation – a common cause of power outages, particularly during hurricanes and severe weather – along 937 miles of power lines.
3. Installing smart grid technology, including 31 automated switches on main and neighborhood power lines to help detect problems and restore service faster when outages occur.
4. Inspecting four main power lines and equipment using infrared technology to detect issues before they cause a power interruption.

**FPL made the following improvements in Okaloosa County from 2019 – 2022:**

1. Strengthened 28 main power lines, including those that serve critical services.
2. Inspected 23,396 power poles for strength.
3. Installed smart grid technology, including 1,663 automated switches on main and neighborhood power lines.
4. Inspected 391 main power lines and equipment using infrared technology.

“No energy grid is outage-proof; however, we’ve made and are continuing to make significant investments to strengthen the grid to make it more resilient to severe weather,” said J.T.

Young, vice president of FPL Northwest Florida. “These upgrades also benefit our customers each day by delivering more reliable service to power their homes and businesses.”

Strengthening power poles, managing trees and vegetation near power lines, installing smart grid technology to fix problems



Crews install a concrete power pole in Northwest Florida to improve resiliency during hurricanes and severe weather and also enhance reliability during day-to-day conditions.

before they affect customers and using robots and drones to regularly inspect equipment have all helped FPL improve its service reliability by 41% since 2006. These upgrades have helped reduce both the number and duration of outages, as well as the number of momentary interruptions or power flickers.

“Delivering more reliable service and being there for our customers when they need us most is part of the value we bring. This includes investing in innovative solutions and technology that help keep the lights on,” said Bernard Johnson, local senior external affairs manager for FPL. “We work year-round to ensure our customers in Northwest Florida experience fewer power interruptions and faster restorations after major storms.”

In 2022, for the seventh time in eight years, FPL was awarded the ReliabilityOne® National Reliability Award. Presented by PA Consulting, the award is widely regarded in the energy industry as one of the most prestigious honors and reinforces FPL’s commitment to provide customers with the nation’s most reliable service.

As America’s largest electric utility, Florida Power & Light Company serves more customers and sells more power than any other utility, providing clean,

affordable, reliable electricity to approximately 5.8 million accounts, or more than 12 million people. FPL operates one of the most fuel efficient and cleanest

power generation fleets in the U.S and in 2022 won the ReliabilityOne® National Reliability

*Continued on next page*

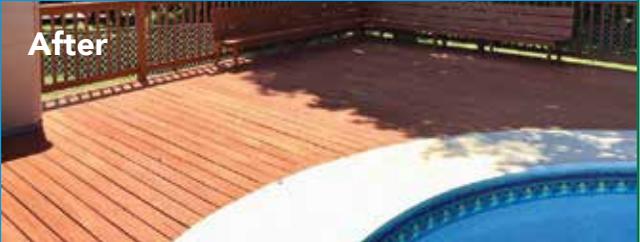
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# Victory Village to Receive \$2 Million for Military Retirement Community

Victory Village will receive \$2 million from Florida's Framework for Freedom Budget for fiscal year 2023-24 signed by Governor Ron DeSantis on June 15, 2023. The funding will be used to purchase 80 acres of land from the U.S. Air Force which will be used to develop a military senior living community with resources and services for wounded warriors and their caregivers.

"I am grateful to Speaker Paul Renner and Governor DeSantis for their support of Victory Village," Rep. Patt Maney said. "The Panhandle Delegation led by Senators Doug Broxson and Jay Trumbull understand what an important resource this will be to Okaloosa County and our military widows and aging veterans."

Victory Village will be located adjacent to Air Force Enlist-



ed Village (AFEV). Plans for the community include multiple neighborhoods for 800 people to reside, a community center, a multidominational chapel, a fitness center and pool, walking paths, retail services, and a

fire and EMS substation to also serve AFEV and the Poquito Bayou neighborhood.

"We're honored to receive this funding, and we're grateful to our legislative representatives for working in support of our vi-

sion for Victory Village," AFEV and Victory Village President/CEO Brooke McLean said.

"Our research for Victory Village has shown that the aging process for wounded warriors with physical and mental inju-

ries of war will not be typical. Victory Village will honor aging injured service members with an expert understanding of their unique requirements that will be needed so they may live their best lives with others who have shared similar experiences."

Victory Village plans to offer a continuum of care complete with on-site skilled nursing and will also be home to surviving spouses of retired enlisted service members and retired enlisted couples of all military branches of service.

"It will be a senior living community like no other," McLean said.

According to the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA), Florida has the third largest population of veterans in the nation after California and Texas with more than 1.5 million veterans.

## FPL

*continued from previous page*

ty Award for the seventh time in the last eight years. The company was also recognized by Escaient in 2022 as one of the most trusted U.S. electric utilities for the ninth consecutive year.

FPL is a subsidiary of Juno Beach, Florida-based NextEra Energy, Inc. (NYSE: NEE). NextEra Energy is ranked No. 1 in the electric and gas utilities industry in Fortune's 2023 list of "World's Most Admired Companies" and recognized on Fortune's 2021 list of companies

that "Change the World." NextEra Energy is also the parent company of NextEra Energy Resources, LLC, which, together with its affiliated entities, is the world's largest generator of renewable energy from the wind and sun and a world leader in battery storage. For more infor-

mation about NextEra Energy companies, visit these websites: [www.NextEraEnergy.com](http://www.NextEraEnergy.com),

[www.FPL.com](http://www.FPL.com), [www.NextEraEnergyResources.com](http://www.NextEraEnergyResources.com).



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# Back to School: What's New for Okaloosa County in 2023-24

By CHRISTOPHER MANSON

"I'm most proud that this school values three things – academics, the arts, and athletics," Okaloosa County School District Superintendent Marcus Chambers says. "We've taken a strong stance to provide students with opportunities to be engaged while they're in the school system."

"The ultimate goal is that when high school seniors walk across the graduation stage, we want them to be prepared for college, the military, or the workforce."

Mr. Chambers oversees all 38 schools in the district, which include roughly 33,000 students and 3,500 employees. The school district is the second largest employer in the county, right behind the military.

All 67 districts across Florida are assessed in reading, math, social studies and science. "We were fifth in the state for 2022-2023. In the last three years, we've placed in the top ten," he says.

Mr. Chambers was appointed by the governor in January 2019 and elected superintendent in August 2020. Prior to that, he was a classroom teacher, assistant principal, and district office administrator. He served as principal at Longwood Elementary in Shalimar, Pryor Middle School in Fort Walton Beach, and Niceville High School.

Since 1998, he has called Niceville home. His father was in the military, and Mr. Chambers graduated from high school in Hawaii. "I played sports and went to the University of South Florida to play baseball," he says. Later, he played baseball and basketball at what is now Northwest Florida State College in Niceville.

At one point, he realized he wasn't going to become a professional athlete, but Mr. Chambers was happy to be getting an education. He graduated with a degree in Elementary Education from the University of West Florida, then earned his Master's in Educational Leadership.

"I'm excited about the upcoming school year," he says. Many construction projects are underway, thanks to the half-

cent sales tax. "We're now able to upgrade facilities, add new buildings, and plan for new school construction. We're currently building classroom additions and cafeteriums (the new way of saying cafeteria/auditorium)."

Mr. Chambers tells me that once a school gets to around 80 percent capacity, it's time to start thinking about new schools. Most of the schools in Okaloosa County are currently at 95 percent capacity.

Construction projects include the addition of a fourth and fifth grade wing at Destin Elementary School and a new elementary school in Niceville. The district recently acquired 80 acres in Crestview for a K-8 school. "We're getting to the point where we can lessen the capacity and free up space," says Mr. Chambers.

"We've taken a very proactive approach to Career and Technical Education (CTE). In Okaloosa County, we have 19 programs, including carpentry, engineering, AI, culinary, nursing and more. In the nursing program, we've partnered with HCA Hospital in Fort Walton Beach and North Okaloosa

Medical Center in Crestview."

In Fort Walton Beach, nursing students have their own campus from which they can walk to the hospital for their clinical hours. The district received a Triumph grant for that program, courtesy of the folks that oversee the BP oil spill settlement funds.

CTE students take a certification test at the end of the course. "They get a certificate that shows employers they have marketable skills and experience," says Mr. Chambers.

"We talk a lot about the next generation of Okaloosa schools and being an A-plus school district. We are rated A, but we gave ourselves the plus because we do well in arts and athletics."

Three years ago, the Okaloosa County School District had the oldest bus fleet in the state of Florida and no bus replacement program. This changed three years ago, and now the fleet boasts 160 buses. "We've purchased 90 new school buses. In the upcoming year, we'll purchase 15 more," says Mr. Chambers. "Every year going forward, we're looking to buy at least 15 new buses a year."



Okaloosa County School District Superintendent Marcus Chambers

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### Brozinni Pizzeria

Owner Nicole McKee and GM Seth Perry have produced a gem for our community—Brozinni Pizzeria located at 144 N. Palm Blvd. in Niceville (next to Pounders). Since opening their doors just over one year ago on March 14, 2022, Brozinni's has specialized in 20" pizzas so large a family of four to five can enjoy! Gluten free pizza available, too, in 10" size. They also serve delicious wings, calzones and pastas. Portions are BIG! Salads are refreshing, especially the Ca-

prese with fresh mozzarella. This pizza shop even has the best burgers. The desserts are homemade. They offer key lime pie, cheesecake, banana pudding, cannolis and tiramisu to name a few. Lunch is served by the slice form 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. daily. You can get a slice of NY Style pizza, salad, drink and a breadstick for \$9.50—a great deal Slices during the day include Park Avenue (meat lovers), Canal (supreme), Italian Beef, Parmesan Chicken, Spinach Artichoke, Deep Dish Meatball, Deep Dish Buffalo



Chicken, and Margarita, 34th White pizza with ricotta cheese, basil and garlic to name a few!

Brozinni's offers dine in, on-line ordering, delivery and take-out, Monday – Saturday 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.  
(850) 678-7778  
144 N Palm Blvd. Niceville

### 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 andouille, bacon, chorizo or veggie. Or tantalize your taste buds with a made-to-order breakfast sandwich on croissants or bagel with two eggs and cheese and then choose if you want to add

Jojo's homemade smoked jalapeño beef bologna, bacon, house smoked barbecue or ham. Cinnamon rolls and kaloches still hold the top spot for 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.

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**August:** 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)

*Continued on next page*

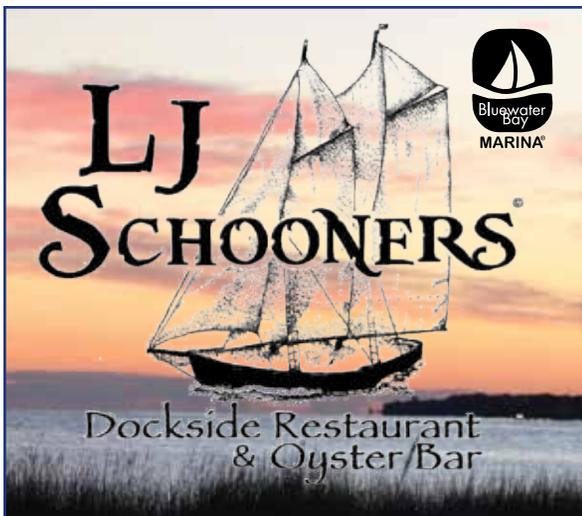


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### ..... MORE FUN .....

- August 4: Jody Lucas 6-9pm
- August 5: Hi-Tide 6-10pm
- August 11: Call the Law 6-10pm
- August 12: Radio Star 6-10pm
- August 18: Barney's Bullet 6-10pm
- August 19: John Galt Dance Band 6-10pm
- August 25: The Remedy 6-10pm
- August 26: One False Move
- August 27: Sunset Shrimp Boil 4-7pm & Laura Lane Duo 4-8pm
- September 10: Card Board Boat Race 4pm

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

**LOCAL DINING**

*continued from previous page*

**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.

Food Truck: 5-9 p.m. Monday & Tuesday | Friday & Saturday. (850) 897-6400

[bluewaterbaymarina.com/schooners](http://bluewaterbaymarina.com/schooners)  
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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.

(833) 873-3343

[Hoteleffie.com](http://Hoteleffie.com)

Grand Sandestin Blvd.,  
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**Tisano's Garlic Grill**

Tisano's co-owner, Trinity Coleman, grew up in a restaurant family. Her mother and grandfather both owned restaurants in their hometown of Stroud, Okla., and her brother currently owns a restaurant in the same town. After moving around the world with the military, Trinity and husband and co-owner Trey Coleman, a 22-year former Air Force officer, landed in Niceville and pursued the dream of owning their own restaurant.



Today, Tisano's has become a local favorite! Tisano's customers rave over the part Italian, part country, 100% local dishes featuring home made food and welcoming local fare. The Luigi pizza has been a staple in the community for decades. Gluten free options are available also. Their recipe for success is simple. "We just want to provide a clean restaurant, with awesome food and friendly staff, at a fair price," said Trinity. When you visit Tisano's, Trinity and Trey want you to feel like you're going to a friend's house for a great meal and good company. We highly recommend you give the house-stuffed mushrooms and the homemade lasagna a try.

Specials include...

**Military Monday:** 25% off

total ticket for active-duty military.

**Tuesday:** Two can dine for \$39. Includes salad, bread, two glasses of house wine and any two entrees \*does not include Mediterranean seafood and Lobster Ravioli entree\*.

Bar Specials include...

**Monday Margaritas:** \$5 house made margaritas all night.

Wine Wednesday: \$3 per glass of house wine all night.

**Happy Hour** 3-6 Monday-Friday: \$1 off regular priced beer, wine and liquor.

Hours: Mon. - Thurs. 4-9 p.m.; Fri. & Sat. 4-10 p.m.; Sun. 12-8 p.m.

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[Tisanos.com](http://Tisanos.com)

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**Two can dine for \$39** - two entrees and two glasses of wine for \$39

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**Thursday:**  
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 Off the Hook

# Unique Whale Shark Tagging Effort

By NICK TOMECEK,  
OKALOOSA COUNTY PIO

The Coastal Resource team with Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism in Okaloosa County recently participated in a collaborative effort that led to the tagging of two whale sharks, Ivey and Oliver, in the Gulf of Mexico south of Destin-Fort Walton Beach.

This unique research opportunity was successful due to a joint effort between the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the University of Southern Mississippi, Okaloosa County's Coastal Resource team and the fishing community.

"We are extremely excited and proud of the work our Coastal Resources team has done with this collaboration," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. "Whale sharks are an amazing species and we are thrilled they made an ap-

pearance in our Gulf of Mexico waters. We look forward to the results of this research."

Reports from commercial and recreational fishermen were crucial in identifying the location of these gentle giants to the team of researchers. Ivey, a 25-foot female, was named after the daughter of the boat captain that sighted it. Oliver, a 40-foot male was named after the child that was on a boat fishing with his family when they spotted it.

Both whale sharks were tagged with a satellite and acoustic tag. The satellite tag will send information if the dorsal fin breaks the surface, while the acoustic tag will send location information if the whale shark passes by a receiver.

Biological samples were also collected for genetic research along with video documentation to confirm the length and sex of each animal. The video will also provide imagery of the side of each whale shark showing the



unique dot pattern that can be used like a fingerprint and help identify them if they are seen anywhere else.

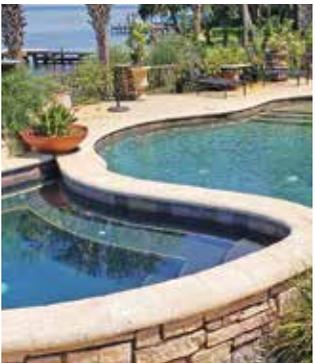
"This was an incredible opportunity for us as marine biologists and we are lucky that we were able to help with this effort right here in Destin-Fort Walton Beach," said Coastal Resources Manager for Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism, Alex Fogg. "We could not have done this without the help of the fishing community. Whale shark aggregations such as this aren't very normal in our area. We get reports of one or two here and there but this is

certainly unique, especially for this amount of time. They may be here for food or some other reason but that is one of the reasons why we want to get some tags out, to maybe answer some of these questions."

Note: All whale shark activities were permitted by the state of Florida and the Federal Government. If you see a whale shark, please observe them from a distance to avoid unneeded harassment. The public can help the research by reporting whale shark sightings at <https://bit.ly/WhaleSharkSighting>.



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## Rehabilitated Sea Turtles Released

The Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Center has taken in 89 patients this year and, so far, has released 58 of them. In July, six sea turtles, four Loggerheads, one Kemps Ridley, and one Green were able to return to the Gulf of Mexico.

Several dedicated C.A.R.E. Center staff team members and their volunteers, as well as hundreds of beachgoers and locals were able to observe the release first-hand.

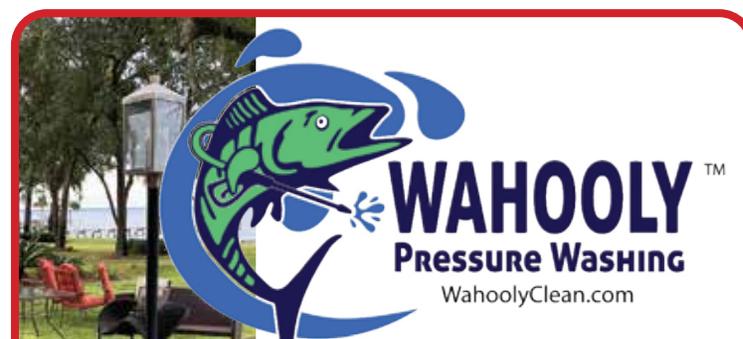
"Lychee," an adult female Kemps Ridley weighing in at

73 lbs. was caught on 7/2/23 at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier wrapped in fishing line. After x-rays and bloodwork showed no other ailments and no internal hooks, Lychee was cleared for a very short stay here at the CARE Center.

"Apple," a subadult Loggerhead weighing in at 88 lbs. was accidentally hooked in the mouth by a circle hook at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier on 6/27/23.

"Finn," a subadult Loggerhead weighing 100 lbs. was foul-hooked at Okaloosa Island Fishing Pier on 2/26/23 with a j-hook in his esophagus. Finn was very emaciated and anemic upon arrival. After months of rehabilitation and rest, Finn was finally cleared for release.

"Finley," a subadult Loggerhead weighing 96 lbs. was accidentally hooked at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier on 4/4/23. Due to the severity of entanglement he had sustained, his right front flipper was amputated here at the CARE Center. After three months of healing and rest, he



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*Continued on next page*

## Release Reef Fish With The Right Tools

Summer is in full swing and so is the busy fishing season in our area. If you plan on targeting reef fish from a vessel on one of your upcoming fishing trips, make sure you have a descending device and/or venting tool rigged and ready in case some of your fish show signs of barotrauma and will need a little help to get back down to depth. Barotrauma is a pressure-related injury that occurs in fish when they are brought from deep water up to the surface. To help you identify the signs of barotrauma remember B.I.P.S.: Bloated belly, Intestines extruding, Popeye and Stomach protruding out of the mouth. If your fish displays one or more of these symptoms, it is suffering from barotrauma and needs assistance to get back down to proper depth to survive another day.

Florida requires a descending device and/or venting tool be rigged and ready for use when fishing for reef fish from a vessel

in state waters (within 3 nautical miles on the Atlantic and 9 nautical miles on the Gulf). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) encourages anglers to choose the device they are most comfortable with and that complies with the regulations where they are fishing when releasing a fish that is suffering from barotrauma.

Descending devices are tools with weights that attach to a fish and help take the fish back to the appropriate depth. There are various types of descending devices but the most common are lip clamps, inverted hooks and weighted containers. It is important to find the device that works best for your situation.

For short video tutorials on different types of descending devices and how to make your own, watch FWC's Descending Devices playlist on YouTube.

Venting tools are sharp, hollow instruments that treat baro-



trauma by releasing expanded gas from the swim bladder, which enables the fish to swim back down to depth.

Items such as fillet knives, ice picks, screwdrivers and gaffs prevent gas from escaping correctly because they are not hollow. These do not comply

with venting tool requirements and should never be used to vent a fish. Incorrectly venting a fish can cause additional damage to the fish, causing more harm than good.

Learn how to vent properly by visiting [Youtube.com/watch?v=jhkzv1\\_2Bpc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhkzv1_2Bpc).

Reminder: When fishing for reef fish, in Gulf federal waters, a descending device and/or venting tool is required to be rigged and ready for use.

However, in Atlantic federal waters, only a descending device is required to be on board and ready for use. Stay up to date with what is required in federal and state waters by visiting [MyFWC.com/ReefFishGear](http://MyFWC.com/ReefFishGear) and downloading the Fish Rules Fishing app for iOS or Android.

Remember, if you plan to fish for or harvest certain reef fish species in Gulf or Atlantic waters from a private recreational vessel (includes anglers over 65 years of age), you must sign up for the FREE State Reef Fish Angler designation and renew it annually. Learn more at [MyFWC.com/SRFS](http://MyFWC.com/SRFS) and sign up today at [GoOutdoorsFlorida.com](http://GoOutdoorsFlorida.com) or anywhere you can purchase a Florida fishing license.

Visit FWC's YouTube channel at [MyFWC.com/SaltwaterFishing](http://MyFWC.com/SaltwaterFishing) for more saltwater fishing how-to videos. For answers to questions, contact 850-487-0554 or [Marine@MyFWC.com](mailto:Marine@MyFWC.com).

If you're fishing in Gulf federal waters, you can receive FREE release gear to help fish survive – check out [ReturnEmRight.org](http://ReturnEmRight.org) and review the best practices for releasing reef fish before hitting the water this summer!

### SEA TURTLES

*continued from previous page*

passed his health exit exam and was ready to be returned to the Gulf. "Per FWC regulations, turtles are releasable if they have at least one flipper on each side of their body, and do just as well as turtles with all four flippers," says Tabitha Siegfried, Gulfarium C.A.R.E. Stranding Coordinator.



"Mango," a subadult Loggerhead hooked at Navarre Beach Fishing Pier on 7/2/23, and "Coconut," a juvenile Green recently hooked at NBFP, also joined the release this morning.

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

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# A Game for the Ages, A Tournament for Champions



BY BARBARA PALMGREN

As a golf enthusiast and now occasional reporter, I covered this prestigious two-day event held at Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club July 17-18. The private club boasts an 18-hole, par 72 championship golf course renovated last year to challenge the most skilled golfers. Santa Rosa Club was one of seven courses in Florida selected to host a qualifying tournament that selects two winners who advance to the national tournament in Colorado, August 14-20, at Cherry Hills Country Club and Colorado Golf club.

The tournament began with 70 players in the field, the youngest just age 13, but all with a handicap index of 2.4 or less to compete. Nine different states were represented and three dif-

ferent countries. Some of the most famous names in golf have been U.S. Amateur Champions including Tiger Woods, Bobby Jones, Jack Nicklaus and more. The winner receives an automatic invitation to play in all of the majors except the PGA championship. The runner-up also receives an invitation to play in the Masters and the U.S. Open.

The second day, July 18, the field was reduced to 27 players who scored 75 or less. The winner was Nate Gahman from Albany, Ga., with a score of 139. Runner-up was Matthew Soucinek from Lake City, Fla., with a score of 140. Golfers began the day with tee times from 7:30 a.m. to 8:51 a.m. Conditions on the course were excellent with no high winds or rain to impede scoring.

Both players, when interviewed after their rounds, were excited to achieve this goal and travel to Colorado for the national championship. Nate, a young businessman with a wife and two young children, is pursuing a dream he's had for many years. Matthew wants to become a professional golfer and sees this as an important step toward realizing that goal. He is

in his last year at Southeastern University and was a member of the SEU men's golf team.

From the heat of Florida to the high altitudes of Colorado, these two young men will experience a competition like no other. The last two men standing will play 36 holes of golf at the end of a six-day event. Good luck, Nate and Matthew! Young men who dedicate time and energy to this sport, are role models for future young golfers as this sport continues to grow and amaze us all.



The winners of U.S. Amateur Qualifying Tournament: Nate Gahman from Albany, Ga. wearing his medal and Matthew Soucinek from Lake City, Fla. Each player is holding this invitation.



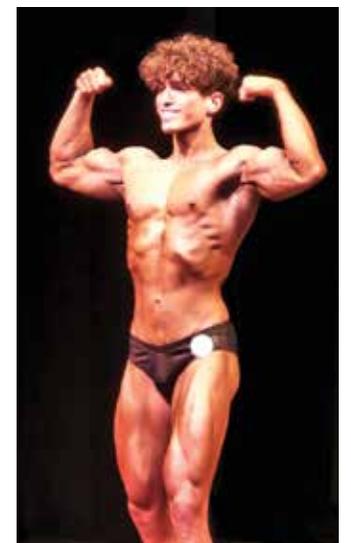
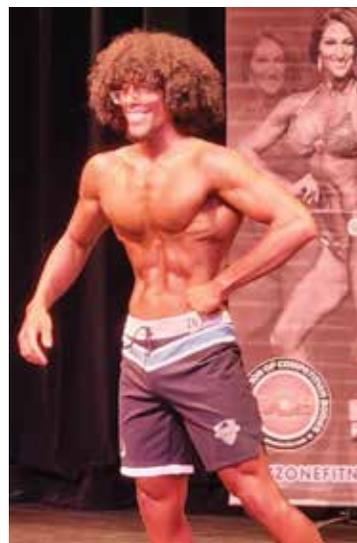
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## Niceville Strong and Natural

Locals Dante Barrett and Jared Deiters competed in the June 17 OCB Emerald Coast Classic bodybuilding event and walked away with four second places and one fourth place. The lifelong friends have much in common: graduating from Niceville High School Class of 2020, pursuing Exercise Science bachelor's degrees at the University of West Florida, attending Northwest Florida State College during summer breaks and sharing a passion for living



Continued on next page

# 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

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

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.

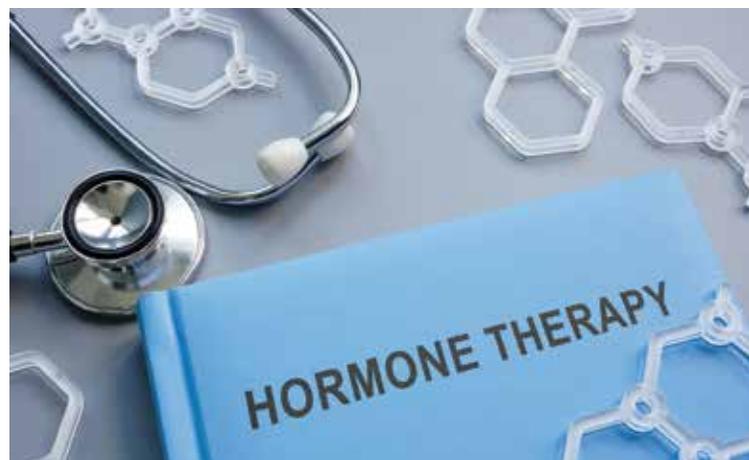
Conveniently located in Miramar Beach, the Hormone Restoration Center offers a warm and welcoming environment. The compassionate and knowledgeable team will provide the support and guidance you need throughout your

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.*



ty 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 de-

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 state-of-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

where he placed second and fourth, respectively. And this was Jared's first professional competition in the Debut, Novice and Open categories, placing second across all three. Their six-month training plan paid off as they elicited a wild response from the audience.

## NICEVILLE STRONG

*continued from previous page*

healthy, natural and fit lifestyles. Both also owe their disciplined approach to their Eagle Pride high school band experience.

This was Dante's second OCB competition in the Physique and Open categories,





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 Wellness


BY LISA LEATH TURPIN, HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACH

A person who vigorously supports their country and is prepared to defend it against enemies is a true Patriot! Every U.S. military branch has thousands of patriots physically ready to protect us at all cost. To be able to defend our nation, each branch has standards and testing for their physical readiness and shape. These men and women are at the top echelon for their strength and endurance. I went

straight to Military.com to learn more about what the requirements are for each branch of the military.

Within the five branches (Army, Navy, Airforce, Marine Corps and Coast Guard), there are similarities but some substantial differences. The Army has made the biggest changes lately by replacing the pull-ups, sit-ups and two-mile run PFT from the 80's.

Since 2022, the Army implemented six new exercises instead of those three of the past. The new six are: 3 rep max deadlifts (MDL), standing power throw (SPT: overhead medicine ball throw), hand-release push-ups (HRP: lift hands off floor during each rep in the down position when chest is on the floor), sprint, drag and carry (SDC: run, drag sled, carry 40 lb.

dumbbells or kettlebells in each hand, run 2 x 25 meter distances of each), leg tuck (LTK: hanging knee ups from pull-up bar knees to elbows) and two-mile run (2MR). This change is for the Army Combat Fitness Test only; special ops and all other military branches still require push-ups, sit-ups and pull-ups.

Instead of G.I. Joe (or Jane), most of us are "Average Joe or Jane;" but that doesn't mean we can't all benefit from a tactical style functional training routine as part of our healthy and fit regime. We can learn from these military fitness tests on how to hold ourselves accountable and set goals. Just like each branch sets standards by using reps over a set amount of time, you can make up your own. Push-ups and pull-ups measure your upper body strength, while dead-

lifts and sled pulls measure lower body strength.

Getting stronger takes time; it's more of a marathon than a sprint. The key to getting stronger? Consistency. Basic controlled movement builds the most muscle, whereas combination movements build more endurance and synergy.

Let's dissect the push-up from the basic military tests. How to do a good push-up: Starting in plank position, hands about shoulder width (or a smidge wider), lower your body all the way until chest touches the floor then push back up. Goal is full ROM (range of motion). In order to get ROM, you might need to modify by putting your knees down, using a counter top or even a wall if necessary. To get stronger, do maximum you can do twice daily for 10 days, rest two days, then

test yourself to see if you can do more reps, or if modifying, a stronger style and repeat until you can do a regular push-up. Note: Maximum is the amount you can do until you can't keep your form or ROM anymore. You won't want to keep up the cycle of 10 days on and two days off for long—that's more of a strength push to do occasionally that I found and simplified what is suggested on military.com. You will get stronger if you do your best, work your hardest, stay consistent with two-three days/week, get full ROM and control your movement. Benefits of the push-up are toned arms and shoulders and the strength in the chest to help get up if you fall or need to catch yourself.

I want to say an EXTRA thank you to our military and families.

## Eyes, The Gift of Sight



KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

Every time I see a bird or discover something I've never

seen before like the black winged dragonflies I recently had the privilege of bumping into reminds me how grateful I am for my sight. Caring for our eyes is important especially if you want to continue seeing the faces of the people you love and the sights you enjoy spending time in.

There are several diseases that we deal with today such as Amblyopia (Lazy Eye), Macular Degeneration, Color blindness, Diabetic Retinopathy, Dry Eye, Floaters, Glaucoma, Pink eye,

Retinal detachment, Astigmatism and Cataracts. I'll be focusing on two of these but the information for maintaining eye health is for everyone.

Risk commonalities exist for several eye conditions such as genetics and health related issues such as obesity, diabetes, etc.

**Myopia** (near sighted) where light focuses in front of the retina and hyperopia (far sighted) where light is focused behind the retina are two conditions that can be corrected by glasses, contact lenses or refractive surgery.

**Astigmatism** is caused when either the cornea or the lens has mismatched curves. Vision is blurred because there are 2 image points. Glasses can usu-

ally correct this.

**Cataracts** occurs when proteins in the lens is damaged by oxidative damage. This disease develops slowly and 50% of the US population experience cataracts by age 80. Its likened to an egg; the albumen is clear when the egg is raw and turns white as it cooks. This explains the whitish color that forms over the eye. Risk factors are smoking, UV radiation, diabetes, radiation therapy, long term use of steroid medications, trauma, lack of anti-oxidant and micronutrient protection as well as the commonalities.

**Macular Degeneration** is a blurring of our sharp central vision which we need to

see straight ahead, read, drive, watch movies or see the details on someone's face. The macula is the focal point of the retina and resides in the center of the back of the eye. The peripheral is not affected. There are two types: Wet, (most vision loss) named for when blood leaks or oozes from new blood vessels (very simple def.) and dry which constitutes 80-85% of cases. This disease is the # 1 cause of blindness in people over 60. There is no cure.

Symptoms include blank or dark spots, blurred vision, issues with seeing colors, or straight lines seen as curvy. Nutritional science shows that by reducing free radical damage and inflammation we can slow down progression or prevent macular degeneration from occurring.

Risk factors include toxic chemicals (BPAs, PCBs, aspartame, phthalates, etc. ingested with food or drink), high blood glucose levels as with diabetes, disseminated inflammations as a result of hyper-permeable intestines (leaky gut), low levels of DHEA (hormone) which protects against oxidative damage and pregnenolone which improves electrical activity in the retina and estrogen blocking drugs such as tamoxifen used in breast cancer treatment which causes



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Continued on next page

# I'm Getting Some Feedback



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,  
JOURNEY BRAVELY

I was stressed and busy. Parenting required more energy than usual. I was irritable and I didn't realize how I was coming across. I thought I was managing stress well until my husband said I was being grumpy. Initially, I became defensive, telling myself he was wrong and I wasn't the problem. After the defensiveness receded, I sorted through the feedback and recognized he was right. The uncomfortable nudge toward self-awareness provided a helpful opportunity to adjust and make amends with my family regarding my stress grumping.

How are you at receiving feedback from those you trust? Do you tend to get defensive and angry? Do you tell yourself you aren't the problem when someone tells you something about your behavior you haven't noticed? What might you be missing by assuming the person giving you feedback is the problem?

When another person tells you their experience of your behavior, positive or negative, they are providing feedback. While it would be wonderful if we had an accurate view of ourselves,

humans have blind spots about how we are showing up, especially when under stress. When done well, both receiving and giving feedback are valuable skills that help you and others grow into wisdom and maturity. Feedback provides an opportunity to embrace the freeing truths that you aren't perfect, you won't be perfect, and life can be a continuous arc of growth as long as you live.

Despite the benefits of feedback, it can be a difficult practice. Receiving suggestions from others about ourselves is humbling, vulnerable work. Feedback can challenge a fragile sense of self, bring up uncomfortable insecurities, and can unearth historical shame resulting in defensiveness. However, working through these discomforts is worth the work to bring you more health and connection. So, how do you navigate feedback as a tool of growth?

## 6 Healthy Ways to Incorporate Feedback Into Your Life

**1. Choose trusted sources of feedback.** Avoid choosing people who have been historically unhealthy. Choose people who are gracious, growth-oriented, emotionally healthy, balanced, non-judgmental and able to receive feedback. Don't choose people who invite you to feel poorly about yourself.

**2. Notice and study your defense patterns.** How do you feel in your body and thoughts when someone tells you something difficult about

yourself? What stories do you tell yourself? How do you blame others? What words do you say? Remember, you aren't always right.

**3. Calm your body and mind.** Notice if your body has gone into fight, flight or freeze. Take deep breaths for 1-2 minutes to reset. Let the person giving the feedback know you need a moment if you are struggling to respond well. Engage a healthy coping skill like journaling or taking a walk to give yourself space to process.

**4. Tell yourself the truth about the feedback.** Sort who is providing the feedback. If they are a trustworthy source, remind yourself of this. If they aren't a trustworthy source, it's okay to move forward without spending much time or energy on the interaction. Remind yourself feedback does not mean you are a failure, a bad person, or less than you were before. Feedback is a tool to improve your healthy sense of self and maturity.

**5. Listen and internalize.** Really consider what is being said to you. Notice how it might be true. Notice how your awareness of your own behavior might be lacking. Consider how your blind spot might be hurtful to those around you. Notice if you'd like to continue behaving in the ways being reported to you or if you would feel better to know you are behaving differently. Consider how you might want to change the behavior. Remem-

ber the person giving you feedback is taking an emotional risk to provide you with this information. Consider being grateful someone cared enough to have a difficult, helpful conversation.

**6. Make amends and adjustments.** Now that you understand and accept something new about your behavior, take responsibility by letting others know you regret how the behavior may have negatively impacted them. Seek healthy support to create a plan for changing the behavior. Try inviting those you trust to let you know when they see the unhealthy behavior and to let you know when you are

improving.

**7. Be a student of giving feedback well.** As you learn to receive healthy feedback, notice how you might be a healthy, kind source of feedback to others in your life. Feel what works well for you and incorporate these learnings into your feedback approach with others.

While not an easy practice, receiving feedback provides you with an ongoing opportunity to become a healthier, better version of yourself. As you navigate feedback, connect with us at [journeybravely.com](http://journeybravely.com) for coaching and counseling support along your journey.



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## EYES

*continued from previous page*

harm to the retina. A fun side note is that the eye produces its own hormones.

Eyes also suffer from blue light which can cause eye fatigue, headaches, dry eyes, double vision and difficulty focusing. Using blue light filters such as screen protectors or glasses (they have a yellowish tint) can aid in reducing its affects. Taking 20-30 second eye breaks (turn away and focus on something else.) every 2-3 hours can also help.

High quality nutrition can make a big impact on our eye health. A few of these nutrients are:

**Vitamin C** - Found in every cell in the body it supports healthy capillaries and cartilage

and is significantly higher in the retina than in the blood. It helps to maintain optimal performance by protection from free radical damage. It must be consumed as the body does not make it (citrus, peppers, broccoli and kale).

**Zinc** - a trace mineral in high concentrations plays a critical role in transporting vitamin A which is another one that supports the retina. Its been linked to preserving normal night vision (oysters, red meat, shellfish beans and nuts).

**Lutein and Zeaxanthin** are carotenoids that act as anti-oxidants and built in sunscreen for eyes. It helps support blue light filtration and visual acuity (how well we see) in the retina (dark green veggies).

Omega 3 supports the eye's oily outer layer (fatty fish, plant

sources and alpha-linolenic (ALA) found in flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, soybeans).

Grapeseed extract, curcumin, phenol and carotenoids, vitamin E, melatonin, bilberry extract, quercetin, resveratrol and a few more are all used by the body to support the eye and reduce inflammation.

If you would like information on the eye support supplement we use go to:

<https://kleaman.usana.com/s/hAZX62> If you choose to order please reach out to me via email (Please put EYES in the subject line to receive a 10% discount.

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

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

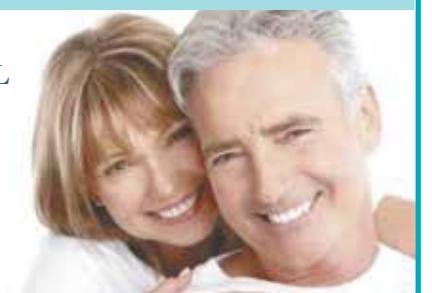


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 Business

# Local Business Expands Into Bay County

By J. ZIMCHEK

Gulf Coast Shutter and the Overhead Door Company of Northwest Florida (both Dillard companies) together are such a well-known entity, you'd be forgiven for thinking they've been around forever. But it was in 2011, when Wayne Bernheisel acquired Gulf Coast Shutter (founded in 2001) that this local business really became part of the local community. Now, with the acquisition of Quality Gates

and Openers in Panama City, it's poised to extend its reach even farther down the Gulf Coast.

Wayne Bernheisel had always wanted his own business, but the path to this end goal wasn't a straight one. It took a stint in the Air Force and corporate jobs with companies like Rolls-Royce and Crane Aerospace & Electronics before he was able to buy Gulf Coast Shutter in 2011. It turned out to be the perfect

time for him to combine his love of community with his dream of a self-owned enterprise. "I wanted something that provided me an opportunity to be out serving the community and building relationships," he said. "To me, that was really important and more fulfilling. Coming from the corporate side, the local community was not such a priority during my tenure." For him, Gulf Coast Shutter and the Overhead Door Compa-

ny of NW Florida offer a way to provide the community with needed products, for security and otherwise, but also much-needed services. Its tagline – Live Life Beautifully Secure – is reflected in a product line that ranges from basic hurricane



screens to Colonial and Bahama Shutters with plenty of curb appeal to a variety of eye-catching garage door options.

And though it got its start primarily in residential, it is now a major supplier for commercial as well. Whether it's dealing with a large business or a comparatively small residential project, customer service is paramount. Recently, an older gentleman and his brother came into the showroom and said they needed springs for sheet doors on their outbuildings. Bernheisel and his team dug up the information for them and passed it along. It's this kind of community interaction that helps build strong local ties, reinforced by his out-of-office roles whether he's serving in his Niceville church or sitting on both the board of the Destin Chamber and the Apprenticeship Advisory Council for NW Florida State College. He's also been a member of the Destin Rotary Club since 2011 and will be president-elect for the next term.

that includes (but is not limited to) driveway gates, gates for residential homes, industrial complexes, boardwalk gates, garden gates, pool gates and pedestrian gates in general. They can also install keypads, card readers, wrist bands – if you can use it to open a gate, Harris is your guy. He's been in the gate business for 16 years, ever since he bumped into a former mentor in the construction industry driving around working on automated gates. Harris had been looking for a new opportunity and the man offered to take him on as a 50/50 partner on the spot. Now, it's a multi-million dollar business with 15 employees. In addition to offering a range of installations, Harris also offers a 24-hour response time for stuck or broken gates, whether or not he installed them. "I don't know anyone around that is reliable doing that," says Harris. "Service is something we pour a lot of effort into." Like Bernheisel though, Harris is also big on community. Every Veteran's Day since 2021, the company has held a dinner and given a veteran and installed an automated gate that Quality Gates. But it doesn't stop there – Harris is also a long-time football coach at Mosley High School, and the company participates in both Bay and Walton County chambers, the Community Association Institute, the American Fence Association and recently joined the Panama City Beach Rotary Club.

For more information or a consultation, call (850) 269-1066 or visit Overhead Door of Northwest Florida at [www.destinoverheaddoor.com](http://www.destinoverheaddoor.com), Gulf Coast Shutter at [www.gulfcoastshutter.com](http://www.gulfcoastshutter.com), and Quality Gates and Openers at [www.qualitygatesandopeners.com](http://www.qualitygatesandopeners.com).

The recent merger with Quality Gates and Openers in Panama City under the ownership of Chris Harris allows Bernheisel and his team to extend this community reach well outside of Walton County. Now, they have over 40 employees spread between two locations, one location to cover the Southport to Port St. Joe region and another to service the Valparaiso/Destin area stretching west to Pensacola, as well as everything in between. Additionally, Quality Gates and Openers offers a broad range of services that will nicely complement those of Gulf Coast Shutter and the Overhead Door Company. "We design, we fabricate, we powder coat, we install, and we service automated gates," explains Harris. He rattles off a list of gates

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# Wisdom Workforces for the Emerald Coast and Beyond



By DR. JEFF AND ROBIN CERNY  
Because of technology change

and the associated worker turbulence, greater attention is being placed on workforce development. Workforce Development refers to policies and initiatives aimed at improving the skills, education, and overall employment prospects of workers in the labor force.

The rapid pace of technological change is disrupting work and workplaces. Policy makers have been slow or unable to predict what skills will be needed in our future businesses. As a result, more and more workers are finding that their acquired skills

are quickly becoming obsolete. A workforce that seeks wisdom will develop 'higher level skills' needed for change.

The Bible teaches that while human beings can make plans and decisions, it is God who orders our steps and guides our paths (Proverbs 16:9). This scripture encourages the development of a Wisdom Workforce in three ways. 1) Wise workers approach their tasks with humility and a willingness to learn. Instead of assuming that they have all the answers, wise

workers seek God's guidance and wisdom in their work. 2) Understanding that God may guide our paths in unexpected ways helps wise workers to be flexible and adaptable. Instead of being stuck in rigid plans or expectations, wise workers are open to change or even better yet will generate divine ideas and open doors. 3) Wise workers trust that God will guide them in the right direction, even when things seem uncertain or difficult. Instead of being uncertain and anxious, this trust provides

a sense of peace and confidence that will be beneficial in any workplace. Wisdom Workers which include the Leaders are willing to learn, to adapt, and are confident in their ordained steps.

*C12EmeraldCoast.Com is a Wisdom Investment Group. It operates in Cohorts of 12 committed Business Leaders that share Godly Wisdom and Best Practices together for a Greater Purpose.*

## Applications Open for Regional Leadership Program

Applications are now available for Class II of Leadership Northwest Florida, a regional collaboration program offered by Florida's Great Northwest.

Leadership Northwest Florida is offered for professionals in all industry sectors desiring to grow their knowledge base, network and skill set within Florida's Great Northwest footprint. The goal of the program is to create informed, dedicated leaders who understand the complex and competitive environment of economic transformation.

"This experience will ultimately result in the long-term influence of the leadership graduates for the betterment of Northwest Florida," said Jennifer Grove, Chair of Florida's Great Northwest Foundation. "Through this program, our

goal is to cultivate leaders, help them understand the foundation of economic development and understand why regional collaboration is so important."

The program focuses on regional collaboration through community, content and connection. It is designed to inform participants on a holistic view of the conditions, challenges, and opportunities shared throughout Northwest Florida, focusing on business vitality, entrepreneurship and innovation, infrastructure, talent and quality of life.

The deadline to submit is Sept. 6.

For more information, contact Kasey Killebrew with Florida's Great Northwest at (334) 790-4557, [kkillebrew@fgnw.org](mailto:kkillebrew@fgnw.org) or [www.floridagreat-northwest.com/lnwfl](http://www.floridagreat-northwest.com/lnwfl).



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BY PASTOR DOUG STAUFFER

Edmund Burke once declared, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” Scripture echoes this truth by instructing, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11). These

## A Pastor’s Ponderings: **The Silent Church — Allowing Evil to Triumph**

admonitions highlight the perils of apathy and inaction in the face of wrongdoing. Silence enables harm to spiral upward and eventually out of control.

I believe standing for righteousness and championing the Gospel are compatible and complementary. God chose America not for its inherent worthiness, but for its global ability to shine a beacon of hope. This beacon dims when the voices opposing destructive agendas are silenced or neutralized. Albert Einstein once wrote: “The world is a dangerous place to live, not because

of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don’t do anything about it.” Silence in the face of evil is sin.

As Christians, we are responsible for shaping our nation’s future, refusing neutrality and upholding America’s exceptionalism rooted in understanding the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Today, we combat an anti-nationalistic, globalist agenda breeding divisive ideologies, such as the atheistic and Marxist-rooted Critical Race Theory. Radical doctrines promoting abortion and gender reassignments brazenly dismiss the sanctity and dignity of human life. Silence allows evil to triumph!

Every day is a fight against complacency and ignorance. God’s truths must permeate every aspect of our lives, extending far beyond the confines of our four-walled meeting houses. Unfortunately, Christian silence has legitimized a seismic shift in America towards secularism, now deeply embedded in our culture and overriding our laws. The complacent church is not God’s plan or His will.

America’s troubles intensified when Christians let their faith recede from public discourse and willingly submitted to judicial activism as the arbitrator of morality. Senator Lyndon Johnson’s mid-50s strategy severely hampered freedom of speech,

claiming faith has no place in public matters. Our sacred duty in the political realm is to oppose government bullying and coercion.

Far too many educational institutions have evolved into platforms for radical ideologies. As believers, we must remain vigilant against child indoctrination with these inappropriate and perverse teachings. We must demand what Lincoln mentioned in his Gettysburg Address, a “government by the people, for the people.” We should continually remind our elected representatives that “We the People” are self-governing and that elected officials hold office to serve the needs and desires of their constituents. We must make our voices heard.

Being silent in the presence of wrongdoing amounts to a tacit endorsement. Welcome to the realities of 21st Century America, where the soaring price of dissent discourages many from articulating their beliefs. This pattern, which history repeatedly demonstrates, paves the way for the subjugation of nations. Nonetheless, vocally opposing such forces can inspire a wave of bravery and conviction, safeguarding our nation’s future from detrimental influences. Our founding fathers, guided by faith leaders of their time, established this nation, and I will not allow a handful or a multitude



of censors to silence me.

A great illustration of allowing evil to triumph: Neville Chamberlain proclaimed “peace in our time after meeting Adolf Hitler.” His naivety illustrates the dangers of appeasing evil. Truth does not negotiate with darkness; it stands forthright and unmovable. We must constantly guard against the perils of spiritual complacency and inaction when faced with religious or secular threats.

Appeasement emboldens God’s enemies, and a passive stance towards evil encourages proliferation. We must confront spiritual wickedness with God’s armor, not appeasement. We must never compromise our spiritual values or principles, but use them as shields against forces seeking to undermine them. Spiritual appeasement can lead to a destructive war on our souls. Therefore, we must stand resolute against complacency, safeguarding our spiritual peace and freedom through unwavering steadfastness.

God’s word provides an urgent call to action: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13) We can never be neutral! We must never be silenced! We must never be complacent!

*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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BY SEAN DIETRICH

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“In the twilight glow I see her,  
“Blue eyes crying in the rain,  
“When we kissed goodbye and parted,  
“I knew we’d never meet again...”

I turn it up because I am a sucker for this tune. Though, I’m not sure why. When I was a boy, the lyrics never made sense to me.

After all, nobody with blue eyes ever cried in the rain for me. And I certainly didn’t have blue eyes. My eyes are gray. My mother used to say my eyes were the color of our pump shed.

Even so, there’s something about this tune that moves me. I can close my gray eyes and go back in time.

And I see my father’s work bench in the garage. A radio sits beside a chest of mini-drawers that is filled with bolts, nuts, screws, washers, and rubber grommets.

Crystal Gayle is singing “Don’t it Make my Brown Eyes Blue?”

Then Willie begins playing over the speaker. My father turns it up.

“Love is but a dying ember,  
“Only memories remain,  
“Through the ages, I’ll remember,  
“Blue eyes crying in the rain...”

And I am holding a GI Joe doll, watching a tall, skinny man work on something beneath a shop lamp, holding a screwdriver.

He does all his own repairs, this man. Because he believes it is wasteful to hire people to do work you could do yourself. Just like it’s disgraceful, and even unforgivable, to throw away refrigerator leftovers.

The people I come from are proud and self-sufficient, and they are not above eating ten-week old meatloaf that has turned Sea Foam Green. They cut their own hair. And their own lawns.

# Sean of the South: Old Music

When I started travelling a lot for work, I hired a yardman to cut my grass. It only made sense. But it felt wrong. I was so guilty about it that I couldn’t sleep. If my father were alive, it



would kill him to know I pay a guy to mow my lawn.

I don’t know why I just told you that.

Things have changed a lot since the days when I played with GI Joe. Today’s radios have replaced Willie’s style of music with country singers who have backup dancers.

Over the years, country music kept sinking lower, until it sounded about as interesting as your Uncle Lou using the bathroom in his RV.

Almost every song on modern country stations seems to be about girls in tank tops, or beer, or knocking boots. Much of this music is performed by young men wearing jeans that have been pre-ripped, or young women dressed like centerfolds.

They can have it.

Because I still remember Lo-

retta, and George, and Johnny, and Merle. And I will always remember Willie.

I remember sitting in Chastain Park, in Atlanta. I watched Willie Nelson play to a tame crowd. It was drizzling rain. And Willie invited Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn onto the stage.

People went crazy. It sounded like the crowd was going to tear the place apart. Then a hush fell over the audience.

The rain fell harder.

In this moment, Willie could have played any song and we would have loved him for it. He played “Amazing Grace.”

Though, to tell you the truth, I couldn’t hear Willie’s voice because Jimmy and Rosalynn were singing too loud.

It was a great moment, seeing Jimmy and Rosalynn singing a hymn in inclement weather. It was like watching your grandparents warm the front pew.

Jimmy and Rosalynn weren’t twirling, waving hands, or hopping up and down like the young people do at the megachurch my cousin attends. They were just singing.

I don’t have anything against megachurches, but my cousin’s church has a fog machine.

Before Willie, Jimmy, and Rosalynn got to the third verse of the hymn, they were joined by Kris Kristofferson, and Mer-

le Haggard’s boys, and seven thousand other people singing.

No fog machines.

And it reminded me of growing up the way I did, with simple people who were not fancy dressers. People who used weekends to do work around the house.

I come from a father who, just for fun, would separate bolts and screws and put them into little Dixie cups. A father who loved Jimmy Carter. And Willie Nelson.

After Willie sang a few more hymns, Jimmy and the others left the stage. It was still drizzling. And we all knew Willie was going to play it. All seven

thousand of us. We just knew.

He started playing the familiar song.

I closed my eyes. All of a sudden, I was in my father’s garage. Holding a GI Joe doll. Watching a skinny man. He was alive again, and he was beautiful. Even if only in my memory. He was happy. And so was I.

“Someday when we meet up yonder,

“We’ll stroll hand-in-hand again,

“In a land where there’s no parting,

“Blue eyes crying in the rain.”

Don’t it make my gray eyes blue.

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Arts & Music

# Theatre: Real and in Real Time; No AI Here

BY ANNA FISHER, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, EMERALD COAST THEATRE COMPANY

The instinct to roll my eyes to the very back of my head was absolutely overwhelming when I read the headlines about the recent SAG-AFTRA actor's strike. The writer's strike I can

understand—I mean how often do writers get the same recognition and pay as celebrities for giving us stories like Yellowstone and Succession. But actors? The ones making millions upon millions every year? As my teenagers would say, "Bruh." But then I did a little research and now I'm almost em-

barrassed at my initial reaction. What we're really talking about are those thousands of hard-working actors who barely make a livable wage each year and just have to keep their fingers crossed for the next gig. The strike is about a lot of things—lack of residual pay due to streaming

platforms, health insurance, cost of living increase, and here's the kicker—Artificial Intelligence. What guarantee does any actor have that their likeness won't be repackaged artificially and served up as an authentically disguised work of art? Fran Drescher, president of SAG-AFTRA (yes, the Fran Drescher with the laugh) said it best when she stated, "Artificial intelligence poses an existential threat to creative professions, and all actors and performers deserve contract language that protects them from having their identity and talent exploited without consent and pay."<sup>1</sup>

The more I researched (and when I say researched, I mean spiraled further and further into an existential crisis) the more I wrestled with questions like, How can we as humans compete with the many tentacled machine we have wrought? Will anyone ever have an original thought again? Are human beings as we know them obsolete?

And then, I had a singular, glorious ray of realization: Theatre. You know I had to bring it back to theatre, right? But really, theatre is the answer. For that matter any gathering of real human beings doing real things in real time is the answer. Actors, writers, storytellers, dancers, painters, chefs, garden club ladies, grocery shop-

pers and babies making weird noises in restaurants- we need you! We need your real authentic voices doing real authentic things that can only come from you. And if you're looking for light and life and texture and people and real authentic human experiences, come to Emerald Coast Theatre Company. There's something transformational about experiencing live theatre with other audience members, breathing the same air as the actors, and taking in a show that will always be a unique, one-time event.

And on that note, we have an incredible Season 11 this fall opening with Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins in Million Dollar Quartet and closing with the beloved classic Mary Poppins in the spring. You can catch a wide array of shows in between like The Play that Goes Wrong, The Marvelous Wonderettes: Caps and Gowns, Crimes of the Heart and the holiday favorite A Christmas Carol in between. For the younger audience members, we have Junie B Jones in October and Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus performed by our talented Junior Company members in December, as well as an original Theatre for the Very Young show Mother Goose on the Loose by Heath Carroll, ECTC Education and Outreach Director, premiering in April 2024. Our fall programming for children and teens starts at the beginning of August with Finding Nemo, Mean Girls and so many other musical theatre workshops, tap, jazz, and ballet classes, and acting opportunities for children of all ages.

All of these things are happening in real time at Emerald Coast Theatre Company. You won't find anything artificial here. It takes a lot more passion, skill, talent, people, time, resources and hard work to create an event that can only truly be experienced live. And it also takes all of you, because you are the heart of ECTC.

<sup>1</sup> Collier, Kevin. "Actors vs. AI: Strike Brings Focus to Emerging Use of Advanced Tech." NBC News, 14 July 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/hollywood-actor-sag-aftra-ai-artificial-intelligence-strike-rcna94191>. Accessed 18 July 2023.

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Florida ARTS & CULTURE

# Festival of the Arts Poster Winner Named

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) has named Roger van Lieshout of Cape Coral, Florida, the 2023 Festival of the Arts poster contest winner.

Recognized as one of Northwest Florida's premier fine art shows, the Festival of the Arts, produced by MKAF, is one of the most anticipated cultural events of the year on the Emerald Coast. This year's 28th annual event will kick off on Friday, Oct 27, with a reception at Henderson Beach Resort. The Festival weekend follows on Saturday, Oct. 28, and Sunday, Oct. 29, at the Mattie Kelly Cultural Arts Village in Destin.

An oil painter since childhood, Roger van Lieshout, a native of Winnipeg, has worked as a professional artist full-time for 14 years. Originally trained in renewal resources at the Saskatchewan Institute for Arts and Sciences in Saskatoon, Canada, he then completed his undergraduate degree at University of Manitoba.

The winning piece is a 36-by36-inch oil on canvas, titled "Flamboyant." This vi-

brant, whimsical piece evokes both the color, beauty, and spirit of Florida living.

"Flamingos are often seen as gangly and funny but look more closely and their grace and beauty become evident," van Lieshout says.

A previous Festival of the Arts exhibiting artist, this is van Lieshout's first MKAF Poster Art Contest win.

"I am most honored to have 'Flamboyant' chosen to help represent the 2023 MKAF Festival of the Arts," van Lieshout says. "The organizing committee and volunteers work hard to produce one of Florida's premier art events, and the location is a fantastic place to spend a memorable day. Last year's turnout was fantastic and having the opportunity to visit with both locals and visitors is always the best part of the fun. The 2023 Festival is bound to be as good if not better than last year!"

As the Poster Art Contest winner, van Lieshout will receive a cash prize of \$500. The winning artwork will be used to

promote the 28th Annual Festival of the Arts by being prominently showcased on the official Festival poster, program guide, T-shirt, in the Festival marketing campaign, on the MKAF website, across MKAF's social media channels, and more.

During the two-day Festival, more than 100 premier artists from across the United States will exhibit original artwork in the form of oil, watercolor, acrylic and glass paintings; photography, sculpture, pottery, wood, paper, fiber, mosaics, mixed media, jewelry designs and more in order to compete for \$12,000 in cash prizes in 18 award categories, including the coveted Best in Show and People's Choice Award, which is selected by the festival fans. The Festival also will feature a Collaborative Art Exhibit, which showcases select artwork of 85 adult and student artists.

A celebration of art, music, food, and family fun, special features of the Festival include a live music lineup, hands-on arts and crafts activities for children, art raffle and more. A diverse

menu of delicious cuisine served up by local food trucks, along with a wine and beer garden. On-site parking and free shuttle service are also available.

Admission is free. Proceeds from the Festival help MKAF and its community education outreach initiatives including ArtsReach serving K-12 students, at-risk youth, people with

disabilities, and the military population with visible and invisible injuries.

To make a tax-deductible donation or provide a corporate sponsorship, or for more information about becoming a MKAF member, visit [www.MKAF.org](http://www.MKAF.org) or call (850) 650-2226.

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View remaining August schedule and book classes at [bigorangehousedesigns.com](http://bigorangehousedesigns.com).

Want to book a private table in a class or host a party? Contact JoJo AT 334-320-6658 or [bigorangehousedesigns@gmail.com](mailto:bigorangehousedesigns@gmail.com).

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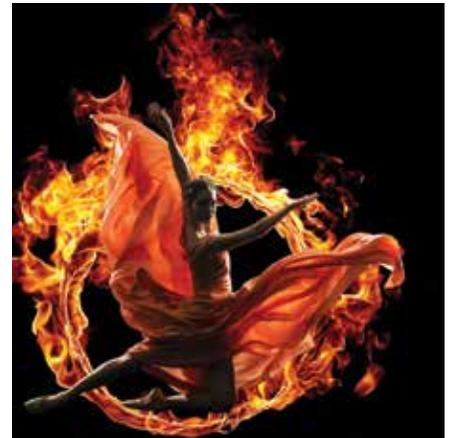
# NWF Ballet Reveals an Exciting 2023-24 Season

The Northwest Florida Ballet recently announced its 54th annual season, which will include Carmina Burana, an original production in partnership with

the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, along with the return of two patron favorites, "The Nutcracker" and "On the Edge."

The season begins with the 44th annual presentation of The Nutcracker on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 17 and 18, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Nov. 19

at 2:30 p.m. at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center. As the only full-length version of this classic holiday fairytale in the area, NFB's The Nutcracker features a cast of more than 140 performers, including international guest artists and over 100 local children. The NFSO, led by NFB music director and conductor David Ott, will provide live musical accompaniment for all public performances.



represent Ballet Memphis, Ballet San Antonio, Ballet Idaho and Colorado Ballet.

Season subscriptions will be available beginning Tuesday, Aug. 1, and include tickets to "The Nutcracker," "Carmina Burana" and "On the Edge" for \$110 per adult and \$48 per child (12 and under), a savings of more than 10 percent compared to box office prices. Patrons are also eligible to purchase tickets to the VIP parties held on each production's opening night for \$25 and receive a 10 percent discount for additional performance tickets when buying a season subscription.

Visit [www.NFBallet.org](http://www.NFBallet.org) and NFB's Facebook page for subscription packages and individual ticket sales announcements. NFB is sponsored in part by the State of Florida through the Division of Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts. Signature Media Co-Sponsors for the season include Emerald Coast Magazine, Scarlett Magazine and Life Media.

*In its 54th season, the Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) is a regionally recognized semi-professional ballet company and school committed to excellence in its training programs and the professional artistry of its productions. The organization's educational endeavors also epitomize excellence with the nationally acclaimed NFB Académie, an integrated arts and education program for third through eighth-grade students. NFB also operates the dance intensive Pre-Professional Program for ninth through twelfth-grade students preparing for a dance career. The organization is led by Artistic Director and CEO Todd Eric Allen and is sponsored in part by the State of Florida through the Division of Arts and Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

In collaboration with the NFSO, NFB returns to the Mattie Kelly Arts Center March 9 at 7:30 p.m. and March 10 at 2:30 p.m. with Carl Orff's powerhouse masterpiece "Carmina Burana." A celebration of spring and new beginnings, this inspiring program is a mesmerizing mix of live music, opera and dance. Created in 1934 and based on texts dating back to the 11th century, "Carmina Burana" is an uproarious and intoxicating depiction of a medieval paradise.

This eclectic partnership features the talented musicians of the NFSO, led by maestro Todd Craven, and the choreography of Gregory Schramel, Artistic Director of New Orleans Ballet Theatre, performed by NFB dancers and soloists from NOBT. Rising operatic world stars, including Sarah Vautour, Lunga Eric Hallam and Ben Taylor, and the Northwest Florida Symphony Chorale round out this incredible ensemble of artists for "Carmina Burana." NFB dancers will also take the stage with the neo-classical ballet "Afterglow," choreographed by NFB Artistic Director Todd Eric Allen with live musical accompaniment by the NFSO playing Ralph Vaughan-Williams' majestic and ethereal fantasia based on themes by 16th-century composer Thomas Tallis.

The season concludes with "On the Edge" at 7:30 p.m. June 15 at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center. This unique production features the artists of NFB with international guest artists performing a mix of cutting-edge contemporary, neoclassical and classical pieces from guest choreographers and the NFB repertoire. International guest artists performing in this production

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**RUBY ELZY**

*continued from page 7*

black society including her good friend, actress Hattie McDaniel. Ruby wrote articles for the Christian Advocate and Etude. The editors noted her comments on race “were the sanest and most sincere we have ever known.” Ruby said in her eloquent essay, “There is no color to talent.”

Ruby also appeared on Broadway and films, most notably, “The Birth of the Blues” with Bing Crosby and Mary Martin. Bing was so impressed with her vocal and acting ability, her personality, and her professionalism that he had his own agent sign Ruby as a new client.

Ruby’s family included three siblings, her mother, Emma Elzy, her grandmother and her great grandmother. The women



CC McCracken in their Columbus, Ohio, home during the time frame in which Ruby lived with them. Left to right - Janet McCracken, Mary Ruth McCracken, C. C. McCracken, Edward McCracken (Ruby’s “little Eddie”, Cleo McCracken, Bill McCracken

in the family were all singers. Ruby’s father left the family to find work when Ruby was age 5.

He never returned.

Ruby was born when blacks were treated as second class citi-

zens, endured segregation and Jim Crow laws. Emma Elzy, in a letter to Dr. McCracken, said it best – Ruby was born “where opportunity unborn had died for Negro children.”

Mrs. Elzy taught in a one-room schoolhouse, “The Pontotoc Colored School.” To “reading, writing and arithmetic,” a rich catalog of spirituals was added – a source of cultural pride and continuity. The Elzy family planted a patch of cotton adjacent to

the lean-to house and took in laundry. Ruby’s job was delivering the laundered bundles to

the white families. Ruby entered through the houses’ back doors as was the custom. On these errands, Ruby sang. She always sang. Very early she knew – her life’s passion was singing and performing.

Undaunted by the challenges and aware of Ruby’s desire, her mother secured a place for Ruby at The Rust Home, a boarding school associated with Rust College, established in 1866 by Northern, white Methodists to educate the emancipated slaves.

At Rust College, Ruby met a visiting Ohio State University Professor, Dr. Charles C. McCracken.

The story continues in Part 2 of next month’s Bay Life edition!



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