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BAY Life

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Meet Our Hometown Hero: Zachary Woodard and Lightz of Hope

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

One of the greatest forces for good can be a child looking out for other children. Zachary Woodard was such a child and LightZ of Hope is his legacy through his parents, Brent and Susan, along with their team. Through this program, children who are hospitalized can receive fun lights that project color onto their walls and ceiling to create an atmosphere of fun and joy during a stay that might be hard and extended. The lights not only brighten their days, but also those of the staff and visitors as well.

Zachary was born on May 20, 2003, at 4 lbs., unable to breathe on his own or swallow. At one-month-old, he went through surgery for a tracheotomy and g-tube. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with Myotubular Myopathy, a disease that causes the muscles to stop developing. Needing a ventilator to help him breathe, he battled with numerous hospitalizations due to pneu-



monia or infection; however, even though his muscles were weak, he had a sharp mind.

Susan shares the day that Zachary planted the seed

for their foundation. "Zachary was recovering from his spinal surgery when a dear friend came to visit us at the hospital and brought a strand

of color-changing Christmas lights to decorate his room. Our friend, Monica, hung the lights around the bedrails, and every morning I would get up and turn the lights on. These very simple, inexpensive lights changed this sterile uninviting environment into an uplifting welcoming space. When Zachary woke up, he told me how much he liked his lights. That sweet face looked up at me and asked, 'Do you think we could do this for other kids?' I had the biggest smile on my face and responded, 'Buddy! I love that idea! Let's talk more about that when we get home.' Well, Zachary went to be with Jesus not long after that conversation—very quickly and very unexpectedly he went to his eternal home.

Driving home from the hospital that day without Zachary was a total shock, but then it hit me. I said to my husband, Brent, 'I know

HERO

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CBA's Water Science Crew is Making Waves with Volunteers Like You!


It's no secret that this stretch of Florida's coast has something special between the rare coastal dune lakes, miles of sugar-sand Gulf beaches, and the third-largest estuary in the state. These natural features are a sanctuary for wildlife and humans alike, and it is the mission of the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) to protect and preserve these waterways for future generations.

CBA takes action through education, restoration, and monitoring program areas, all made possible by a passionate volunteer base. Locals and visitors alike can participate in experiences that empower them to take action to care for our shorelines, wetlands and waterways. CBA is currently seeking locals to join their Water Science Crew – on-the-ground stewards monitoring local water quality.

Why is water quality monitoring important? Gathering data is a


CBA

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HERO

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what God wants us to do! Zachary told me! We are supposed to gift lights to other kids who are being hospitalized.' The idea for the foundation was born. After some collaboration with Zachary's friends and family, we landed on LightZ of Hope. The capital Z is for Zachary. Hope is for all the medically fragile kids and their families. We all need hope to visualize a pathway towards something better. Our pastor used to say, 'We all need hope to cope.' And we do!"

Susan and her family know that the greatest relief from caring for a child with severe illness or disability can come from a community that just lets you know you aren't walking it out alone. "Friends showed up at the hospital and prayed for us and with us. Sometimes, people did not know what to do, but they showed up. We call that the 'showing up ministry.' One of the ways we were supported was through meals and groceries. There was one lady in our small group who brought us a meal every week for months. There was another lady who



would show up just to bring us groceries."

Having felt that outpouring from her own circle, LightZ of Hope has grown in scope and opportunity into the CareZ program. "We also now provide financial assistance to families in a medical crisis. Families are identified through the social workers at the hospital and referred for a specific need like rental assistance due to loss of income. Other needs can include meals in the hospital, medications not covered by insurance, etc."

Even as they miss him every day, getting to be there for other families has been a great source of joy for Zachary's family. "Since we started our foundation, I have so many favorite stories, but this one in particular speaks to my heart. In December 2021, we had the privilege of providing financial support



for many families in medical crisis. Brent and I had decided in advance that we would bless each family with \$1000 during the Christmas season and I got to call each family personally to notify them. After one family was notified, the mother began to cry and exclaimed, 'God heard my prayers!' She said that the previous evening, she laid a bill on the table that they were



Looking to grow their reach in Northwest Florida, they are hoping to find local partners who will help them develop the fundraising and outreach effort of their CareZ program by expanding their network of volunteers and donors. For information on how to become part of this incredible organization, email info@lightzofhope.org. You can also follow them on Instagram @LightZOfHope and Facebook, LightZ of Hope.

If you know a child with a medically complex condition or life-threatening diagnosis, nominate them to receive a gift from LightZ of Hope at lightzofhope.org/nominatechild.

unable to pay. The overdue bill was \$990. She cried out to God for a way to pay this bill. Of course, we had nothing to do with any of those details, but God knew, and He met their needs through our foundation. We were able to be a light in their dark circumstances and were used to meet this family's needs."

Since their first delivery, The Zachary Woodard Foundation has gifted almost 10,000 LightZ of Hope across the U.S. and Alaska and has provided over \$400,000 in financial assistance.

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 Community

CBA

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crucial step in protecting our environment. Data can help us detect problems and improve management of our natural resources. Water quality data is also used by scientists to better understand ecology, climate change, human health, and more. CBA's Water Quality Monitoring Program collects data from 137 stations that inform annual reports, long-term trends, and add to over 20 years of recorded data!

Want to become a water quality monitor? Adopt a section of Choctawhatchee Bay or a coastal dune lake and visit the waterbody monthly to take samples and measurements. Volunteers receive training and equipment as well as a well-earned sense of contribution to science. No experience is necessary to join. Although some stations do require volunteers



Western Lake in Grayton Beach State Park.

to bring their own kayak, paddleboard, or boat, others have a canoe on-site for volunteer use.

Best geared for paddlers are South Walton's coastal dune lakes. Currently, Camp Creek, Grayton, Little Red Fish and

Stallworth lakes are all in need of volunteer monitors. However, if you have boat access in the bay, or want to spend more time in the river, CBA works watershed-wide and has other openings throughout the watershed.



The Noggle family, volunteer monitors of Boggy Bayou in Niceville.

If you are interested in exploring and connecting to nature, while giving back to the environment, you might be ready to join the Water Science Crew! Email wingardk@nwfsc.edu for details on how you can

contribute. Want to pitch in but not ready for a monthly commitment? Check out CBA's Facebook page for other volunteer opportunities ranging from beach clean-ups to creating oyster gardens.

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 Community

The Power of Hope: Opportunity Place Provides a Sanctuary for Families

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

Fiona Devenney, the Executive Director of Opportunity Place, knows that one of the best sources of energy in a community is this: Hope. Her team, although small, is mighty, and includes Balon Lofton (Associate Director), Felicia Waters (Eligibility Specialist), Gabrielle Lofton (Shelter Coordinator), and Jean Day (Youth Services/Volunteer Coordinator). This dedicated group has positioned itself to receive families in Okaloosa and Walton Counties who need an injection of hope when life's circumstances make it hard to know what to do next, or where to go. Having a background in working at domestic violence shelters and caring for the homeless, Fiona has always been involved in social services.

She knows a family doesn't have to be defined by their circumstances.

"I think that the most important thing to know is that the families we serve were once in their own homes. They were once an intact family unit, had jobs, had vehicles, and had the American dream. And then something happened, whether it was divorce, a death in the family, domestic violence, or they fell into an addiction, lots of reasons bring them here. Our families want to succeed. They want to get back to that hope. Children in our shelter, especially, didn't have a say about how life would go. That's why it's so important for us to give the whole family the dignity they deserve."

So, how does Fort Walton Beach-based Opportunity Place



preserve dignity? By making it possible for families to become self-sufficient again. This means meeting them where they are and taking care of foundational needs, so the family has a place to launch. When a parent knows their family is safe, fed and has shelter, they have the margin

to address their challenges and get sustainable jobs, secure additional skills, find their housing and, when needed, address addiction.

"We're not just a shelter. For example, we offer classes on parenting skills and budgeting. We teach about health and nutrition, life skills, how to write a resume, and do a job interview. Many of our families have endured a lot and have never experienced group living so we also offer classes on coping with group living and trauma. When they're ready, we also help them with their housing.

We also have an amazing program for our children. Children are resilient, but they need hope, too. We want to help take their fear away so they can excel in education and life. At Opportunity Place our Case Manager and Youth Services Coordinator partner with the parents to identify what areas might require expert intervention and get to the resources that best meet the needs of the child."

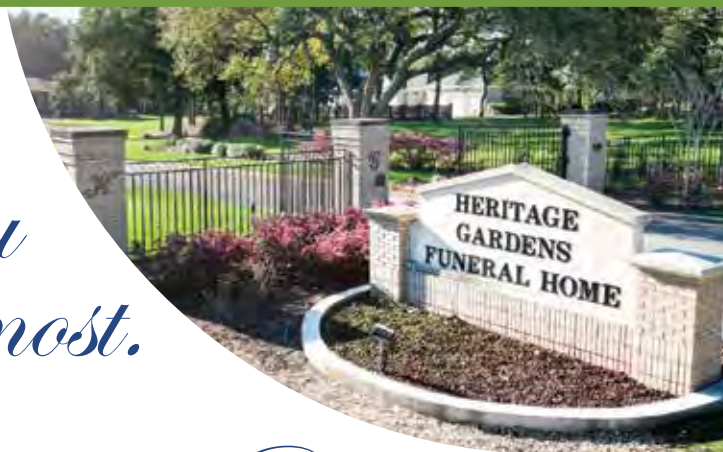
What is unique about Opportunity Place is that it allows the family to define what a family consists of, not just mother and child. They include men and grandparents who have custody of children. To keep everyone safe, there are cameras throughout the three buildings, except for the sleeping areas where each family stays together, that make up Opportunity Place. Two of the buildings serve as housing with laundry facilities and bathrooms and the third includes a kitchen, dining and additional common areas. All in all, 43 beds throughout the different bedrooms can accommodate various sizes of families. Each room has bunk



beds and/or full and twin-size beds, and can also include space for infants when needed. In the first 30 days, a family can reset. They work with staff to figure out what their unique needs are so resources can start being built. Employment must be secured in that first month if the family wants to continue to stay up to the 90 days allowed. In those 90 days, the goal is for the family to become independent enough to move into their own housing, and Opportunity Place is there every step along the way.

So, how can a community invest in its own health? By supporting organizations like Opportunity Place. In addition to donating supplies, funds and volunteer time, another fun and meaningful way is to join them at their fundraiser, the Harlem Nights Casino Affair, on October 4th, 2024. This marks 16 years of providing shelter to families and the event will be held from 6 - 10 p.m. at The Island Resort in Ft. Walton Beach at 1500 Miracle Strip Parkway Southeast. This incredible night will consist of gaming tables, champagne and hors d'oeuvres, music by Boukou Groove, dancing, live and silent auctions, and a photo booth by Epic. Each ticket is \$100 and that provides you with \$500 worth of casino bucks to use at the event! For those who want to stay the night, special room rates are also being offered. If you aren't able to make the event, consider becoming a sponsor of this fun night of hope-building and celebration. For event details, donation opportunities and sponsorship information contact fiona@opifwb.org, call 850-865-1950, or visit opifwb.org.

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Bay Buzz Events

It's Fall y'all, and time for some of the best events on the planet!

SOCKS Meowsterpieces Art Show



BARBARA CATWORTH

Save Our Cats and Kittens (SOCKS), a nonprofit, no-kill, free-roaming cat shelter in Fort Walton Beach, is getting ready for its first Meowsterpieces art show and competition.

The show's theme is feline, a celebration of all things cat, from their beauty and agility to their independence and playfulness. Works will be displayed from Sept. 3-21 in the SOCKS event building, with an awards presentation and reception from 2-3:30 p.m. Sept. 21. All art styles, including painting, sculpture, photography, design, craft, video, sound art, kinetic art and performance, will be represented in three age categories: child (ages 12 and younger), teen (ages 13-17) and adult (18 and older). Works will be judged by Guest juror J. Wren Supak, Director & Curator of Mattie Kelly Art Center Galleries at NWFSC, and People's Choice. People's Choice winners will be determined by an online pay-to-vote system. \$1 = 1 vote. Submitted art will be auctioned after the exhibition, with proceeds benefiting SOCKS. For more info: www.saveourcatsandkittens.com/meowsterpieces-art-show.

TMF 3rd Annual 9/11 Heroes Run

Sept. 8 | 9 a.m. | Legendary Marine Destin

The Travis Manion Foundation (TMF), one of the nation's leading veteran service organizations, will host the Destin 9/11 Heroes Run 5K Run/Walk/or Ruck Race on Sunday, Sept. 8, at 9 a.m. at Legendary Marine in Destin. The annual



race will unite the community to remember the lives lost on September 11 and in the wars since, and honor the veterans, military service members and first responders who serve our country and our communities. The 5K course is out and back through beautiful Regatta Bay.

Proceeds benefit the Travis Manion Foundation which empowers veterans and families of fallen heroes to develop character in future generations. Sponsored nationally by USAA, the 9/11 Heroes Run national race series will be held in 70 communities globally.

The 9/11 Heroes Run was inspired by Marine 1st Lt. Travis Manion who was killed by a sniper in Iraq in April 2007 as he selflessly protected his battalion. Before his final deployment, Travis visited Rescue One in NYC—a group known for losing almost all its men on 9/11. Travis returned from this visit with a deeper understanding of his reasons for fighting in Iraq. At its heart, the 9/11 Heroes Run is a tribute to a personal commitment to never forget the heroes of that day.

"Each year on the anniversary of September 11, we pause to remember the heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice on that day and those who lost their lives in the wars since," said Ryan Manion, CEO, Travis Manion Foundation. "The growth of the 9/11 Heroes Run 5K series over the last 17 years demonstrates a shared commitment in communities nationwide to never forget the sacrifices of first responders and military service members like my brother, Travis, and countless others."

Through 9/11 Heroes Runs around the world, Travis Manion Foundation invests back into the local race communities to support military service members, veterans, first responders and their families. For more in-

formation about the race series visit 911heroesrun.org.

Perfect Hues: Baytowne Wharf Art Fest!

Saturday, Aug. 31 - Sunday, Sept. 1 | 4-9 p.m. nightly | FREE

Stroll The Village streets from 4-9 p.m. as you browse a variety of artwork from local and regional artists. Enjoy LIVE music throughout the festival and a spectacular fireworks show over the lagoon on Sunday at 9:30 p.m.

Also, on Sunday night, be sure to check in by the breezeway to enjoy a Sip & Shop through The Village. We love kicking off the fall season with such a unique, moonlit weekend.

Continued on next page

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 Community

BAY BUZZ EVENTS

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Music Line up:

- Saturday
- 4-6:15 p.m. | Mike Whitty
- 6:30-9 p.m. | Timmy Hood
- Sunday
- 4-6:15 p.m. | Emily Bass
- 6:30-9 p.m. | Jared Herzog

Mid-Bay Rotary's 30th Annual Oktoberfest
Friday, Sept 27 & Saturday, Sept 28 | Merchants Walk – Bluewater Bay

The Mid-Bay Rotary Club will hold its 30th Annual Oktoberfest Friday, 5 to 10 p.m., and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., September 27-28, at Merchants Walk in Bluewater Bay. The fes-



in the US and affects people of all ages and races.

Together we walk. Together we fight. Together we win!

Oktoberfest In Niceville
Oct. 3rd | 3rd Planet Brewing

For the fourth year, the very popular Oktoberfest at 3rd Planet Brewing sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council 13527 will be held from noon to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 3 in Niceville.

The Knights will be serving freshly grilled Brats with sides of sauerkraut and potato salad, or hot dogs to enjoy along with more than 20 of 3rd Planet's locally brewed beers on tap. Soft drinks and savory dessert treats will also be available.

Authentic German music will be provided by the band "Tall Cotton" from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The Knights of Columbus from Christ Our Redeemer Parish in Niceville raises funds to support local charities such as the Twin Cities Pavilion, Niceville Catholic Outreach Food Bank, Special Olympics, Emerald Coast Autism Center, ARC of the Emerald Coast, Children in Crisis and many more. All funds raised by the Knights are donated to charities. For more information, contact Joe Purka, jwpurka@gmail.com, 850.974.1491.

Local breweries feature their products and restaurants in The Village showcase their best dishes Live music by Duchess from 6-8 p.m. \$65 general admission for Friday 6-8 p.m. only.

Saturday, Oct. 12 | Grand Craft Beer Tasting | General Admission
2-5 p.m. | Baytowne Wharf Events Plaza

More than 200 domestic and international craft beers will be available for sampling. Live music by Below Alabama from 2-5 p.m. Tickets: \$50 Grand Tasting event only.

Saturday, Oct. 12 | Grand Craft Beer Tasting | VIP
\$90 general admission

Features exclusive beer tastings and great food from Landshark Bar & Grill! Tickets include all of Saturday's events AND you can beat the lines to get in the event before anyone else! You will also receive your very own Beer Festival swag bags.

2-Day Ticket: \$110 general admission for Friday and Saturday. Tickets include admission to Friday Night's Beer From Around Here Event from 6-8 p.m. and Saturday's Grand Tasting Event 2-5 p.m.

For tickets, a lineup of beers and additional information, visit baytownebeerfestival.com.

Choctawhatchee Audubon Society
September Activities
The Colony of Tristan de Luna: Unearthing Secrets of the 1559 Expedition

Thursday, Sept. 5 | 7 p.m. | Room 800, 2nd floor Chandler Center | Crosspoint Church - Niceville

John R. Bratten, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology at the University of West Florida, will present a talk on the 1559-1561 Tristan de Luna y Arellano expedition, the most ambitious Spanish attempt to colonize

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activities will include the Edelweiss German Band, accordionist Walter Kasprzyk, musician Gary Schmitz, musician Jody Lucas and balloons by Mickey Cameron. The Emerald Coast Community Band will also play. There will be over 30 vendor booths as well as a children's giant slide, rock climb and bouncy house. Brats and Kraut, German pretzels, chicken and hot dogs will be served. German beer, soda and water will also be served. Free admission!

Walk for a Cause!
Conquer Chiari Walk Across America
Sept. 28 | Props Brewery Freeport

The Conquer Chiari Walk Across America is a series of coordinated awareness/fundraising walks around the country to raise awareness of Chiari Malformation and to raise money for valuable research. The local walk is being held at Props Brewery located at 1799 Great Hammock Bend, Freeport, 32439 on Saturday, Sept. 28.

Registration begins at 8 a.m.; walk starts at 9:30 a.m. Entertainment will be provided by the Backsliders and The Community Ukes. There will also be face painting, guest speakers and more! Everyone is invited to participate. For more information, contact Marion Gipson at 334-313-0875 or mariogipson@yahoo.com or visit the Conquer Chiari website at Walk.conquerchiari.org

Chiari Malformation is a neurological disorder where the brain descends out of the skull and puts pressure on the spine. This affects over 300,000 people

BAY BUZZ EVENTS

continued from previous page

Florida. The hurricane that destroyed most of the fleet created a rich archaeological site, offering insights into the settlement, fleet, and daily lives of the colonists through thousands of recovered artifacts. Free and open to the public.

Experience the Beauty of Local Birdlife

Sept. 7 | 7:30 a.m.

Join the Choctawhatchee Audubon Society to experience the beauty of local birdlife at the Okaloosa Holding Ponds and Wright Pond with expert birder and photographer Jim Anderton along the west edge of Roberts Road, just a couple hundred feet north of Task Force Pizza Co. off Lewis Turner Blvd. Wear closed-toed shoes, long pants and bring a hat, water and your binoculars, scope or camera. For questions - Jim Anderton at 850-543-2221. No experience necessary, anyone interested in birding is welcome to attend!

4th Annual Burgers, Bourbon & Beer Festival
Sept. 21 | 12-3 pm | Destin Harbor

The 4th Annual Burgers, Bourbon, and Beer Festival is back bigger and better than ever on September 21 at the Destin Harbor! Not only will you indulge in mouth-watering burgers, sip on smooth bourbon, and enjoy ice-cold beer, but you'll be supporting the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast.

-Food Only / Under 21: \$40



Includes (1) armband for unlimited food samples.

-General Admission: \$65 Includes (1) armband for unlimited food samples and (7) tickets for alcohol samples.

-VIP Ticket: \$100 Includes (1) armband/lanyard for unlimited food samples and unlimited beer/bourbon samples. PLUS: Exclusive early admission (11am-12pm) to the event, VIP lounge with a private bar, BBB t-shirt, and exclusive small-batch bourbon tastings.

The Market Shops 9th Annual Bloody Mary Festival

Oct. 12 | 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. | The Market Shops at Sandestin



Local bars and restaurants will be serving the finest Bloodys on the Emerald Coast, made

more! Tickets \$60 in advance; \$75 at the door.

DCWAF 8th Annual Harvest Wine & Food Festival

Oct. 17-20 | Grand Tasting – Cerulean Park – WaterColor | Santa Rosa Beach

Step into a world of culinary delight at the Harvest Wine & Food Festival, an annual event hosted in WaterColor by the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF), October 17-20. This four-day celebration features an array of exquisite wine dinners, the renowned Grand Tasting, a delightful cocktail brunch, and much



more. For tickets, visit dcwaf.org.

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Bay Buzz

Niceville to Host First Ever Veterans Day Parade!

The City of Niceville will have its first-ever Veterans Day Parade on Sat., Nov. 9, for community members show support and pay tribute to the brave men and women who have served and continue to serve our country—those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. The parade will begin at 10 a.m. and travel through the streets of Niceville, honoring our veterans and their families. Registration for the parade is now open and will close on Oct. 4. Individuals, groups and organizations are encouraged to participate by applying to the city’s website.

To register or become a sponsor, visit cityofniceville.org.

EFCU Recognizes Mid-Bay Rotary as a Hometown Hero

Eglin Federal Credit Union recently recognized Mid-Bay Rotary Club as a Hometown Hero! Nominated by Cumulus Radio (Coast 93.3), the nomination stated “The Mid-Bay Rotary Club started an event to help the Twin Cities Pavilion in Niceville (senior living facility) to help with repairs outside, providing shade, rocking chairs and new structures for the clients



Hometown Heroes Award Presentation. Pictured (L to R): Laura Coale, Eglin Credit Union VP for Marketing; Kathey Mitchell, Eglin Credit Union Communications Manager; Mid-Bay Rotary President Harry Holmes, Mid-Bay Rotarian Bob Hoffman; and Cumulus News Person Dan Diamond.

at the facilities. Through their efforts and collaboration with other area local Rotary Clubs, its firetruck pull with teams of several fire departments, area Rotary Club teams, community businesses and area organizations, the club has raised over \$10,000 to give to this needy community and their building. “Most patients are strictly state covered, and their families have no other options,” Eglin Federal Credit Union stated. “Well done to all of you. You’re doing great work for the community. We’re so happy to have this partnership with Cumulus for our Hometown Heroes!”

City of Niceville Welcomes New Chief of Police, Mark Hayse



Mark Hayse has been appointed as new Niceville Chief of Police. Chief Hayse brings over 33 years of dedicated service in law enforcement, along with a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role. Formerly a member of the Fort Walton Beach Police Department, Hayse, has demonstrated a strong commitment to public safety and has earned the trust and respect of his colleagues and community members throughout his career. In his new role, he will oversee all operations of the Niceville Police Department and work closely with other city officials to address community needs and concerns. Welcome to Niceville Chief Hayse!

Grit and Grace Honors WCDWC Member



Walton County Democratic Women’s Club member Victoria Crystal was honored by Grit and Grace July 19-23. Her “powerful” story was delivered by Connie Baldwin of Defuniak Springs. From being orphaned at the age of 6 to being an abused wife to the many contributions she has made to her town, Crystal’s life has been a full one. The story of her meeting and later losing the love of her life brought tears to many in the audience.

In addition to being the Communications Coordinator for the WCDWC, she is the PR Director for The Tivoli Historical Society and Walton County Democratic Black Caucus and also a member of CJEF of Wal-

ton County and the NAACP. Victoria is the founder of The Ladies of Distinction of DFS, a group formed to honor people, many of whom are never thought to be worthy of honor. She is a writer, poet, and the author of seven books. Victoria was in the beauty business for 45 years, where her prolific skills as a stylist and hair care specialist earned her the nickname “Queen Bee.”

Okaloosa Saves Wins Coveted National Award!



Okaloosa Saves has earned the 2024 America Saves Savings Champion award, an honor explicitly reserved for organizations who effectively and actively promote saving strategies during the annual America Saves Week campaign.

Okaloosa Saves is one of 18 organizations honored with this distinction out of more than 4,600 participating organiza-

Continued on page 13

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Happenings Around the Bay

2024
EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 01** **Women's Climbing Circle**
5 pm | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
Bluegrass Jam
12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
Perfect Hues Baytowne Wharf Art Fest
4-9 pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf | Sandestin
- 03** **Niceville Young Professionals Lunch Meeting**
11:30 am | Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce
Chess Night
6 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar
Spider-Man Across The Spider-Verse
7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- 06** **Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's First Friday Coffee**
7 am | Destin-FWB Convention Center | Okaloosa Island
Niceville High School Football Game vs. Pine Forest High School
7 pm | Niceville High School | Niceville
Freeport HS Football Game vs. Northview
7 pm | Freeport High School | Freeport
- 07** **Concealed Carry Weapons Class**
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
Live Music: Tim Nowell
1 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
Rocky Bayou Christian School Football Game vs Jefferson County High School
6 pm | Fort Walton Beach High School | FWB
- 07-08** **Emerald Coast Holistic Health Expo**
Destin-FWB Convention Center | Okaloosa Island
- 08** **Travis Manion Foundation 9/11 Heroes Run**
9 am | Legendary Marine
- 11** **Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce's Second Wednesday Breakfast**
7:15 am | Niceville Community Center | Niceville
Live Music: Michael Howard
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 12** **Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's Nothing But Networking**
11:30 am | Bob Hope Village | Shalimar
- 13** **Emerald Coast Title Service's New Forms Review Class**
2 pm | Emerald Coast Association of Realtors | FWB
A Night at the Park
5 pm | Freeport Regional Sports Complex | Freeport
SOF Missions Emerald Coast Gala
6 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center | Okaloosa Island
Niceville HS Football Game at Crestview HS
7 pm | Crestview High School

- 14** **Intro to Graphite Drawing with Elizabeth Plauche**
10:30am | Artful Things Niceville | Niceville
Live Music: Chris Curles + Saltwater Revival
6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 16** **Glock Sport Shooting Foundation (GSSF) Indoor League**
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
- 17** **Sinfonia Cabaret at Seagar's: An Evening with Alysha Umphress**
5:30 pm | Seagar's Prime Steaks & Seafood | Miramar Beach
Home Defense Fundamentals Class
5:30 pm | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
- 19** **Free Family History Help**
1 pm | Niceville Library | Niceville
- 20** **Freeport HS Football Game vs. Venom**
7 pm | Freeport High School | Freeport
Joe Breedon Panhandle Regional Festival
4 pm | 4-H Camp Timpooshee | Niceville
Niceville HS Football Game at Choctaw
7 pm | Choctawhatchee HS | Fort Walton Beach
Rocky Bayou Christian School Football Game vs Franklin County High School
7 pm | Meigs Middle School | Shalimar
- 21** **Concealed Carry Weapons Class**
10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
4th Annual Burgers, Bourbon, and Beer Festival
12 pm | Destin Harbor behind Brotula's Seafood House
Bluegrass Barn Jam
1 pm | Alaqua Animal Refuge | Freeport
Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show
10 am - 5 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center
- 22** **Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show**
11 am - 4 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center
- 27** **Mid-Bay Rotary 30th Annual Oktoberfest**
5-10 pm | Merchants Walk | Bluewater Bay
Niceville High School Football Game vs. Gulf Breeze High School
7 pm | Niceville High School | Niceville
- 28** **Rocky Bayou Christian vs Central High School**
6 pm | Fort Walton Beach High School | FWB
Mid-Bay Rotary 30th Annual Oktoberfest
11 am -10 pm | Merchants Walk | Bluewater Bay
Conquer Chiari Walk Across America
9:30 am | Props Brewery | Freeport

- 29** **Sunset Shrimp Boil**
4 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar
Live Music: Rovvie Paynter
6 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island

OCTOBER

- 01** **Niceville Young Professionals Lunch Meeting**
11:30 am | Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce
Live Music: Charlie Seagar
4 pm | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | Okaloosa Island
- 02** **Family Game Night**
5 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 03** **Knights of Columbus Council Oktoberfest**
12-9 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 04** **Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's First Friday Coffee**
7 am | Christian Life Center at First Baptist Church | FWB
CVHN Benefit Concert in the Park featuring the Tip Tops
5:30 pm | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin | Miramar Beach
Live Music: John Mckinney
6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- 05** **10th Annual CMSAF Binnicker Memorial Run presented by Eglin Federal Credit Union**
8 am | Bob Hope Village Commons | Shalimar
Dog Daze presented by Friendship Veterinary Hospital
9 am | Fort Walton Beach Landing Park | FWB
Oktoberfest
12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
Dino Light - Northwest Florida Ballet
7:30 pm | Grand Boulevard North Park | Miramar Beach

ONGOING EVENTS

- Oils and Acrylics with Rosalyn O'Grady**
10 am | Tues | Artful Things | Niceville
- Watercolor Techniques with Theresia McInnis**
1 pm | Tues | Artful Things | Niceville
- Bingo Night**
6 pm | Tues | Bayou Brewing Company | Niceville
- Trivia Night**
6 pm | Thurs | Strange Colt Brewery | Niceville
- One Stroke Basics (LVL 2) with Sheila Mahony**
10 am | Fri | Artful Things | Niceville
- Yoga at Turkey Creek**
9 am | Sat | Turkey Creek Nature Trail | Niceville
- Brunch on the Bayou**
9 am | Sun | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville

FARMERS MARKETS	Niceville Community	Hammock Bay	Grand Boulevard
	Saturdays 9 am - 1 pm	1st & 3rd Sundays 8 am	Saturdays 9 am - 1 pm
	Palm Plaza Niceville	Victory Blvd Freeport	Grand Boulevard Miramar Beach

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5 Tips to Lower Your Insurance Costs in a Rough Market



By JULIE A. MARTIN

1. Update your home. In this property insurance market, most of the standard carriers are imposing strict age guidelines on Roof, Heating, Wiring, and Plumbing. If your home is 20 years old or older, keep in mind that the older your roof is, the harder it will be to move your insurance to a different carrier. The same holds true for your hot water heater, which most carriers regard as too old once it has been in your home for at least 15 years.

2. Confirm with your

agent that your insurance has all applicable discounts. Wind Mitigation discounts weigh heavily on your premium. Roof credits such as FBC, or Florida Building Code Equivalent, Hip roof, for roofs that slope on all four sides like a pyramid, and single wraps, may vastly decrease your premium from what it is now. If you have recently replaced your roof, it is best to order a new mitigation inspection directly afterwards, and submit it to your agent. Carriers acknowledge new inspections as of the date they



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are received by the underwriting department, rather than the date they are performed.

3. Check your Total Insurable Replacement Cost.

Ask your agent to update your replacement cost estimator. Most standard carriers have some form of inflation guard on their policies, which is designed to keep your dwelling coverage at or above the level required in order to fulfill the Florida Valued Policy Law. Due to the recent burst of inflation in materials and the costs of hiring a licensed contractor, some policies may experience a bigger jump in dwelling coverage from policy term to policy term. It is best to check with your agent to be sure your home is not over-insured.

4. Smart Water Protection System. Some newer homes have a Smart Water Protection system which automatically shuts off the water in the event of accidental leakage, and many carriers offer a good discount to policyholders for having this device installed in their homes.

5. Increase Deductibles.

This is a valid way to reduce your overall property insurance premium. However, there is a downside. For one thing, if raising your deductible significantly increases your potential out of pocket expenses in the event of a claim, you have to decide if you are prepared for that risk. Secondly, some deductibles can only be changed at renewal. If you change your wind deductible from 2% to 5%, you will have to wait another year before changing it back, so be sure to calculate your potential out of pocket exposure before making

this decision.

In this rough market, it is difficult to shop rates between carriers, but the best time to do that is after hurricane season ends, which is in December.

The guidelines are always the toughest in high summer, so that by December, many of the carriers have relaxed their rules enough for people to move from carrier to carrier with much less fuss and expense, and that, dear reader, is what we all want—peace of mind with less expense.



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BAY BUZZ

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tions of America Saves Week, which took place April 8 – 12, 2024, as part of Financial Capability Month.

During this one-week timeframe, Okaloosa Saves along with the other 17 financial institutions helped to encourage nearly \$354 million worth of deposits into new and existing accounts. Additionally, 231,000 new accounts were opened and 64,000 individuals increased their automatic saving transfers or deposits into existing savings accounts.

“Okaloosa Saves has been guiding people for 20 years in Northwest Florida to become savers,” said Board Chair Laura Coale. “We enjoy teaching the importance of reducing debt and building wealth by creating a plan to save money year-round. Financial wellness helps promote overall wellness, and we appreciate our partnership with America Saves for years to come.”

Eight Inducted into Okaloosa County Women’s Hall of Fame

The Commission on the Status of Women recently inducted eight, local women into the Okaloosa County Women’s Hall of Fame: Sharon Allen – Mattie Kelley Cultural Arts Inductee, Col. Allison Black – Military Inductee, Judge Lacey Powell Clark - Carolyn Spencer Humanitarian Inductee, Shawn Crist – Education Inductee, Sierra Elliot – Contemporary Inductee, Lori Kelley – Business-Professional Inductee, Joy Makela – Community Service Inductee and Barbara Henderson Slocumb – Pioneer Inductee.

Since 1995, 140 women have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. This award was created to honor and recognize women who have made important contributions to Okaloosa County. For more information, visit ocsw.com or call Jeanne Rief at 850-685-8027.

Green Thumb Garden Club to Tour Westonwood Ranch in September

One of the primary objectives of Green Thumb Garden Club (GTGC) is to provide Walton County students with scholarships to colleges, universities and technical schools. GTGC



awarded \$6,000 in scholarships this year and the Club’s goal is to increase that amount in 2025. The September meeting will give GTGC members and guests an opportunity to learn about our newest student sponsorship partner, Westonwood Ranch.

Attendees will meet at Horse Power Pavilion, located at 4497 State Highway 20 W, Freeport, Florida, for check-in beginning

at 9 a.m. Carpools will then go to Westonwood Ranch for a tour and presentation, returning to Horse Power Pavilion for a brief meeting and lunch. The cost for the event including lunch is \$30 (cash or check) or \$32 (credit card).


For additional information, please visit the website or email greenthumbgardenclubinc@gmail.com.

Walton County Reopens Bear Creek Bridge In Freeport


Bear Creek Bridge on Bay Loop Road (83A) is open again after the 12-month repair project.

The \$1.1 million project was funded by the Florida Department of Transportation, the

Continued on page 39



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Education News

From Superintendent Marcus Chambers



Hello Students and Parents,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and

high spirits. As we embark on another exciting academic year, I want to extend a heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you. Whether you're returning students or new faces, we're thrilled to have you as part of our Okaloosa County family. Having been an educator for over two decades, I understand the importance of creating a nurturing and supportive environment for our students. As a parent myself, I share your hopes and dreams for our children's success. Together, we can make this school year memorable and impactful.

For those who may not know me, my name is Marcus Chambers, and I have the privilege of serving as your Superintendent. My commitment to excellence in education drives me every day, and I am dedicated to ensuring that our schools provide the best possible learning experiences possible.

Our teachers and staff have been hard at work preparing for your return. We have high expectations for behavior, respect, and academic achievement. Let's strive for excellence in everything we do. Remember, success is a team effort, and we're all part of the same team! This

year, we're introducing exciting changes to our curriculum. From innovative STEM programs to enriching arts and humanities courses, there's something for everyone. Get ready to explore, learn, and grow!

Communication is key, and I encourage both students and parents to stay connected with us. You can reach out to me directly via email at chambersm@okaloosaschools.com. Additionally, follow us on social media for updates, events, and inspiring stories from our schools. Check out our website at www.okaloosaschools.com.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. Let's make this school year one filled with joy, discovery, and achievement. Together, we'll soar to new heights!

Governor Ron DeSantis Presents \$20,000 Awards to Five Florida Teacher of the Year Finalists

Governor Ron DeSantis recently recognized the five Florida 2025 Teacher of the Year finalists. Governor DeSantis presented each finalist with a \$20,000 check. The winner, Jaime Suarez, was named the overall winner at the Teacher of the Year gala on Thursday, July 25. Suarez will receive additional awards, bringing her total award amount to \$50,000.

The five finalists for the 2025 Florida Teacher of the Year were Samantha Nelson, Florida State University School; Jennifer

Brown, Marion County; Jaime Suarez, Hernando County; Dr. Clayton Nylund, Hillsborough County; and Heather Stewart in Walton County.

Why You Should Join the Choctawhatchee Audubon Society

1. Engaging Programs in Niceville: We meet monthly to offer programs that are both interesting and educational. These sessions are free and open to the public—no membership required!

2. Bird Walks throughout Okaloosa County: Experience the beauty of nature first-hand through our bird walks. We need

more people to help plan and lead these walks, making them accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

3. Community Involvement: We participate in local festivals and events as an educational vendor.

4. Social Media and Outreach: We are looking for individuals to help create content for our social media platforms, design brochures and flyers, write press releases and keep our website updated and engaging.

5. Photographers Welcome: We love to showcase the work of local photographers on our Facebook page and website. Share your talent and help us spread

the beauty of our local wildlife.

6. Annual Holiday Party in Destin: The December Holiday party is a highlight of the year, featuring a silent auction that serves as the annual fundraiser.

Whether you're interested in planning events, leading walks, creating educational content or simply enjoying the camaraderie of fellow bird enthusiasts, there's a place for you in our society.

Contact Dave Clausen at choctawhatcheeaudubon@gmail.com to express your interest and find out how you can get involved. Or visit www.choctawhatcheeaudubon.org, Facebook: Choctawhatchee Audubon.

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Have Interior Design Fun with Postmodern Playfulness

BY STACY SARIKANON,
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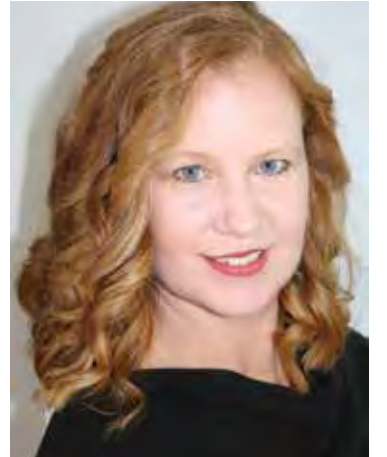
your own individuality, for adding personal creativity, for being a bit rebellious—there’s no style like Postmodernism.

The Museum of Modern

Art (MoMA.org) describes Postmodernism as “a reaction against modernism. It is less a cohesive movement than an approach and attitude toward

art, culture and society. Its main characteristics include anti-authoritarianism, or refusal to recognize the authority of any single style or definition of what art should be, and the collapsing of the distinction between high culture and mass or popular culture, and between art and everyday life. Postmodern art and architecture can be also characterized by a deliberate use of earlier styles and conventions, and an eclectic mixing of different artistic and popular styles and mediums.”

If you are of a certain age, it’s no surprise that Postmodern design philosophy arose in the 1960s, a time when parts of society increasingly challenged authority. Architects, designers and other creative types were bucking rigid modern functionalism in favor of flexible living spaces reflecting owners’ per-



geometric patterns. Accessorize with a combination of high-end art and playful décor items.

The dining room can be ideal for a playful mixing of colors and shapes.

In a kitchen, make your foundation brightly colored cabinets paired with stainless steel appliances. Open shelving will allow



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sonalities. A usual goal of Postmodern interior design is to create a space that is truly unique.

Furnishings used in Postmodernism are limited only by one’s imagination and ability to find the unusual. An interior designer, of course, can help with that. Our access to resources is quite extensive.

This is your opportunity to playfully mix materials, colors, textures and, sometimes, even unconventional art and furniture. Designers love to help clients find that one “statement piece” that really sets a room apart. With Postmodern design, the entire room makes a statement. A bold one.

Such creativity can be applied to any room. In a living room, for example, use a mix of vintage and modern furniture. Add bold, colorful rugs with

you to display an eclectic mix of dishware. Unique backsplashes with bold patterns also can add personality.

In a bedroom, combine classic with contemporary furniture. An unusually shaped headboard with a bold color can make a striking statement. Top it off with layers of bedding in different patterns and textures.

Don’t forget the bathroom. It’s a wonderful space for very bold wallpaper or tiles with geometric or floral patterns. Mingling retro and modern fixtures can be fun, especially with colorful faucets. Clinch the look with quirky accessories like an uncommonly shaped mirror.

If challenging traditional design norms and prioritizing individuality and creativity is you, consider the Postmodern style for your next room makeover.

Technological Advancements and the Future of the Destin Fishing Rodeo

By FRANK BERTE

For the last three-quarters of a century, the Destin Fishing Rodeo has brought people together from all over the Southeastern United States and abroad to celebrate their love for fishing! It lasts for the entire month of October and is arguably the largest fishing contest/festival in the world.

In the early days, starting in 1948, things were simpler. A line, a hook, a boat and some gumption were all you really needed to win the Rodeo. There was no GPS, no depth finder. People couldn't GPS pinpoint their favorite fishing spots with an accuracy of about a foot or two. Things have certainly changed in the last 75 years. And, as a wise man once said, it's just as important to look forward as it is to look back. So, we thought it might be fun to take a look into the future of our favorite fishing fest.

Sports Fishing is quite popular in the U.S. The Equipment Market alone was estimated at



USD 16.82 billion in 2023 and USD 17.84 billion in 2024, and it is on track to grow at about 6.54% to reach USD 26.21 billion by 2030. Our sport is growing every day. A study by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF), found that the number of all anglers, six years and older, has grown and now is on track to exceed 52.4 million, or roughly one in

six Americans! As anglers, we contribute \$148 billion to the economy and support more than 950,000 jobs across the country and, somehow, we still manage to contribute a whopping \$1.8 billion towards fishing conservation.

Moving into the near future, scientists have predicted that, without some serious conservation, we could see the end



of commercial fishing by 2048. The world's fish stocks are being overexploited with populations on the decline, because we're catching fish faster than they can reproduce. Their studies show that if nothing changes, we could run out of seafood for normal consumption by the 100th anniversary of the Destin Fishing Rodeo! We will need to repopulate the oceans, which sounds nearly impossible, or start fishing in a whole new way.

Catch & Release is a common practice of fishing for species that are either limited to a small number per person or have size and weight restrictions. Regardless, the process can be deadly for fish caught in deeper water, because just like divers that come up too quick-

ly and get the bends from expanding oxygen bubbles in their blood, fish, such as grouper, experience something very similar. When released at the surface, it is nearly impossible for them to swim back down to the bottom before they are picked off by sharks or simply die of exhaustion before they make it down to the water pressure to which they are accustomed.

This year we are proud to have Return 'em Right as one of our sponsors. Its core mission is to help anglers return the bottom dwellers to their environment close to the ocean floor. The device is quite effective. Connecting the fish to a weight that quickly returns the fish to the proper depth where it releases them safely. This year Return 'em Right has added a Catch & Release division and are offering its products to all charter boats and private anglers that want to participate in this cutting-edge style of fishing.

Continued on next page

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RODEO FUTURE

continued from previous page

Returning mature fish to their home after catching them is one way to maintain local populations. But the global seafood supply must expand far quicker to meet future demand. Today, aquaculture is the fastest-growing method of food production in the world. For example, in 2020, 87 million tons of fish were produced in these facilities. It's estimated that to meet demand, that number will need to



grow to 155 million by 2050. Expanding aquaculture, managing

wild fisheries and reducing waste will be instrumental in meeting this demand and, in a sense, keeping our sport alive!

All this being said, there are some really exciting new ways to go fishing that give more than just a nod to the future. Here are a few that we feel are leading the charge in technological advancements. First on our list is RealView Fishing. It offers a live video feed of your hook and bait via underwater cameras operating through an electrical fishing line that can transfer high-speed data in real time. It's pretty amazing! It lets anglers see exactly what's on their bait and enables them to make split-second decisions to catch more fish!

Livingston Lures offers a highly advanced lure with an internal circuit board that emits the sound of an injured bait fish that almost instantly gets hit and can be used on a variety of dif-



ferent species in multiple environments. They can bring you right into the underwater world and are available in Orca, Dolphin and, yes, Shark models! They come in one- and two-seat configurations, and certainly give weight to the concept if you can't beat them join them! This vessel puts you literally next to the fish and retails for a mere \$80,000. How you

catch the fish underwater is still in development, but not too far off in the future.

With technology ever advancing, it's possible to envision a future where fleets of seaworthy drones are equipped with underwater cameras, trackers, sensors and a wealth of other data-gathering instrumentation. AI will leverage advances in data analytics to process and analyze more data which means more fish! By 2148, when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Destin Fishing Rodeo, we should be able to catch simmering, seasoned filets right out of the water. But let's face it, why do we fish? We fish to challenge ourselves. Even in 200 years, it will be more about the experience than the technology. Just ask Bruce how he feels about a robotic weighmaster... Happy Rodeo!

The Angler App is super helpful for all levels of fishermen and women. The app offers great tips and historical data to help you stay on top of the fish, as well as the ability to store your coordinates privately and share them with friends when needed. You'll discover new fishing spots and the best times to fish in the location of your choice. Explore GPS fishing maps, mark your spots with waypoints, find the best bait and get insider intel wherever you choose to drop your line!

Another growing angle for shore fishing anglers is local guides who offer fishing with drones. The drones can drop your hook right on top of the fish, taking all the guesswork out of casting. Seabreacher is a company that offers a line of fish-shaped



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Growing the Game: **The 34th Rocky Bayou Junior Classic**



By BARBARA PALMGREN

Golf tournaments continue during the summer in Okaloosa County. Junior golfers age 8-18 participate each year in this

challenging event held at Rocky Bayou Country Club. This year, the tournament was held on July 24-25, 2024. Always warm in July, the golfers were up to the challenge of this two-day event. The age group of Boys 8-9 played nine holes. All others played 18 holes for two days.

Tournament director, Dennis Attaway, was busy with his volunteers to be sure all players started off at the appointed tee times. Here are the first-place winners in each division:

Boys 8-9: Davis Grant won in a playoff over Cason Parish



Boys 12-13: 1st place - Aiden Yang. Aiden also finished with a tie for 6th place at the Optimist



International at Doral last week out of 97 golfers from all over the world.

Girls 12-14: 1st place - Rayna Perkins

Boys 14-15: 1st place - Cooper Robley: Champion and Boys Overall winner

Girls 15-18: 1st place - Ariel Kim: Champion and Girls Overall winner

Boys 16-18: 1st place Colton Yarbrough

Congratulations again to these young golfers who continue to amaze parents and friends as they earn lower scores...yes, if you aren't a golfer, you don't know that a lower score is a better score.

Exciting Diving: Underwater Museum of Art Expands to 47 Sculptures with 6th Deployment

Seven new sculptures were recently added to North America's first permanent Underwater Museum of Art (UMA) in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Grayton Beach State Park in South Walton.

Named by TIME Magazine

as one of 100 "World's Greatest Places" and a 2023 CODAworx Award winner for "Collaboration of the Year," the UMA is the first presentation of the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA)'s Art In Public Spaces Program and is pro-

duced in collaboration with the South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA). The purpose of the UMA is to create art that becomes marine habitat, expanding fishery populations and providing enhanced creative, cultural, economic and

educational opportunities for the benefit, education and enjoyment of residents, students and visitors in South Walton.

The 2024 installation includes the following pieces of sculpture: Reef Goddess By Raine Bedsole (Santa Rosa

Beach), Deep Sea Three by Matthew Gemmell and David Showalter (Baltimore, MD), Sea How We Flow by Elise Gilbert (Santa Rosa Beach), Poseidon's Throne by Nathan Hoffman

Continued on page 30

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BY SCOTT MILLER

I can still remember how the excitement felt every week, every game, every time.

The chills and tingling would come over me as the National Anthem played just before kickoff. Without fail, it was an experience I have always treasured.

Playing football is a very unique, one-of-a-kind thing. Although my playing days are now well in the rearview mirror, the sport we call football is still very special to me. It truly is the ultimate team sport.

The cool thing is just how many passionate, loyal, die-hard football fans there are and, as I've come to learn over these past nine years, especially here in the South. Yes, the game has evolved, the conferences have changed and the college football playoff structure has grown, but the passion is the same.

So, friends, now that September is here, it's time again to put that jersey back on and gather together at our favorite local sports bars and restaurants to celebrate the season—Football Season that is!

Here are a few of my favorite game day venues. I recommend you try them all!

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

Since 1984, AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar has been serving cold Gulf Coast oysters and cool libations. What began as a popular local hang out known for fresh oysters and cold beer has grown into one of the most iconic "hot spots" on the Destin Harbor. From its humble beginning shucking oysters off the deck behind a small trailer on the Destin Harbor, it has grown to four locations along our Emerald Coast, serving fresh seafood, live music and exciting water activities in the Destin area. Attention all die hard football fans, AJ's boasts the one and only Jumbotron on the Des-

tin Harbor. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month. Don't miss any of the action just come on down to AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar all season long...

(850)837-1913
116 Harbor Blvd.
ajsdestin.com



Landshark's Pizza

Hungry? Thirsty? Maybe a little of both? Come in and visit Landshark's Pizza. Owners Brian and Sue Hassmann have created a Niceville locals' favorite pizza, buffalo wings and sports pub and bar that serves can't-beat, handmade-dough pizza and wings with the craziest selection of wing sauces and rubs you'll find—plus many other scrumptious eats for folks of all ages. There's plenty of seating for everyone and TVs galore, plus fun and games all week long. Sports fans from all over come and watch all your favorite teams on countless regional and national sports networks. Now it pays to show up a little early to get your favorite seat and to save a buck on all beer and wine from 3-6 p.m. Tuesday - Friday. Having teamed up with Props Brewery to serve the coldest brews this side of the Bay along with the vast selection of bourbon and craft beer, it's no secret why the locals love Landshark's Pizza Company. Cheers! Order online, too, or DoorDash. Hours: Sunday 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.; Monday Closed; Tuesday - Thursday 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Friday - Saturday 11 a.m. - 10 p.m.

(850) 424-6743
1128 E. John Sims Pkwy.
Niceville
Landsharkspizza.com

The Preserve in Bluewater Bay

Football is back and so is The Preserve clubhouse—a great local place in Bluewater Bay to hang out and watch sports. That's right, your favorite neighborhood hangout is ready for fun, food and football. As one patron put it, "Such a fun local's hangout! The atmosphere is fun, warm and inviting and the bartenders are literally the sweetest. I love that I can get good craft beer and watch my favorite teams on one of their many TVs. They've also got a lot of awesome, rotating food trucks to choose from too! Extremely relaxing and always an enjoyable time." Located in the beautiful neighborhood of Bluewater Bay in Niceville, The Preserve offers good drinks, a rotating array of local food trucks each night they're open or feel free to bring your own food as well! Open Thursday-Friday: 3 - 10 p.m.; Saturday: 11 a.m. - 10 p.m.; Sunday: 11 - 6 p.m.; Closed Tuesday and Wednesday.

850.842.2194
thepreserve850@gmail.com
2000 Bluewater Blvd,
Niceville in Bluewater Bay



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LJ SCHOONERS

Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar

17th Annual Cardboard Boat Race

Sunday, Sept. 8 • 4PM



Entry Fees:
 Adult Division \$25 • Junior Single Division (12 & under) \$25
 Junior Team of 2 \$35 • Business \$25.
 Day of race entry fees will be Single \$35/Team \$45.
 Course to be run in front of LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar.
Boats are intended to be biodegradable. Clean up: simple, if you brought it you clean it up.
 (Includes hauling away your boat.)
 MORE INFORMATION: (850) 897-2821 or bluewaterbaymarina.com

Oyster Bar Hours: Monday-Thursday 3pm-10pm • Friday-Saturday 11am to midnight • Sunday 9am to 9pm
 Restaurant Hours: Monday-Tuesday Closed • Wednesday-Saturday 11am to 9pm • Sunday 9am to 9pm • Sunday Brunch 9am to 1pm

Events and Live Entertainment:

- Sept. 1 - Mitch Cantrell 4-8pm
- Sept. 2 - Nathan & Brooke 4-8pm
- Sept. 7 - Jody Lucas 6-9pm
- Sept. 8 - Cardboard Boat Race, Niceville Valparaiso Rotary Club DUCK RACE
- Sept. 10 - Chess Night 6pm
- Sept. 14 - Spear Fish Dive Tournament
- Sept. 20 - The Aces Band 6-10pm
- Sept. 27 - Parker & Ivoree Willingham 6-10pm
- Sept. 29 - Sunset Shrimp Boil 4-7pm.
Jody Lucas 4-7pm

SEC Football Schedule

SEC	Aug 31	Sept 7	Sept 14	Sept 21	Sept 28	Oct 5	Oct 12	Oct 19	Oct 26	Nov 2	Nov 9	Nov 16	Nov 23	Nov 30
Alabama	W. Kent	S. FLA	@WISC	OPEN	UGA	@VANDY	S. CAR	@TENN	MIZZ	OPEN	@LSU	MERCER	@OU	AUB
Arkansas	PI BLUFF (29)	@OKLA ST	UAB	@AUB	TEX A&M	TENN	OPEN	LSU	MISS ST	OLE MISS	OPEN	TEXAS	LA TECH	@MIZZ
Auburn	ALA A&M	CALIF	N. MEX	ARK	OU	@UGA	OPEN	@MIZZ	@KEN	VANDY	OPEN	UL MONROE	TEX A&M	@BAMA
Florida	MIAMI	SAMFORD	TEX A&M	@MISS ST	OPEN	UCF	@TENN	UK	OPEN	UGA	@TEXAS	LSU	OLE MISS	@FL ST
Georgia	CLEMSON	TENN TECH	@UK	OPEN	@BAMA	AUB	MISS ST	@TEXAS	OPEN	FLA	@OLE MISS	TENN	U MASS	GA TECH
Kentucky	SO MISS	S CAR	UGA	OH	@OLE MISS	OPEN	VANDY	@FLA	AUB	@TENN	OPEN	MURRAY ST	@TEXAS	LOUISVILLE
LSU	USC	NICHOLLS	@S. CAR	UCLA	S. ALA	OPEN	OLE MISS	@ARK	@A&M	OPEN	BAMA	@FLA	VANDY	OU
MSU	E. KEN	@ARIZ ST	TOLEDO	FLA	@TEXAS	OPEN	@UGA	A&M	ARK	U MASS	@TENN	OPEN	MIZZOU	@OLE MISS
Missouri	MURR ST (29)	BUFFALO	BC	VANDY	OPEN	@A&M	@U MASS	AUB	@BAMA	OPEN	OU	@S. CAR	@MISS ST	ARK
Oklahoma	TEMPLE	HOUSTON	TULANE	TENN	@AUB	OPEN	TEXAS	S. CAR	@OLE MISS	MAINE	@MIZZOU	OPEN	BAMA	@LSU
Ole Miss	FURMAN	MTSU	WAKE FOR	GA. SOU	UK	@S. CAR	@LSU	OPEN	OU	@ARK	UGA	OPEN	@FLA	MISS ST
SC	OLD DOM	@UK	LSU	AKRON	OPEN	OLE MISS	@BAMA	@OU	OPEN	A&M	@VANDY	MIZZOU	WOFFORD	@CLEMSON
Tenn	CHATTA	NC ST	KENT ST	@OU	OPEN	@ARK	FLA	BAMA	OPEN	UK	MISS ST	@UGA	UTEP	@VANDY
Tex A&M	ND	McNEESE	@FLA	BOWLING GR	ARK	MIZZOU	OPEN	@MISS ST	LSU	@S. CAR	OPEN	N MEX ST	@AUB	TEXAS
Texas	COLO	@MICH	UTSA	UL MONROE	MISS ST	OPEN	OU	UGA	@VANDY	OPEN	FLA	@ARK	UK	@A&M
VANDY	VA TECH	ALCORN ST	@GA ST	@ MIZZOU	OPEN	BAMA	@UK	BALL ST	TEXAS	@AUB	S. CAR	OPEN	@LSU	TENN

High School Football Schedules

All upcoming games at 7 p.m. except where designated.

Niceville (District 1-5A)
 Head coach: Grant Thompson
 8/23 - South Sumter (Bushnell)
 8/30 - Escambia (Pensacola)
 9/6 - Pine Forest (Pensacola)
 9/13 - at Crestview
 9/20 - at Choctawhatchee (Fort Walton Beach)
 9/27 - Gulf Breeze*
 10/4 - BYE WEEK
 10/11 - at Mosley (Lynn Haven)* at Tommy Oliver
 10/18 - Lincoln (Tallahassee)
 10/25 - at Milton,* 7:30 CT
 11/1 - at Navarre, 7:30 CT
 *District games

Freeport (District 1-2A)
 Head coach: Shaun Arntz
 8/23 - at North Bay Haven
 8/30 - at Jay
 9/6 - Northview
 9/13 - at Cottondale
 9/20 - Vernon
 9/27 - at Pensacola Catholic*, 7:30 p.m.
 10/11 - South Walton*
 10/18 - Baker
 10/25 - at Walton*
 11/1 - Liberty County
 *District games

Rocky Bayou Christian School
 North Florida District
 Head coach: KC Woods
 8/23 - at Snook Christian Academy
 9/7 - Jefferson County, 6 p.m.
 9/20 - Franklin County
 9/28 - Central 6 p.m.
 10/11 - SCCA
 10/18 - at Joshua Christian Academy

Week 1: Aug 30, 31, Sept. 1
 Oklahoma vs Temple Fri. 8/30 6pm ESPN
 Georgia vs Clemson Sat. 8/31 11am ABC
 FL vs Miami Sat. 8/31 2:30pm ABC
 W. Virginia vs Penn St. Sat. 8/31 11am FOX
 Alabama vs W Kentucky Sat. 8/31 6:30pm ESPN+
 Texas A&M vs ND Sat. 8/31 6:30pm ABC
 LSU vs USC Sun. 9/1 6:30pm ABC

Week 2: September 7
 Michigan vs Texas 11am FOX
 Okla. St vs Arkansas 11am ABC
 Kentucky vs S. Carolina 2:30pm ABC
 Auburn vs California 2:30pm ESPN2
 Alabama vs USF 6pm ESPN
 NC St. vs Tennessee 6:30pm ABC
 Oklahoma vs Houston 6:45pm SECN

Week 3: September 14
 South Carolina vs LSU 11am ABC
 Wisconsin vs Alabama 11am FOX

2024 College Football Game Day Highlights

Florida vs Texas A&M 2:30pm ABC
 Wake Forest vs Ole Miss 5:30pm CW
 Kentucky vs Georgia 6:30pm ABC
 Auburn vs New Mexico 6:30pm TBA
 Miss. St. vs Toledo 6:30pm TBA

Week 4: September 21
 Miss. St. vs Florida 11am TBA
 Auburn vs Arkansas TBA
 LSU vs UCLA TBA
 Oklahoma vs Tennessee TBA

Texas A&M vs Bowling Green TBA
 Ole Miss vs Ga. Southern TBA
 Michigan vs USC 2:30pm CBS

Week 5: September 28
 Ole Miss vs Kentucky TBA
 Auburn vs Oklahoma TBA
 Texas vs Miss. St. TBA
 Penn St. vs Illinois TBA
 Clemson vs Stanford TBA
 Alabama vs Georgia 6:30pm ABC

Michigan St. vs Ohio St. TBA
 Week 6: October 5
 Penn St. vs UCLA TBA
 Florida St. vs Clemson TBA
 Georgia vs Auburn TBA
 Ohio St. vs Iowa TBA
 Arkansas vs Tennessee TBA
 Vanderbilt vs Alabama TBA
 Washington vs Michigan TBA

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

Locally owned and operated since inception in 1982, Fud-

pucker's restaurant stands out by being dedicated to its owners' three favorite "F" words: Food, Fun and Family. Featuring live alligators, family entertainment and teen nights, Fudpucker's is the only place in Destin where you can see, feed and even get your picture taken with a live alligator, shop for "World Famous" t-shirts, write your names on the walls, play arcade games and enjoy quality casual food in an upbeat and family friendly atmosphere. There's even a special kids' menu and a playground with lots of space to play. Stop by Fudpucker's Destin for a relaxing meal, a cold drink and a friendly locals' smile. Fudpucker's is not just a restaurant, it's not just a bar, and it's certainly not just a "tourist" place - it's a one-of-a-kind entertainment experience, and one that can be enjoyed by kids and families of all ages. Special: World Famous Fudpucker Punch - \$8 'til 4 p.m. every day: Father Fud's special cure-all elixir and legendary medicinal concoction made with a combination of orange and pineapple juices, four types of rum and a splash of Grenadine - \$8 'til 4 p.m. every day.

(850) 654-4200
20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy.

Destin
fudpucker.com

JoJo's Coffee and Goodness

An iconic favorite of locals, owner and operator of JoJo's Coffee and Goodness Angela "JoJo" Stevenson invites you to enter her cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere for a daily dose of "goodness." Stop in for mouth-watering cinnamon rolls; scones: cranberry orange, chocolate caramel and cheddar thyme; strawberry coffee cake; cranberry orange muffins; red velvet cookies; brownies with espresso ganache or caramelitas. Try a breakfast special with a piece of quiche or kolache-hash-brown 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 kolaches still hold the top spot for sell outs. Stop in for featured muffins, coffee cake or pound cake, which go great with



maple cinnamon latte or caramel macchiato. And, oh, the freshly roasted coffee. Get what you're craving! Order ahead and pick up some for tailgating to start the football season off right!

Hours 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

(850) 737-6194
4652 Hwy. 20 East, Niceville
bigorangehousedesigns.com

LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant

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

Sept 8: 17th Annual Cardboard Boat Race-Niceville/Val'p Rotary! **Sept. 14:** Spear Fish Dive Tournament. **Sept. 29:** Sunset Shrimp Boil 4-7 p.m.

Sundays: Brunch 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. buffet style, bottomless Mimosas!

Tuesdays: Taco Tuesday 4-8 p.m. buffet style, bottomless Mimosas!

Wednesdays: Fun Races 6 p.m.; Kids 10 and under eat free 5-9 p.m.!

Thursdays: Throwdowns 6-10 p.m.

Fridays: Steak Night 5-9 p.m.

See ad for live entertainment each weekend. Dine-in, pick-up, to-go.

Oyster bar hours: Mon-Thurs 3-10 p.m.; Fri-Sat 11 a.m.-midnight; Sun 9 a.m.-9 p.m.

Restaurant hours: Mon-Tues closed. Wed-Sat, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sun, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

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290 Yacht Club Dr., Unit 200,
Niceville in Bluewater Bay

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bigorangehousedesigns.com

The 46th Annual Destin Seafood Festival!

BY CALI HLAVAC

One of the locals' favorite times of year is the Destin Seafood Festival, back for its 46th year! So popular is this exciting, delicious, delectable event that more than 60,000 locals and visitors are expected to walk through. The entire Destin Seafood Festival is a one-mile stretch, beginning at Harborwalk Village and stretching all the way to Heron Harbor with stages on each end. The 2023 Festival included more than 110 food and craft vendors, in addition to local restaurants.

Happening Friday through Sunday, September 27-29, the Festival kicks off October's month-long Destin Fishing Rodeo. As always, it is absolutely amazing to attend and you'll get the opportunity to take in some of the best local and coastal musicians at the beach with five stages beckoning you to a variety of live rock, reggae, country, tropical tunes and more. Local Destin restaurants and eateries will serve up their scrumptious seafood specialties on the docks and along the new, pedestri-

an-friendly Harbor Boardwalk. Cold drinks, including beer and wine, are available and will keep you cooled off while you take it all in. You can stroll along the Destin Harbor enjoying the arts and crafts where artists and vendors display their jewelry, clothing, sculpture, glass, watercolors, oil paintings, designs and more. And don't forget your seafood festival T-shirt!

Enjoy the festival that has always been free – or buy a VIP ticket and enjoy the VIP area! Destin Seafood Festival organizers have created a local seafood experience that brings back the flare of local seafood to our Destin Seafood Festival. Located inside the larger festival, the VIP area will require a paid ticket to browse the local restaurant and chef tents, sample their food flavors and vote for your favorites. For more information on participating as a chef or being a sponsor for this great event, visit www.destinseafoodfestival.com.

All the food and fun began in 1978 when the Destin Charter Boat Ladies Auxiliary decided to establish a festival



SAVVY LEIGH PHOTO

to celebrate local fishermen. Now a Destin tradition, it used to be only a one-day festival on "Kelly's Hill," where folks could overlook the Destin Harbor, the current site of HarborWalk Village. It has always been held in conjunction with the Destin Fishing Rodeo during October. Proceeds from the festival are donated back to the community, including the Destin Charter Boat Association who works to maintain the fishery our community was built on; the Miss Destin scholarships; Destin Fisherman's Fund to help those in need and more! The festival is hosted by area businesses in

conjunction with sponsors and countless volunteers.

This year's musical entertainment, with five different stages, will feature local bands playing throughout the festival. Harbor restaurants and bars will offer a full lineup of local favorites as well, performing throughout the day and evening. You can bring a chair and chill or don your dancing shoes! Bands and schedule TBA. Visit DestinSeafoodFestival.com.

This year the Kids Zone has expanded with multiple games for all ages. Sponsored by Fudpucker's, the Kids Zone will include painting oyster shells, sand

art, play area and more. The HarborWalk Kids Fun Zone has Hamster balls, a rock-climbing wall and a zip line. There is a seating tent nearby also. Kids will delight in face-painting and tattoos as well.

Parking will be available at Heron Harbor, the HarborWalk Village, the Marler public parking lots, the Destin Community Center and the Destin Fishing Museum. Shuttles will also be provided from the Morgan Sports Complex to the Harbor, free of charge.

Admission is totally free or you can go as a VIP with passes that include complimentary unlimited food with a variety of seafood, gumbos and catered treats and more. VIP Tickets also include private bathrooms, cash bar, additional vendors, TVs, live music and more. To purchase a VIP pass, visit the official Destin Seafood Festival website.

For a site map, to become a vendor and other information, visit DestinSeafoodFestival.com. Email info@destinseafoodfest.com.

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Local restaurants competing for the top spot in a variety of food categories

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www.destinseafoodfest.com



Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Family Birth Place Recognized Nationally

For the fourth year in a row, Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast is on Newsweek's list of America's Best Maternity Care Hospitals at the highest five ribbon level.



The Best Maternity Care distinction recognizes facilities that have provided exceptional care to mothers, newborns, and their families based on three data sources. These include nationwide online surveys of hospital managers and maternity health-care professionals, medical key

performance indicators relevant to maternity care and patient satisfaction data.

"Being recognized nationally year after year is a testament to the continued commitment of

our physicians, care teams and leadership to provide the highest quality of care to all mothers, babies, and families we serve," said Erica Bottom, MSN, RN-C, OB, Family Birth Place Manager.

Sacred Heart's facilities in Pensacola and Miramar Beach have also recently taken part in the state's first postpartum wristband initiative. The new program involves giving a silver rubber wristband to mothers to voluntarily wear for up to a year postpartum. This has helped pri-

oritize them as patients and spotlight their medical history when they seek care through EMS, ERs or other medical sites.

In addition, the hospital recently renewed its Baby-Friendly designation, recognizing its commitment to the highest level of breastfeeding support and education. It is the only hospital in the area to hold this accreditation. Sacred Heart health system was also recently named one of the top 15 health systems in the country for 2024 by Fortune and

PINC AI.

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Family Birth Place is the home to the only neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) serving families from Walton and Okaloosa counties close to home. We have a neonatal specialist available 24/7 for neonates needing routine and specialty care.

The full list of recipients is available at <https://www.newsweek.com/rankings/americas-best-maternity-hospitals-2024>.

Walton County Health Department New Physician Residency Program

In conjunction with the Walton County Health Department/Walton Community Health Center and the University of Florida, Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Hospital in South Walton has launched a new physician resi-

dency program.

The new program is headquartered at the Walton County Health Department (WCHD) in Santa Rosa Beach and has been open since July 1. Administrator Holly Holt said, "We're developing residents that we hope

want to stay in our community. We found out years ago when we were doing our community needs assessment that there's a real need in our area for more clinician providers."

Holt said the federally-qualified health center is the first in

the state to launch this kind of residency program and she believes it will have a real impact when it comes to advancing health care in Walton County and Northwest Florida. "The aim is to meet the community's needs while also getting doctors to stay in this area," she added.



Holly Holt, Director, WCHD

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Success for My New Semester in Life



By DR. JESSICA MONTELEONE, PT MS PhD

There were five of us kids. My dad was a well-respected school teacher who educated children attending middle school in a small town in New England. My momma taught sewing class at night school for adults. We didn't have a lot of money to spend on school clothes and school supplies, but my parents invested in our success in many ways.

1. We never got hand-me-down shoes. Used shoes have wear patterns from how the previous owner's foot hits the ground. Some folks are knock

kneed, some have bowed legs, some have high arches and some flat feet. Some toe in and some toe out. The shoes tell the story. Shoes need to fit well. Heels should not slip out when you lift up your feet. There should be a thumb-nail length of clearance between the big toe and the end of the shoe. Shoes should feel comfortable and supportive throughout the day.

2. Our clothes were not always the best in fashion, but they covered what needed to be covered and didn't give attention to parts of our bodies that didn't need it.

3. As an expert seamstress, Momma knew that clothes need to fit. If they are too tight, they can hurt our bodies, cut off circulation, and cause distraction from what we are doing. Bra straps should be wide to disperse pressure, pants should be comfortable in standing and in sitting.

4. After school, we were not allowed to play outside until our homework was done. We always studied in the same spot every day. The consistency helps us



to perform that task better and to learn a good work ethic that carried us through success in our jobs as adults.

5. We all helped with meal preparation, cooking, setting the table and cleaning up. We sat down as a family to eat our meals together. Once in a while, there would be discord, but for the most part, we shared our day to listening ears of those

who really wanted to hear about it.

6. We were commended for good behavior and good grades. Kids need to hear how they have been successful. They are all different. Thank God. Find ways to encourage good behavior. If you are having a bad day, get over it before spending time with your kids.

7. Groceries are expensive

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even back then. Oatmeal is good food. Eggs are a perfect protein. Fresh fruit and veggies offer great nutrients as well. Getting back to basics can be more nutritive and less expensive.

8. Remember that saying "yes" to something new means saying "no" to something else. My parents always attended our events. We need to choose wisely. We cannot do it all.

Transitions can be difficult. A new school, a new teacher, the cry for belongingness. Let's get back to basics to create success through structure, positive affirmations and working together as a family. Let's do it for the health of our family and ourselves.

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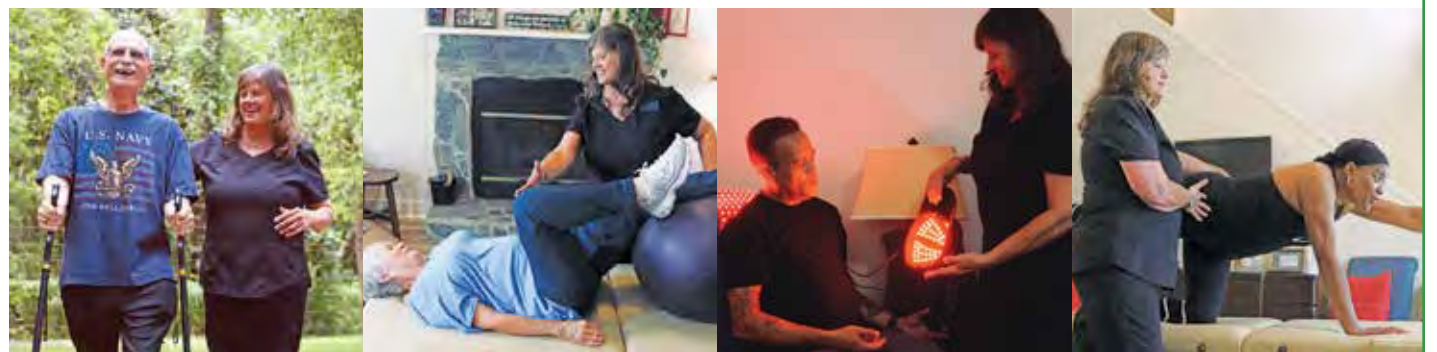
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 Wellness

Don't Rush It



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

I found myself standing in the kitchen littered with craft buckets, rocks, pillows, stress balls, chore charts, money charts, an emotions poster, and a desperate grasp for control and change. More than one of the kids were in developmental seasons of big feelings with big behavior and I was attempting to implement “parental support” to feel in control of others’ behavior that was clearly beyond my control. I decided to create a positive reinforcement system, a calming closet, chore structure, and a

money education plan all at the same time to “support the kids.” Seems pretty realistic to change all of those at once, doesn’t it?!

When life feels out of control and change is needed, you may feel tempted to rush it, throwing various change strategies into practice simultaneously. Maybe you’ve started multiple strategies to address health, weight goals, relationships, professional challenges, parenting, or something else. In the midst of stress, rushing change can become a way of avoiding the uncomfortable reality that sustainable change takes time, learning, and energy in a new direction over months to produce deep and lasting results. Sometimes small change can be sustained in short time periods, however, most change takes months and years to bear noticeable fruit in life.

Once you let go of trying to implement many change strat-

egies to get a quick result, you are able to better identify and implement the area and strategy of change that will address the root of the struggle. You can always try additional strategies once your primary change effort begins to flourish.

So, how are you supposed to approach sustainable, steady change?

7 Ways to Create Sustainable Change Without Rushing It

1. Notice stress as a sign for inward reflection. Notice when you are feeling discomfort in your chest, stomach, head, muscles. Notice irritability, low motivation, anxious thoughts/behavior. Notice numbing behaviors like drinking, smoking/vaping, drug use, shopping, gambling, spending, phone scrolling, or other things you do to avoid uncomfortable feelings.

2. Openly acknowledge your stress. Tell yourself it’s normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes. Remind yourself stress often points to an area of needed change.

3. Engage healthy calming to get out of fight/flight/freeze responses. Take 2 minutes to deep breathe, go for a walk, talk to a trusted friend, pray, journal, use your

creativity. Use healthy coping (not numbing) to help regulate your immediate stress level so you can use rational thinking skills again (rational thinking goes offline when we get emotionally overwhelmed).

4. Once calm, identify the problem. Name the problem and allow yourself to think and talk about the issue as needed. “My kids are having lots of tantrums and that makes me feel like a bad parent. I’m trying to control their behavior because of my discomfort and my fear they will become bad people. I need to figure out what I can reasonably change and what I need to accept as the reality of parenting kids through hard stages.”

5. Sort what you can and can’t control. Controlling others’ behavior is impossible and the only person you can control is yourself. “I can’t control my kids crying or melting down. I can be in charge of my emotional health, my patience, my approach to connection and correction, and providing them with opportunities for healthy sleep and nutrition.”

6. Choose one area of change to begin addressing what you can control. “When

my kids start melting down, I’m going to use deep breathing and remember my job is to guide them through the emotions their developing brains can’t yet handle well. I’m going to keep a steady voice, calm body and I’m going to validate their emotions and offer two calming skills they can relate to.”

7. Stick with the one area of change until it feels natural. Avoid changing other things while you are focused on your one area of change. It can take 3-6 weeks or longer for a new behavior to feel routine. Adding too many changes at once will make sustaining long-term change difficult. Once you have your first change area incorporated, try adding another area of change in the same manner.

Be patient and kind as you work toward change. Our brains are wired to be moldable and change takes time and consistent practice. Keep going, celebrating your successes and being gracious in your failures. Not rushing change produces noticeable, significant life transformation. If you need support along your journey of change, connect with us for counseling and coaching at Journeybravely.com.



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How Much Activity is Enough?



BY KASSIA GARFIELD

How Much Activity is Enough?

A lot of people ask me how much activity they should be doing to stay healthy. People still need to be generally active in their day, and then ALSO add in a higher intensity workout. The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week or 75 minutes a week of vigorous intensity exercise. Benefits continue to increase up to 300 minutes a week of exercise. This is just 30 minutes, five days a week or 60 minutes five days week. At 30 minutes a day, that is only 8% of your waking hours. This seems like a reasonable amount of

activity to reduce the risks of heart attack, stroke and decline in cognitive function. At age 60, the recommendations for time do not change, but the ADDITION of strength and balance training are now vital to maintain current function, reduce fall risk and prevent the natural loss of muscle mass, called sarcopenia, that begins in your 40s.

How to Decide Which Activity?

A good way to identify the proper intensity, is to look at heart rate. Someone's maximum heart rate is calculated by: 220 - age. For a 75-year-old, their max heart rate will be 145. We use that heart rate and find

a percentage that fits 'moderate intensity.' Moderate intensity is considered 50-70% of your max heart rate. So, for our 75-year-old, a heart rate of 72-101 BPM is the target. For an 18-year-old, the target heart rate would be 101-141. A huge difference. Our exercise of choice will vary based on our age. For a younger adult, a run or light jog might bring up the heart rate to the goal level, but for the 75-year-old man, a brisk walk will hit the

same target. Strength training can profoundly increase your heart rate and helps increase your cardiovascular efficiency without having to run or jog which puts 7-8 x the amount of stress on your joints compared to walking.

How to get started?

If starting from no activity, begin with 15-minute walks, 4 days a week to start building up stamina. Light, free-weight,

strength-training routines can also increase the heart rate in controlled bursts. This allows the body to start to acclimate to an increase in activity. Finding a buddy or accountability partner can help and is a good way to be successful. Set small goals during this process to encourage the change in behavior. You got this!

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Wellness

The Dirty Dozen



BY KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

It sounds like a western. However, these don't carry guns, ride horses or fight outlaws. These dirty dozen do, however, have an effect on our health.

Every year, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) releases its Dirty Dozen and Clean 15 list. This list is based on thorough testing of many fruits and

vegetables. For 2024, here are a few results from EWG (ewg.org).

More than 90% of samples of strawberries, apples, cherries, spinach, nectarines and grapes tested positive for residues of two or more pesticides. A total of 209 pesticides were found. There are 13-23 pesticides in at least one sample of each item tested.

More than 50 different pesticides were detected on every type of crop on the list except cherries (part of the dirty dozen).

Some of these pesticides and chemicals can be linked to cancer, reproductive damage and are also banned in Europe and the European Union.

In order of toxicity the Dirty Dozen items are:
Strawberries



- Spinach
- Kale, collard and mustard greens
- Grapes
- Peaches
- Pears
- Nectarines
- Apples
- Bell and Hot peppers
- Cherries
- Blueberries
- Green Beans (tested positive for a pesticide the EPA banned over 10 years ago)

- Mangoes
- Mushrooms
- Watermelon
- Cabbage
- Kiwi
- Honeydew melon
- Asparagus
- Sweet peas (frozen)
- Papaya (Can be produced from genetically modified seeds)
- Onions
- Pineapple
- Sweet Corn (Can be produced from genetically modified seeds)
- Avocados

tives like blackberries, oranges, bananas, etc. It doesn't mean these are totally clean, but their testing results places them in between the dirty and the clean.

The small label on produce tells us how it was grown. A 4-digit code beginning with a 3 or 4 is conventionally grown. The 5-digit code starting with 9 is organic and the 5 digit code starting with 8 is genetically modified.

There is also a new label showing up on fruits and vegetables: Apeel touts itself as natural and safe; a plant-derived food additive. It creates a thin layer or skin on the vegetable and cannot be washed off. The description is a food additive, mono and diglycerides, by-products of fat and oil processing, classified as 'emulsifiers' and contain trans fats.

If you'd like to take a deep dive, nutritionwithjudy.com/meet-apeel is a good place to start.

As we start making changes, buying more organic of certain items, the stores will take notice and offer more organic options. I understand, especially in today's world, paying more for organic can be a hard choice. Focus on the clean 15 and substitutions. It's about starting new habits and making wise choices.

Here's to Health!

*HealthyDay Healthy Life
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The Clean 15 have the lowest counts of these residues:

- Carrots
- Sweet Potatoes

With the dirty dozen, buying organic should be our first choice. We can also find alterna-

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What You Need to Know about Medicare's Open Enrollment Period and Medicare Advantage Plans

By KELLY STALNAKER

Aside from your initial Medicare enrollment and "special" enrollment for life changing events (moving to a new address, losing your coverage, etc.), you can only make changes to your Medicare plan during the Open Enrollment Period. From October 15 through December 7 only, you can join, drop or switch to another Medicare plan. Since this enrollment period only happens once a year, it is very important that you are well educated about the advantages and disadvantages of various Medicare policies.

According to a Kaiser Family Foundation study, seniors are inundated by ads for Medicare Advantage plans, noting that over 9,500 commercials air daily on the television. Additionally, a survey of seniors found that more than 30% report receiving calls daily from representatives selling advantage plans. These aggressive advertising techniques are proving to be successful as over half of seniors are currently enrolled in privatized Medicare plans. But, these flashy ads have been shown to be misleading and do not always tell the whole story.

Journalists at Prospect.org found that many ads are inaccurate, citing "[The ads] neglect to say that the amount of coverage you get is limited. They don't talk about what you are losing by

leaving traditional Medicare." The plans claim to help lower costs, allow for ease of use with just one all-encompassing policy as opposed to several separate plans, and offer additional benefits such as gym memberships. But they fail to mention the restrictions that will undeniably affect your healthcare.

According to Medicare.gov, Medicare Advantage plans have closed-provider networks that often require prior authorizations for various medical procedures. More importantly, patients have less freedom in choosing their own healthcare providers, "In some areas, it can be difficult to find a local doctor or hospital that works with Medicare Advantage. And if you visit a doctor or hospital that isn't "in-network," you will pay higher out-of-pocket costs." Finally, Medicare Advantage plans do not always work as well with supplemental retiree coverage, potentially resulting in higher copay costs for patients.

The misrepresentation of these plans, combined with the excessive barrage of advertising has become such a concern that Washington D.C. is getting involved. Criticizing the widespread and predatory marketing of Medicare Advantage plans, along with the rapidly increasing consumer complaints, many federal agencies are working together to monitor the issues and



develop clear guidelines for ethical advertising practices. For example, in August 2022, the Federal Trade Commission forced one company with a very prom-

inent spokesman to repay \$100 million for fraudulent activities.

We at J&B Medical are so thankful for our Medicare patients, but have unfortunately

been forced to turn away long-time patients who switched to Advantage plans and we are no longer in network. Do not simply take the information provided by an Advantage plan salesperson at face value. Ask a lot of questions before making the switch. Prior to committing to a new plan, it would be beneficial to contact all of your providers to confirm they will continue to be in network. Time spent doing research ahead of a change in your plan may avoid headaches and higher costs in the long run.



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30A License Plates Boost Safety & Beautification Efforts

The local community has rallied behind Scenic Walton's mission to enhance beauty and safety in Walton County with local residents registering for over 3,000 of the newly available charity license plates in advance of their distribution. \$25 from each initial sale and ongoing renewal fee goes directly to nonprofit Scenic Walton.

Leigh Moore, Executive Director of Scenic Walton, emphasized that all funds are dedicated to the pursuit of projects throughout Walton County, not just the beach areas. The organization focuses on improving median landscaping, promoting underground utilities, and expanding infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. These initiatives aim to create a safer and more attractive



environment for residents and visitors alike.

"Not everyone that signed up for a plate during the pre-sale period has picked up their plate yet. We want to make sure they know they are ready! If they

signed up for a pre-sale voucher, there is no physical voucher. All they have to do is go to any Florida Tax Collector's Office and let them know they signed up. They will look them up in their system and give them their plate," says Moore.

The plate is available throughout the state of Florida. You can get yours at any tax collector office or online. "It's an easy way to support our countywide mission," says Moore. Each specialty license plate initially costs \$66.90 at a tax

collector's office and \$72.35 online (including a \$5.45 shipping fee) the first year, with an annual renewal fee of \$30 thereafter.

The Walton County Tax Collector's offices have the plates in stock. Citizens with a car, RV,

trailer, or golf cart/LSV registered in Florida can pick up their plate in person there or order online. To learn how to order your plate online, visit Scenic Walton's website at scenic.org/walton-plate.

EXCITING DIVING

continued from page 19

(Highlandville, MO), Bubby Barnacles by Donna Conklin King (East Orange, NJ), Sunken Spores by Ashley Rivers (Gulfport, FL), and Ring My Bell by Bradley Touchstone (Santa Rosa Beach).

Access the Underwater Museum of Art (UMA) via Grayton Beach State Park which offers parking, showers, restrooms, changing rooms and a beach walkover. Once you arrive at the park, the UMA site lies in approximately 58 feet of water and is at a distance of less than one mile from shore, accessible by boat or kayak.

Experience the UMA site

at-depth if you are a certified diver who is comfortable swimming in open water. The coordinates for the Super Reef Anchor Point are N 30°18.754 / W 86°09.521. Out of respect for the art, boaters are asked to anchor on or near the Super Reef Anchor Point to protect the sculptures from unintended contact or damage.

Dive30A in Grayton Beach is able to shuttle divers directly from Grayton Beach to the UMA site! Emerald Coast Scuba in Destin schedules regular trips to the site also.

We'd love to see any images you capture while diving! Tag your photos with #UMAFL or @UMAFFlorida on Facebook and Instagram.



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The longest running Home and Boat Show in Northwest Florida, the Emerald Coast Home and Boat Show, will be celebrating its 25th Annual Silver Anniversary event at the Destin-FWB Convention Center on Saturday and Sunday, September 21 and 22, 2024. This event offers FREE ADMISSION to the public and will have 110 vendor booths with vendors offering super discounted Home Show specials and giving away over \$20,000 in swag and door prizes. Also, Captain's Choice Boats and Emerald Coast Marine will be having a spectacular boat show and sale with awesome end-of-the-year DISCOUNTED BOAT SHOW SPECIALS. And, The Big Red Bus from One Blood will be onsite to take your blood donations. Plus, there will be an onsite Dog and Cat Rescue and Adoption area.

some special surprise celebrity guests who will be there to meet and greet the public. This event will feature Home Show and general businesses offering information and discounts on Insurance, Roofing, AC, Plumbing, Mortgages, Homes, Interior Designs, Flooring, Pools and Spas, Shutters, Leaf Guards, Furniture, Generators, Vacations, Siding, Heating and AC, Restorations and Remodeling, Electric Bikes, Water, Closets, Bath Remodeling, Painting, Windows and Doors, Computers, Cell Phones, Solar, Lumber and Boat Lifts, Fencing and much more. Plus, we will have health care and general business vendors from Scentsy, Chiropractic, Hearing, Massage Therapy and other Health Fields. And Kitchencraft will have a live cooking show. More info at www.ParadisePromotionsFL.com

Don't be surprised to see



BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

We are into an election year, the markets have made some extraordinary moves and we thought it was a good time to catch our breath and reflect on a few things. Davis Parrish, one of our advisors (in the Atlanta area) compiled some research (from Raymond James) for us and we wanted to share it with you here for your mid-year reading.

The Stock Markets:

As of June 21, the S&P 500 had surpassed its own record 31 times since the beginning of January. That equates to an all-time high every four trading days. This year marks the first election year since 1892 when both major party nominees have occupied the White House. Gains for the market have historically been higher when an incumbent president is running for reelection. The volatility index or “VIX,” as of June 28 was 12.36, which was down almost 8% for the year. The worker participation rate is now at 62.4%. That is the percentage of people 16 years old and older that are working or seeking work. That puts it just about at its average for the past 75 years. Unemployment approximates 4% of the workforce. Its highest rate was almost 11% back in 1982 and its lowest rate approximated 2.5% in 1953.

We have a few observations for our readers.

First is U.S. debt. Higher debt leads to higher debt service which could mean either higher taxes or less capital available for investment and growth and ultimately lowering living standards for Americans. Raymond James published an article in the first quarter of this year addressing U.S. debt. Let us know if you would like a copy.

Second, we encourage read-

ers to research what the U.S. net worth is as well as the U.S. household net worth. That makes things a bit more encouraging since you might find that as debt has risen, so has wealth. And wealth is several times greater than the debt. There are a variety of sources online that address that. We are encouraged when we see U.S. worth at several times GDP and several times debt. The same for U.S. household net worth. Again, we remind readers that higher debt always leads to higher debt service and that is important to economic growth.

Third would be potential solutions for entitlements – mainly Social Security and Medicare. The last time that Congress took substantial action was in 1983 when Congress increased the full retirement age from 65 to 67 (for those born after 1960). That is being looked at again as the last time the FRA was extended, it also provided long-term solvency for several decades after. Other measures being considered are raising the cap of income where the Social Security tax is applied (there is no earnings cap for Medicare taxes). Regardless of how someone sees it, we remained encouraged that the U.S. has found the answer before and will find it again.

Maurice Stouse is a Financial Advisor and the branch manager of The First Wealth Management/ Raymond James. Main office located at The First Bank, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, FL 32451. Phone 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer -tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymond-james.com.

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Insights for Investors: Where Do We Stand at Mid-year?



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Words Matter



BY KIRK MCCARLEY

I came across a video where the speaker was addressing leadership effectiveness among prominent politicians. He was complimentary of one person being bold and decisive in what they stood for contrasting that with another who was less adamant, even “wishy washy.” As I

watched, I found myself less focused on the message and more attuned to how it was presented.

The messenger was passionate about his observations and beliefs, sprinkling in the “F-word,” several times in his short discourse.

Once, during a barnstorming tour to attract new businesses to my geographical region, I was paired with a colleague whose language was so brusque and blustery that I found it wearisome. Attempting first to promote unity and comradery I hesitated before I finally commented upon his ribaldry, remarking that I didn’t feel it met the standards of professionalism we should want to convey. His response to me was disagreement, further believing it would “attract and be relatable to prospects.”

Yelling, swearing and being overbearing were things Tony Dungy avoided during his 13-year NFL head coaching career. He believed there were better and more useful ways to get his message across to the players. Rather than scream, Dungy taught.

Rather than curse, Dungy talked in a calming voice. As opposed to overbearing, Dungy treated his players with respect.

“I think it was an approach that was outside of the box,” former Colts cornerback Marlin Jackson said. “It was different because of how he was able to relate to players. Guys naturally respected him because of the way he conducted himself. You wanted to go out there and play

for him. You felt like you didn’t want to let him down.”

Dungy first learned about being mild-mannered and respectful from his parents. He then realized that philosophy carried over to his job when he played safety for the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1977. Dungy got his first opportunity to carry out that philosophy in 1996 with the Buccaneers. Most players are accustomed to coaches who swear and yell a lot. Dungy told his players from the start that things wouldn’t be that way in Tampa.

“I said, ‘This is the way I’m going to coach and if you need to be yelled and screamed at, I can hire another coach to be the screaming coach. Other than that, I’m just going to tell you what we need to do,’” he said.

Dungy didn’t have any problems winning games that way. He led the Buccaneers and Colts to the playoffs in 11 of his 13 seasons coaching the two teams. The Colts won five division titles, reached the AFC Championship Game twice and won Super Bowl XLI.

In other vocational fields, swearing does not necessarily equate to success. In the rugged world of stand-up comedy, Ellen Degeneres and Jim Gaffigan rarely use profanity of any kind. Jerry Seinfeld described cussing in one’s act as actually being lazy.

Author and consultant Phil Cooke counsels many leaders who falsely believe that carefully directed anger and occasional swearing strengthens their leadership position. Instead, he finds

that:

Real leaders never get to the place where anger or swearing is necessary to maintain their leadership.

The minute you lose control, you’ve just telegraphed to your team that you’ve run out of real answers, and don’t have a clue what to do next.

Cooke goes on to say, “In many ways, swearing in the workplace is like taking risks with social media. For everyone that gets away with it, someone’s career is ruined. I can’t count the number of promising leaders in business and politics who hit the rocks because of a thoughtless email, Twitter post, or other social media blunder. Swearing can backfire just as easily. Consider the impact when it comes to your perception. A moment’s profane vent could completely change your perception in the office or with customers or associates.”

How “clean” is your brand? How positively does it influence others? Are your words and expressions thoughtful, clever, creative, intelligent, upright, moral?

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Kirk McCarley is a Certified Professional Coach as well as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and SHRM-CP Certified. He also is a Production Assistant for both college football and basketball for ESPN and leads group cycling classes as a Certified Spinning instructor. Contact kirk@theseedsovercoach.com, theseedsovercoach.com, or call 314-677-8779.

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Emerald Coast Hospice Joins Alzheimer’s Association Walk to End Alzheimer’s

Emerald Coast Hospice will join the Alzheimer’s Association Central North Florida Chapter as a 2024 Walk to End Alzheimer’s® Local Presenting Sponsor for the Emerald Coast Walks in Okaloosa County and Panama City. The Walk to End Alzheimer’s Emerald Coast will be held on Sunday, Oct. 27 in Okaloosa County and Sunday, Nov. 3, in Panama City.

On Walk day, participants honor those affected by Alzheimer’s with the poignant Promise Garden ceremony — a mission-focused experience that signifies our solidarity in



the fight against the disease. During the ceremony, walkers will carry flowers of various colors, each color representing their personal connection to the disease.

Nearly 7 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s disease in the United States. Addi-

tionally, more than 11 million family members and friends provide care to people living with Alzheimer’s and other dementias. In Florida, there are more than 580,000

people aged 65 and older living with the disease and more than 840,000 caregivers.

To register and receive the latest updates for this year’s Alzheimer’s Association Walk to End Alzheimer’s, visit alz.org/walk.

A Pastor's Ponderings: Reflecting on Labor Day - Work as Worship



BY PASTOR "DOC DOUG" STAUFFER

Labor Day is profoundly significant. It shows honor and respect for workers' contributions across our nation. It is a fitting time to delve into what the Bible teaches about work. From the beginning, work has been a part of God's design for humanity. In Genesis 2:15, we read, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Even in the perfection of Eden, before the Fall, God assigned Adam the responsibility of tending the garden. Work was not a punishment but had a purpose—it served as an opportunity to fulfill God's plan and to glorify Him through diligent labor.

The Apostle Paul provided a powerful directive on HOW we are to approach our work: 'And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men' (Colossians 3:23). This verse reminds us that our work, whatever it may be, is ultimately for the Lord. Whether planting fields,

working for a company, teaching children or guiding a household, we are to perform our tasks with the mindset that we are serving God, not merely human masters. This transformation of our work from mere duty to an act of worship is a profound way to connect with God daily and find joy and fulfillment in our tasks.

Paul also addresses the issue of work and eating: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Here, the apostle emphasizes the importance of work in providing for oneself and others. This principle underscores the value of personal responsibility and the dignity of labor. By working, we provide for our own needs and contribute to the well-being of our families and communities—not for the welfare of those unwilling to work. (That's Socialism.)

Teaching the Next Generation the Value of Work

As we reflect on these biblical principles, we must consider how we pass them on to the next generation. In years past, children often took on responsibilities like paper routes, bagging groceries or mowing lawns—tasks that taught them the value of work and the connection between effort and reward. Today, however, far too many parents seem hesitant to engage their children in work that requires a solid work

ethic. Instead, screens—televi- sions, phones, or tablets—have become the babysitters of our time.

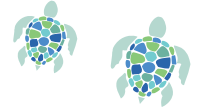
If we want to raise a generation that understands the dignity and necessity of labor, we must be intentional about teaching them from an early age. Encouraging children to take on responsibilities, complete chores and even earn their own money through simple jobs can instill in them a sense of accomplishment and a recognition of the rewards that come from hard work. Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Labor Day serves as a reminder to appreciate the work we do and the work of others. It is a time to reflect on the blessings that come from honest labor and to remember that every job, no matter how big or small, has value in the eyes of God. In a world that often measures worth by titles, salaries or social status, the Bible offers a distinct perspective: Our worth is found in our faithfulness to God's calling, and our work is an opportunity to reflect His character.

We celebrate Labor Day each year, so let us take the opportuni-

ty to renew our commitment to approach our work with a heart of worship. Let us remember that our ultimate boss is the Lord, and let that knowledge infuse our daily tasks with purpose and joy. Whether in the field, the office, the home or the church, may we work heartily, knowing that we are serving the Lord Jesus Christ in all we do.

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.





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Musing

Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Sunrise on Lake Martin. I'm usually the first one awake. I rarely have any company in the mornings. I wake up with the chickens. Most mornings, I sit on my porch alone. Just me and the feral cats.

This morning, however, I had company.

I heard small feet walking onto the screened porch, overlooking the lake. I turned to see a child with messy hair, staggering toward me. A 12-year-old girl in pajamas.

She used her hands to feel her way through the maze of patio furniture. She walks like this, feeling her way around, even when it's daylight.

My goddaughter sat beside me on the sofa. She sort of crawled into my lap, head resting against my chest.

"Morning," she said with a yawn. Her breath smelled like a billy goat's lower intestinal tract.



"Good morning, Dragon Breath," I said.

She cupped her hand to her mouth and attempted to smell her own breath. Birds fell out of the trees.

I picked crust from her eyes. "You're killing me," I said.

"What do you see?" she asked. "Sunrise," I replied.

"Can you describe what it looks like?" She curled against me snugly.

I looked at the pink sky of morning. Daylight had taken hold of the world.

"You've seen one sunrise you've seen them all," I said.

"Wish I could see it."

I squeezed her. "I have an idea. How about you tell me what the sunrise sounds like."

She yawned. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, I want you to tell me how a blind person experiences a sunrise."

Becca curled tighter against me. "You really want to know?"

"I do."

"Well, you have to close your eyes."

I did.

"No cheating," she said.

"Scouts' honor."

"First," she said, "I hear birds. But, I feel like when sighted people hear birds, they don't think about all the DIFFERENT birds they're actually hearing. They just hear one sound, birds. But if you listen you can hear millions of sounds."

I listened. We counted 28 different bird calls.

"What else do you hear?" My eyes were still closed.

"I hear screechy things," she said. "Crickets, maybe. Some high-pitched, some low, some go real fast, some go slow. And I hear the water."

"I don't hear any water."

"You have to listen," she said in a groggy tone. "It's a little slapping sound in the distance. Water everywhere."

She was drifting off.

"And the wind," she said lazily. "I hear the wind. A lot of people don't think wind has a sound, but I feel like it does. Even when it's not blowing hard, wind still makes a hiss in the trees, and if you actually listen, you can tell the wind is always around you, all the time, even when you can't see it or feel it. The wind is always there."

"Sort of like the IRS."

She was breathing heavily, like she was falling into another world.

"Are your eyes still closed?" she said.

"Sí. What else do you hear?"

"I hear your heart beating," she said in a sleepy voice. "Because my head is on your chest."

"What does my heart sound like?"

But she was already gone. Lightly snoring. Tucked against me tightly.

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Pure Joy

BY ANNA FISHER, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, ECTC

Emerald Coast Theatre Company is a vibrating ball of energy in the summertime, filled with many students from ages 5-17. There was a week this past summer where we had 80 students in four separate camps running simultaneously, at full volume from all directions.

I was sitting at my desk trying to block out the sound and focus on my work, and finally just gave up and decided to walk through the building and observe classes. I started in the small dance studio with our class of 19 five and six-year-old Mini Players who were dancing and singing their hearts out to "Can't Stop the Feeling," a peppy little song from the animated children's movie Trolls. The cuteness almost knocked me out cold!

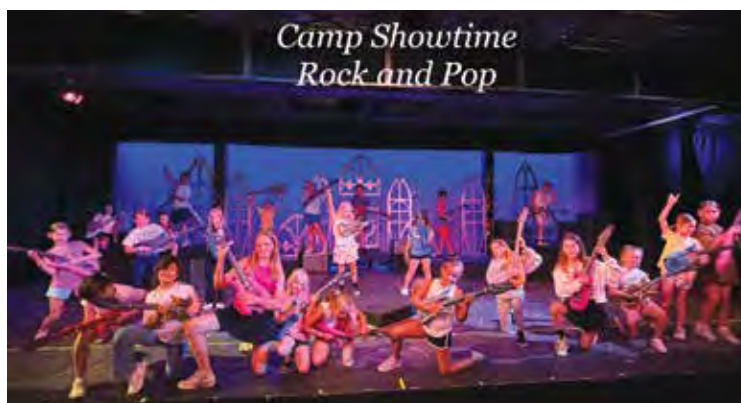
I then peeked in on Camp Showtime Rock and Pop in our larger rehearsal space, where 28 students were learning choreography and vocals to "Twist and Shout." It made me smile to see them embracing such a classic.

I walked from there out front to the small second stage

to watch 18 Middle and High Schoolers have the challenge of having everything fall apart in The Play that Goes Wrong: The One Act Teen Edition. Their show is double cast so everyone had a chance to play a pivotal character in the production.

Finally, I dance-walked (keep in mind there's music blaring from every direction) through to our main stage area and had my mind blown by our 15 teen girls rehearsing the high school edition of Broadway's musical pop sensation SIX. The confidence these performers gained while taking ownership of their role through dance and vocals was phenomenal. The confidence building effects of this particular camp were so tangible, we are considering offering it every summer.

You are a part of this. Every time you buy a ticket, attend an event, volunteer your time or donate, you are the heart of ECTC. You share ownership of the team building, confidence strengthening and screen-less joy these students experience while working hard towards a common goal with their cast.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF NIKKI HEADRICK.

This was just one week of our eight-week summer camp programs here at ECTC. We continue these classes year-round as well, and welcome students of all abilities into our building every

day. These children make my heart full, and I wanted to share that fullness with you.

There's so much to look forward to for Season 12 and we invite you to come be a part of

it all! We open in September with Jersey Boys and continue with Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery, while rounding out 2024 with our holiday offering All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914. Launching the new year is Every Brilliant Thing, Little Shop of Horrors, Always a Bridesmaid, and Legally Blonde, the Musical. If you want a bright spot of pure joy in your day in between Sherlock and All is Calm, come see our EDU kids on stage in their fall production of Shrek JR.

Until then, I'll be trying to work at my desk while listening to dozens of young thespians sing "I'm a Believer." Isn't life grand?

CREATE with Big Orange House Designs Calendar

- | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| Sept 3 - Homeschool Art Club. Tuesdays 10:30-1:30 Two art session. \$48 | Sept 7 - Permanent Jewelry w/Sherrie. \$53.50 | Sept 10 - Homeschool Art Club. Tuesdays 10:30 am-1:30 pm. \$50 | Sept 10 - After School Art Program K-5. \$28 | Sept 11 - Middle/High After School Art. \$35 | Sept 13 - Open Studio Glass Art 10 am-2 pm. \$26.75 | Sept 17 - Homeschool Kids Club. Tuesdays 10:30 am-1:30 pm. \$48 | Sept 24 - Homeschool Kids Club. Tuesdays 10:30 am-1:30 pm. \$48 | Sept 25-Oct 30: Daytime Pottery Series. 6-weeks. \$267.50. Available spots |
| Sept 3-24: Evening Pottery Series. 4-weeks. \$214. Available spots | Sept 10 - After School Art Program K-5. \$28 | Sept 11 - Middle/High After School Art. \$35 | Sept 13 - Open Studio Glass Art 10 am-2 pm. \$26.75 | Sept 17 - Homeschool Kids Club. Tuesdays 10:30 am-1:30 pm. \$48 | Sept 24 - Homeschool Kids Club. Tuesdays 10:30 am-1:30 pm. \$48 | Sept 25-Oct 30: Daytime Pottery Series. 6-weeks. \$267.50. Available spots | View remaining schedule and Book Classes at bigorangehousesdesigns.com. | |
| Sept 4 - Middle/High After School Art "Fall into Color" Glass art. \$35 | Sept 5 - Big Bold Floral. 36x24 BIG canvas. Mixed media. \$133.75 | Sept 6 - Glass Art Open Studio 10-2 pm. \$26.75 | Sept 7 - Glass Art Open Studio 12-2 pm. \$26.50 | Sept 7 - Permanent Jewelry w/Sherrie. \$53.50 | Sept 10 - Homeschool Art Club. Tuesdays 10:30 am-1:30 pm. \$50 | Sept 10 - After School Art Program K-5. \$28 | Sept 11 - Middle/High After School Art. \$35 | Sept 13 - Open Studio Glass Art 10 am-2 pm. \$26.75 |

Want to book a private table in a class or host a party? Contact JoJo at 334-320-6658 or bigorangehousesdesigns@gmail.com. bigorangehousesdesigns.com (850) 737-6193. 4652 Hwy. 20E, Pineapple Plaza, Bluewater Bay in Niceville

Bay Life Writer Publishes Book

One of our very own Bay Life writers, Kenneth Books, has published a humorous, politically incorrect book.



"These are a Few of the Things that I Hate" is composed of essays, all put together in a calendar format. The 327-page book is designed to prompt belly laughs throughout the year.

From New Year's resolutions through St. Patrick's Day, toning up for the beach, Thanksgiving treachery, the IRS, politics and right into Christmas, this is the funny side of hatred.

"It's not love, but hate that makes the world go around," says a blurb on the back of the paperback book. "Enjoy this extremely politically incorrect expedition into revulsion and laugh your way to understanding.

"Walk through the politically incorrect year of satire, humor

and outrageously absurd yet realistic observations to help you get through the day.

"Free your curmudgeonly mind with these hilarious observations, stories and nod to blistering diatribes that will have you laughing from January to December. This obsessive and fearless collection of life's injustices, grievances and petty pretensions will help you categorize the things you hate. Because it's about time someone wrote this stuff down!"

One reader commented on Amazon, "This is the funniest book I've ever read. From cover to cover, I laughed out loud. Can't wait for the next one!"

The book is available for \$19.99 from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, Walmart, Booklocker and several other outlets. It's not yet in stores, but can be ordered on line.

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Arts & Music

Sinfonia Launches Season 19 With Cabaret

Entering its 19th season, Sinfonia Gulf Coast continues its tradition of “redefining” the symphony experience. Led by Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller, the region’s only fully professional symphony orchestra aims to entertain, educate, and inspire the Northwest Florida Gulf coast.

Season 19 will launch with the annual Sinfonia Cabaret at Seagar’s featuring award-winning Broadway star and television actress Alysha Umphress on Tuesday, Sept. 17 at 5:30 p.m. at Seagar’s Prime Steaks & Seafood in Miramar Beach. With impeccable vocals, magnetic storytelling, and contagious charisma, Umphress captivates. Her undeniable talent has been showcased in *On the Town* (Tony nomination), *American Idiot* (Grammy Award), *Smokey Joe’s Café* (Chita Rivera Award), and the world premiere of *Beach-*



es (Helen Hayes nomination). Tickets for *An Evening with Alysha Umphress* are from \$395 per person and include valet parking, a sparkling wine reception, a multi-course meal prepared by Seagar’s executive

chef Fleetwood Covington, wine and all gratuities.

Purchase and download tickets at SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or call the box office at (850) 460-8800.

Sinfonia Opens Registration for Music Education

Registration is now open for the 2024-2025 Music Education programs. As the only program affiliated with a professional orchestra in the Emerald Coast region, the Sinfonia Youth Orchestra (SYO) offers student musicians unparalleled opportunities to enhance their musical talents and perform in a variety of ensembles throughout the school year under the mentorship of professional musicians.

Programs include the Symphonic Orchestra, for intermediate to advanced (All-State level) middle and high school student musicians who play strings, winds, brass, and percussion; Sinfonietta Strings, open to beginning string students; and Intermediate Strings, open to intermediate string players.

Joining the SYO program comes with numerous benefits. As an established professional orchestra, we bring our extensive experience and knowledge

to successfully guide young musicians. SYO is in partnership with the only professional orchestra in the area, offering students hands-on teaching by experienced professionals. Members enjoy meaningful individual and small group mentoring by experienced sectional instructors, resident musicians lead by Sinfonia Gulf Coast’s esteemed music director/conductor, Demetrius Fuller.

The program is led by professional, approachable, energetic, and highly educated musicians, making it an enriching experience for all. Performances at Sinfonia Gulf Coast events feature A-list performers such as Time For Three, Brubeck Brothers Quartet, Patti LaBelle, Kristin Chenoweth, Bernadette Peters and others providing high-caliber performance experiences.

Continued on page 39

24 25

SEASON

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Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast and its music education and community engagement initiatives throughout Northwest Florida.

Kelly Pierre's Nature-inspired Artwork is 'Transcendent'

Santa Rosa Beach Artist Named 2024 Festival of the Arts Poster Contest Winner

By ZANDRA WOLFGRAM

Artist Kelly Pierre hails from South Louisiana's vibrant culture, where his Cajun French-speaking family owned shrimp boats. Summers spent learning the shrimping business along the Gulf Coast deeply connected him to the seafood industry.

"I got to touch and hold all kinds of marine life. They are beautiful and amazing, and I wanted to save them all," Pierre says in his lilting Louisiana accent.

Pierre's winning artwork, titled Transcendent, is a soothing 24" x 30" acrylic painting featuring an elegant octopus carefully eyeing the viewer as it floats across the canvas in calming sea hues.

"People come here to experience the marine life. It is very inspiring to me," Pierre explains. "I hope my painting reminds people of all the beautiful creatures on this earth and that we recognize that this earth is something to preserve. We need

to preserve our existence."

Most of Pierre's art reflects the beauty, culture, and diversity of the coastal area. His passion for painting began in childhood after seeing an artist at a festival. Inspired by Alabama's "smiling fish" artist Don Sawyer and Louisiana's "blue dog" artist George Rodrigue, as well as his travels to the Caribbean, Pierre has found endless inspiration in both land and sea.

Pierre's Artistic Journey

Now, Pierre can paint almost anywhere, though he usually works from his studio by the sea at Harbor Walk Village in Destin, Florida. After more than 30 years as a professional artist, the 51-year-old still finds great enthusiasm in painting, believing that "a good place to paint is wherever I can."

A previous exhibitor at the Festival of the Arts, this is Pierre's second win in the MKAF Poster Art Contest. He first won in 2019, but severe weather hindered the Festival



that year.

"This award means so much. Being an artist was just a dream, but now it's a reality. But it's not about me. I believe we're all artists ... and to everyone out there if you work hard and don't give up, you can achieve your dream."

Facts About the Festival

As the Poster Art Contest winner, Pierre will receive a cash prize of \$750. His winning artwork will be used to promote the 29th Annual Festival of the Arts, showcased on the official Festival poster, program guide, t-shirts, in the Festival market-

ing campaign, on the MKAF website, and across MKAF's social media channels.

This year's 29th annual event begins on Friday, Oct. 25 at 6 p.m. with the Arty Kick Off Party at Henderson Beach Resort in Destin. The two-day Festival continues on Saturday, October 26, and Sunday, October 27, throughout The Dugas Pavilion green in Destin.

The much-anticipated event will feature more than 100 juried artists from across the United States, exhibiting original artwork in various mediums including oil, watercolor, acrylic paintings, photography, sculpture, pottery, glass, wood, paper, fiber, mixed media, and jewelry designs. Artists will compete for more than \$12,000 in cash prizes across 18 award categories, including the coveted Best in Show and People's Choice Award, selected by festival fans.

A highlight of the Festival is the Collaborative Art Exhibit, showcasing select artwork by

adult and student artists. This celebration of art, music, food, and family fun will include a live music lineup, hands on arts and crafts activities for children, an art raffle, and more. Visitors can enjoy a diverse menu from local food trucks, along with Wine & Beer Garden and a Bloody Mary bar. Convenient on-site parking and free shuttle service also will be available.

Admission to the Festival is free. Proceeds support MKAF and its community education outreach initiatives, including ArtsReach, which serves K-12 students, individuals with special needs, and active-duty military and veterans throughout Northwest Florida and the Southeast.

Join us in celebrating the arts and the vibrant community at the 2024 Festival of the Arts, and witness the beautiful artwork of Kelly Pierre and other talented artists.

For more information, visit MKAF.org.



Celebrate the Arts with *Festive Fall Events*

Best of the Emerald Coast *MKAF is the 2024 Charity Beneficiary
OCT 10 | 6 PM | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

An Evening with Wendy Rodrigue
OCT 11 | 6 PM | The Dugas Estate | Santa Rosa Beach

Arty Kick Off Party & 29th Annual Festival of the Arts
OCT 25 | 6 PM | Henderson Beach Resort | Destin
OCT 26 | 9 AM - 5 PM & OCT 27 | 10 AM - 4 PM | Dugas Pavilion Green in Destin

[Purchase Tickets at MKAF.org/Events](http://MKAF.org/Events)

Proceeds from all events benefit MKAF and its ArtsReach education and community engagement initiatives.

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Arts & Music

The Heritage of Home Music Lessons

Home studio music lessons, a tradition that spans centuries, offer a personalized and immersive approach to musical education. This method of learning has been cherished for its unique benefits, fostering a rich and personal relationship between the student and music. The student enters a musical zone of learning as soon as they walk through the studio's front door.

Learning music is a journey that combines the excitement

of discovery with the discipline of working towards a goal. For many, the choice of learning environment can significantly impact their progress and enjoyment. One of the popular choices is learning music at a teacher's home studio. This offers a home setting with a unique blend of benefits that greatly enhance one's learning experience.

Personalized Attention and Tailored Instruction

One of the most significant

advantages of learning music at a teacher's home studio is the personalized attention students receive. In a home studio setting, the teacher can focus on the individual needs and learning styles of each student. This one-on-one interaction allows for customized lesson plans that can adapt to the student's pace, strengths, and areas for improvement. Lessons are flexible and can evolve based on the student's progress and interests.

Comfortable Learning Environment

A home studio typically provides a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere compared to a music store or classroom setting. This can help reduce anxiety where students can express themselves freely, make mistakes, and learn without fear of judgment.

Access to High-Quality Equipment and Resources

Many home studio teachers invest in high-quality musical instruments and equipment, ensuring that students have access to the best tools for learning. This includes well-maintained pianos, guitars, keyboards, and other instruments. Additionally, home studio teachers often have a wealth of resources at their disposal, such as many years of experience learning and teaching privately, music books, sheet music, charts, a sundry of personally created handouts, affiliations, technology, and educational software, which enhance and inspire the learning experience.



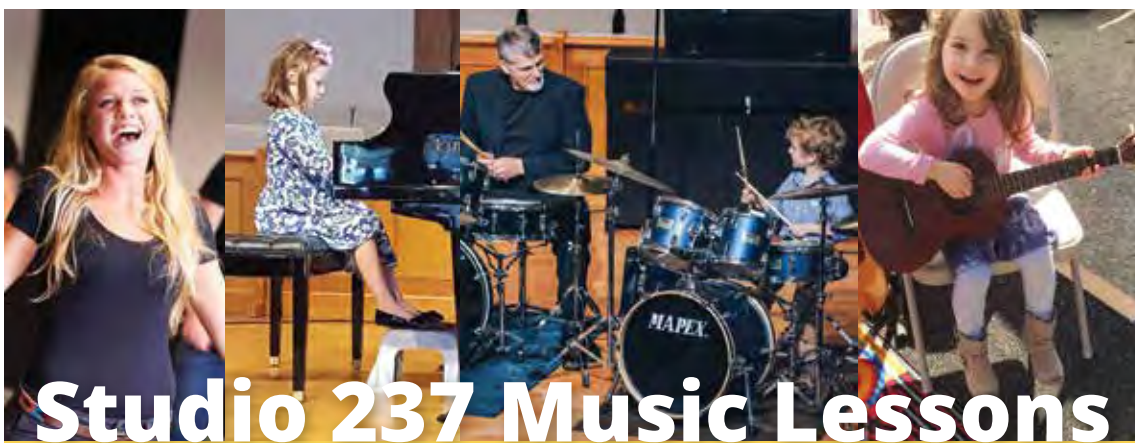
Closer Student-Teacher Relationships

The home studio environment fosters a closer, more personal relationship between the teacher and student. This rapport can be instrumental in keeping students motivated and engaged. Teachers who work from home often have the opportunity to get to know their students on a deeper level, understanding their musical goals, personal interests, and any challenges they may face. This deeper connection can lead to more effective teaching and a more enjoyable learning experience.

Inspiring Creative Space

A home studio is often a reflection of the teacher's personality and passion for music, creating an inspiring and creative space. The environment is filled with musical memorabilia, inspiring artwork, and a sense of personal touch that is often missing in more institutional settings. This inspiring atmosphere will set the tone as soon as they enter the home which stimulates creativity and encourages students to explore their musical potential.

Whether you are a beginner or an advanced student, the unique advantages of a home studio can help you achieve your musical goals while enjoying the journey of learning. Since 2011, Studio 237 Music Lessons of Santa Rosa Beach has offered a home-style learning experience from a variety of teachers on a variety of instruments including piano, voice, guitar, ukulele, keyboards, and drums as well as offering songwriting for kids, and more. Our goal is to inspire people (young and old) to discover, develop, and demonstrate music as they learn via successful time-tested methods. Call Ray or Lisa Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons to begin your learning journey at (850) 231-3199 or text (850)797-3546, visit our website at www.Studio237Music.com, or email us at Studio237Music@gmail.com.



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BAY BUZZ

continued from page 13



Shown here (L-R): Commissioner Danny Glidewell, Freeport Councilman Tracey Dickey, Commissioner Donna Johns, Commissioner Wm. 'Boots' McCormick, Commissioner Brad Drake, Freeport Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Public Works Deputy Director Scott Caraway, County Administrator Stan Sunday, Freeport Mayor Russ Barley and Public Works Director Buddy Wright.

Walton County Commission and the City of Freeport.

Healing Paws for Warriors Co-Founders Step Down

The co-founders of the non-profit Healing Paws for Warriors, Mike Arena and Sheila Hale, recently announced their departure from the non-profit after nearly a decade of volunteering their time serving veterans in the Florida Panhandle. Michael and Sheila formed the organization as a way to give back after Arena's struggles with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury after his time in the Air Force as a com-

bat medic. He went through a program that paired him with a service dog and, as he explained, was given what he felt was a second chance. Arena and Hale wanted to use the program to not only improve a veteran's quality of life, but to bring awareness to veteran suicide.

Arena presented the Healing Paws board of directors his letter of resignation, stepping away from his duties as (former) executive director, board member, and trainer. Arena called the decision one of the most difficult of his life. "From the earliest days, as we pursued our vision of how we would help our



veterans—those who sacrificed so much for our nation—by providing trained service dogs



at no charge, we felt as though we were changing lives. The dogs we rescued and trained to serve our veterans in this noble cause truly embodied our mission of 'Save a Veteran. Rescue a Dog,'" said Arena.



SINFONIA

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High school students can earn Bright Futures volunteer hours at Sinfonia Gulf Coast and SYO events, adding another layer of benefit to their participation.

The program is designed to be accessible and affordable. Need-based scholarships are available by request. Rehearsals are scheduled on Sunday afternoons to accommodate busy school-week schedules, and members receive free tickets to

each Sinfonia Gulf Coast main season concert.

SYO seniors can apply for the Grace Fulcher Memorial Scholarship, created in honor of Grace Bernice Fulcher, a former SYO member.

"We believe our youth orchestra programs foster a strong sense of community, allowing members to connect with like-minded fellow musicians in a safe, collaborative, and welcoming environment," says Sinfonia Youth Orchestra director Margaret Gordon. "Plus, in addition to quality music ed-



ucation, we are known as 'Funfonia,' because we pack plenty

of performance "fun" into our education program, too!"

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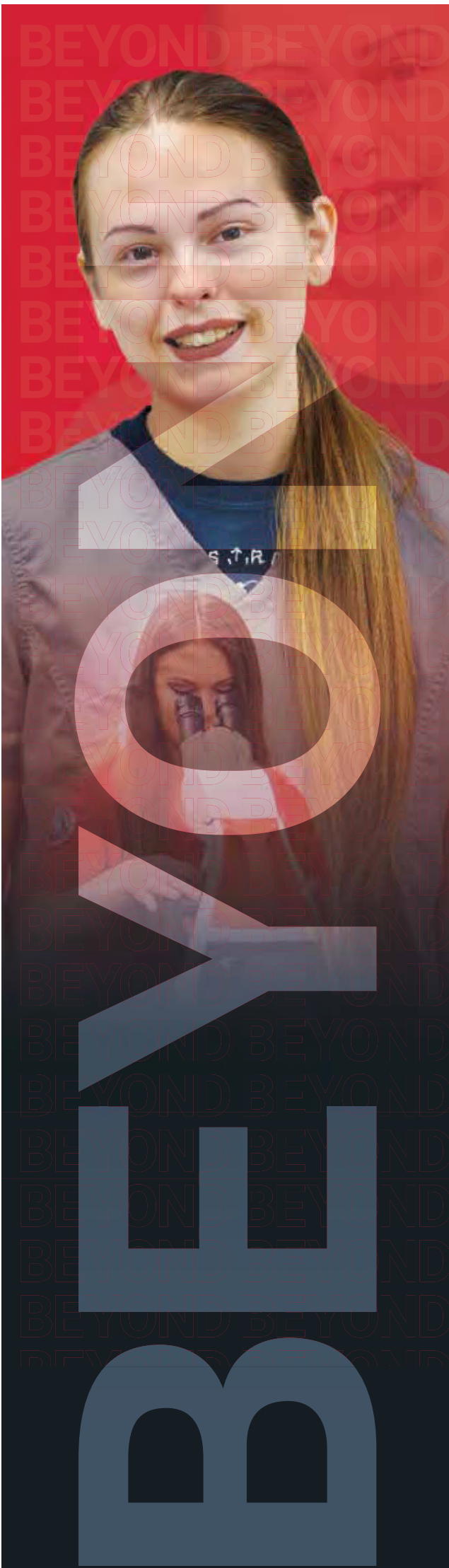
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