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Postal Customer Local

Bargain Box Blessings

BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

For those who grew up in Niceville, The Bargain Box is known as one of the main thrift stores in town. Amanda Parish, the current ministry director, recalls how it all began.

“Six women started this ministry in 1957. It started as a fundraiser to furnish the parsonage but once that was accomplished, they saw it was so successful that they just kept going. They were originally in a tiny house in Valparaiso. They went from there to a storefront on Bayshore Drive in Niceville, then eventually to a brick house where the Crosspoint Pumpkin Patch used to be. The Bargain Box eventually raised enough money in 2002 to build the first part of the building we’re in now.”

Amanda has experienced every part of what The Bargain Box has to offer. Over the years, she has been a shopper and a volunteer, and in 2016, she became the first ministry director to be hired since the store opened in 1957. She has seen firsthand the exponential good that it does daily, espe-



cially when families are struggling to pay for shelter and food.

“Our mission statement sums up our goal: To provide affordable goods to the community and raise money to support missions and ministries.”

For Amanda and her team of employees and volunteers,

however, it’s more than a store. After seeing the impact of 2020, and how it kept people apart, they are even more focused on building community through their work. “We see that part of our ministry is to provide a place where people feel safe and can have some fellowship. We’re available if someone needs to talk.

Some people are grieving or feel lonely and The Bargain Box is a comfortable place where they can see familiar faces, have meaningful conversations and serve. Even shoppers aren’t just shopping. They’re giving back with ev-

BARGAIN BOX
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The 16th Annual 30A Songwriters Festival Hits South Walton as the Number One Songwriters Festival in the Country

BY WILL ESTELL

If you consider yourself a fan of great music and the talented songwriters who make the songs you love possible, you will definitely want to make plans to attend the 16th Annual 30A Songwriters Festival—especially since it is now considered the top-rated songwriters’ festival in America—happening along our beautiful beach communities of South Walton and the white sands of Northwest Florida’s Gulf Coast.

The renowned festival is celebrating its 16th year of Hooks, Lines and

30A SONGWRITERS
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Award Winning Local's Menu

Community

BARGAIN BOX

continued from page 1

ery purchase and helping someone else in need.

People come to our store and tell us how much they love that we help our community. It's important to us to meet local needs. What many don't know is that as our community shops, 100% of the sales contribute to local and international aid through the Bargain Box's do-



nations to nonprofit and ministerial efforts.”

Local missions, organizations and programs helped include Crossroads, Children in Crisis, Freedom House, Grace Rides, Soul Care, our local schools, Fresh Start, The Pearl Project,

CALM House, and Youth Village. International efforts can be seen through Africa Advent, where Crosspoint partners with the church in and around the Congo to build churches, provide training and bikes to Congolese pastors, as well as Bibles in their native language. In addition, The Bargain Box helped to provide a roof for an orphanage in Guatemala and a well was built in South America. The first mission of the Bargain

Box is to make shopping affordable for everyone. But, through its team, donations, volunteers and shoppers, its legacy will be that they are making a global impact through local effort.

The Bargain Box is located on 107 Partin Dr. S. in Niceville and is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m. - Noon. Donations of gently used household goods and clothing are accepted, as they are able, during busi-

ness hours. For large donations or furniture, special arrangements can be made by calling 850-678-4411, ext. 189. If you want more information about volunteering or have a 501c3 non-profit organization and would like to be considered for support, contact Amanda directly by emailing aparish@crosspointchurch.com.



30A SONGWRITERS

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Singers January 16 - 20, 2025, with performances on presenting sponsor Grand Boulevard's main stage in beautiful Miramar Beach, as well as more than 30 other popular venues dotting the map of World Famous 30A.

This year's rendition of the popular festival includes headline performances by Grammy award winning rocker Melissa Etheridge; the acoustic Americana sound of Amos Lee; the masterful harmonies and arrangements of The Jayhawks; the blues infused Southern rock of The Devon Allman Project, and the multi-genre sound of Maggie Rose and Secret Sisters.

The long winter weekend of music and fun has now become the most celebrated songwriters' festival in the entire country and

is revered by artists and music lovers around the globe. With more than 175 artists, encompassing over 225 performances at 30 plus venues, the 16th annual 30A Songwriters Festival most definitely has something for everyone. Whether you're a fan of folk music, rock, soul, country or anything in between, this festival covers it all and does so with some of the best writers and performers to ever grace the stages of these South Walton coastal venues.

The 2025 lineup is chock-full of phenomenal artists like Holly Williams, Charlie Mars, Shawn Mullins, Mary Gauthier, Jeffrey Steele, Hayes Carll, Lilly Hiatt, Tommy Prine, Grayson Capps, Chuck Cannon, Jeff Black, Randall Bramblett, Kelly Willis, Bob Schneider, Steve Politz, Adam Hood, John Driskell-Hopkins, Dan Bern, Will Kimbrough,



Lilly Winwood, Ellis Paul, Darrel Scott, Livingston Taylor, Griffin House, David Ryan Harris, Emerson Hart, Certainly So, Abe Partridge, Chris Stills, Will Hoge, Chastity Brown, Vicki Peterson, Jennifer Lynn Simpson, Sara Hells, Jack Barksdale, Cat Ridgeway, Caitlin Cannon,



Bradley Cole Smith, Nelson Nolan, Mike Whitty with The Sand Ole Opry, Cousin Curtis, Ryan Hood, John Cowsill, John Paul White, Ruthie Foster, Black Opry Revue, John Fullbright and numerous others.

Additionally, some top-notch writers and performers making their first trip to our beautiful beaches to perform include: Charlie Starr and Benji Shanks of Blackberry Smoke, country sensation Brandy Clark, Chuck Prophet, Josh Joplin Group, Willi Carlisle, Bee Taylor Band, Langhorne Slim, Josh Rouse, Chris Knight, Jontavious Willis, as well as Josh Rouse, Paul McDonald, Jill Sobule, Kyle Davis, Tyler Ramsey, David Borne', Andrea Von Kampen, Beth Bombara, Anna Grace, Mallory Johnson, and one of my personal favorite new country artists, Jada Cato.

The popular festival takes place at venues spread across a span of slightly over 30 miles of South Walton beach communities, including the large outdoor main stage facility at Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach. These live music hotspots include well-known restaurants, entertainment venues, hotel lobbies and cafés dotting the two-lane Scenic Hwy. 30A. And one thing is for sure, if you're

hanging in places like these, near beaches like these, listening to artists like this festival brings, you are most definitely sure to have a fabulous time, that will undoubtedly find you hitting spot after spot for more music and fun.

I asked multi-hit Nashville songwriter Jeffrey Steele what keeps him coming back year-after-year: He simply lamented, "I always look forward to 30A Songwriters Festival, not only as

Continued on page 6

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Jerry Williams: The American Dream & the Very Human Experience

By KELLY MURPHY-REDD

Jerry Williams retired as the highly respected and successful President/CEO of Eglin Federal Credit Union (EFCU) and moved back into his newly remodeled home four weeks prior to this interview. He and his wife, Jean, feel like they have a new home. It even has that “new house smell.” They love their Poquito Bayou neighborhood, knowing their neighbors, and walking their rescue dogs. Jerry and Jean have been married 21 years.

Jerry was born in Crestview. His dad was a farm boy from Baker and his mother a city girl from Bloomington, Ind. Jerry’s Army vet dad and his mother met in Indiana. They married and moved to Baker. It turned out “Green Acres” was not the place to be, for her, and they moved to Fort Walton Beach when Jerry was age six.

After attending local elementary and high schools, he attended OWJC and UWF, earning a

degree in mathematics. His dad was an air conditioning mechanic on Eglin AFB and Jerry credits learning his blue-collar work ethic and trouble-shooting skills from him. He credits his people skills to his mother. A real mix of the two people.

After he graduated high school, his mom and dad took a contract labor job to clean the EFCU building on Eglin AFB at night. While attending OWJC, Jerry cleaned the Hurlburt location at night to pay for school.

He went on to be engineer support for Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in West Palm Beach. In Jerry’s words, he was a geek who applied mathematical formulas to the engineer’s work. He was then offered a job at a small defense contractor developing the AMRAAM missile seeker at Eglin, AFB.

Bill Webster, president of a small company in Fort Walton Beach, lured Jerry away from the defense industry. They moved to Memphis where Bill



started a company developing software for credit unions. EFCU was their largest client. Bill eventually sold his company and moved back to Fort Walton

Beach. While Jerry was in Memphis, Jim Appleton, president of EFCU, called and offered him the position of Vice President of Data Processing. He moved

back to Fort Walton Beach in 1994.

He held various IT positions over 20 years. During this time, he met his wife Jean who was Bill Webster’s sister. She was working at Bank of America.

Thinking about the future and the idea he may be considered for president one day, he decided it was time to “quit being a nerd” and get out of the computer room. Jerry joined co-worker Sherry Harlow at FWB Chamber events. He talks glowingly about chairing the Military Affairs Committee, being an Honorary Commander at Hurlburt Field, and being an Eglin 33rd Fighter Wing Civic leader. These associations gave him deep appreciation and knowledge about military bases in our community and opened many doors.

In 2014, he was made president of EFCU. He was invited to numerous events and felt he

Continued on next page



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 Community

Niceville High School's NaGISA Program Shines on International Stage in Japan

Eight students and four chaperones from Niceville High School's NaGISA program recently returned from an extraordinary 11-day journey to Japan over Thanksgiving break. Representing the only high school in the United States affiliated with the NaGISA program, the group attended the 2nd World Congress of Marine Stations in Shizuoka, Japan, where they presented their groundbreaking work on marine biodiversity.

NaGISA, which stands for Natural Geography of In-Shore Areas, is a Japanese-based international collaboration aimed at inventorying, cataloging, and monitoring the biodiversity of in-shore areas. In Japanese, NaGISA means "where the land meets the sea." Niceville High School's NaGISA program has been at the forefront of this initiative, with over 20 years of contributions to marine science. Their presentations at the World Congress were designed to showcase their achievements and inspire other high schools around the globe to join this critical effort.

The students departed on November 21st and arrived in Japan the following day. Before heading to Shizuoka, they explored Tokyo, visiting historical and cultural landmarks. On November 28th, students Jocelyn Wheeler, Noah Stickler, Hannah Castor, and Sasha McCraine participated in a "poster session," presenting the NHS NaGISA program's collection and analysis protocols. In this science-fair-like environment, they engaged with attendees from top universities worldwide. Seniors Lily Suttlemyre, Craig Falzone, Jacob Milz and sophomore Julia Milz delivered the main presentation titled "The Northwest Florida NaGISA Program as a Blueprint for Scientific Outreach." Their presentation highlighted the history and success of the NHS NaGISA program, detailed their innovative "Sandy Beach" protocol, and encouraged other high schools to contribute to marine biodiversity research. The students were accompanied by Mr. Richard Hernandez, Teacher of the Gifted at NHS and NaGISA advisor,



(Pictured Left to Right) Lillian Suttlemyre, Jacob Milz, Julia Milz, Mr. Richard Hernandez, Hannah Castor, Jocelyn Wheeler, Sasha McCraine, Craig Falzone, and Noah Stickler

Mr. Patrick Cole, a social studies teacher at NHS, and Savannah Mikus, a former NHS NaGISA student who is now an adjunct lecturer of Japanese culture at the University of Florida, along with her husband, Jacob Mikus, a registered nurse. Mrs. Mikus served as the group's interpreter and tour guide, enhancing the cultural and scientific experience for the students.

"This trip offered these stu-

dents the rare opportunity to present alongside counterparts from some of the world's leading universities," said Richard Hernandez. "Our students' contributions left a lasting impression on the eminent scientists in attendance, and they showcased their scientific expertise, demonstrating the excellence of Niceville High School and the Okaloosa County School District." Niceville High School has since

been accepted as an entire World Association of Marine Stations member, joining a prestigious network of over 800 marine stations worldwide. The school's program has also been invited to the next World Congress of Marine Stations in two years and asked to contribute to the Atlas of Marine Stations.

Superintendent Marcus Chambers praised the students' accomplishments: "This trip exemplifies our students' incredible opportunities to engage in world-class learning experiences. The NaGISA team's dedication and passion exemplify the excellence we strive for in Okaloosa County. I am so proud of their achievements and the way they represented our district on an international stage."

Through months of preparation and hard work, these students brought global recognition to their program, their school, and the Okaloosa County School District. Their journey is a testament to the power of education and the impact of students who dare to dream big.



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JERRY WILLIAMS

continued from previous page

was invited because of the person he was, not the position he held. He retired after 30 years of service to EFCU. Jerry knows there will be less invitations coming his way. Still passionate about being involved in the community, he told his co-worker Neko Stubblefield, he still makes a great "+1."

When asked how he created the enthusiastic culture at EFCU, as demonstrated by the large turnout of employees at events and their contagious excitement, Jerry says the more involved he was, the more involved his employees were. Leading by example, he told the team he would "be at the front of the band leading the charge." He also worked to make sure there were resources to support community involvement. EFCU eventually joined at the highest membership levels at all chambers with his board's support.

He and Jean enjoyed travel-

ing to conferences and being involved in the community. They discovered they enjoyed bike riding together. They recently completed a six-day, 171-mile ride along the shores of Lake Michigan.

Retirement holds challenges for Jerry and Jean. He has been diagnosed with Genetic Ataxia, a general term for diminished motor skills. There are 75-100 variations, but it basically means a faulty protein is causing the cerebellum to die. He has Spinocerebellar ataxia type 6 (SCA6). The blessing about this variation is, it is late onset and slow progression.

The symptoms start with awkwardness and progress to fumbling and falling. Walking on uneven terrain or stairs is very difficult. His progression will involve using a cane, a walker and then a wheel chair. Talking and eating will be affected. He and Jean have remodeled their home to be accessible, no matter what happens.

Jerry wasn't born with a quit-

ter gene. If he falls down, he gets up. He will minimize the effect and maximize what he can do. In the past, he's been scuba diving and sky diving. At 57 he competed in an Ironman triathlon. He can't run now, but can still bike and swim. He uses a recumbent mountain bike and magnetic shoes and pedals. There is a Multiple Sclerosis medication that is showing some promise and there will be decisions about whether he should try it or worry about side effects. He's not done yet and is inspired by wounded warrior friends facing greater challenges than he faces.

Jerry says he will keep moving forward and keep giving back. It is what it is, and it will become what it will become. He doesn't want sympathy, but instead seeks awareness and understanding. He's not ignoring his diagnosis, but charging ahead. He considers himself blessed.

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 Community

30A SONGWRITERS
continued from page 2

another opportunity to do what I love, singing and entertaining, but also seeing the fans, my writer friends I don't see often, and catching up and hangin' at the beach."

From the main stage at Grand Boulevard, featuring Saturday and Sunday's headliners to popular spots like AJ's Grayton Beach, Bud & Ally's, Water Color's Fish Out of Water, Boat House and Lake House to 30A Café to Rosemary Beach Town Hall, and Old Florida Fish House there is certainly no shortage of venues hosting great songwriters and musicians for this event. Since its inception in 2010, 30A Songwriters Festival has grown year after year, and is one of many endeavors made

possible by Walton County Cultural Arts Alliance (CAA), a remarkable organization that adds so much to our coastal community through its artistic and philanthropic endeavors.

The festival is co-produced by Russell Carter Artist Management, which has been the driving force behind the talent booking since the festival began in 2010. Additionally, 100% of 30A Songwriters Festival's net profits benefit CAA's mission to advance the arts in Walton County through education, leadership, advocacy and the funding of special arts related programs within the community.

Festival Co-Producer, Russell Carter, President of Russell Carter Artist Management, has good reason to be immensely proud of the festival he helped to create.

"This festival began as a small event and grew quickly into a premier one-of-a-kind musical showcase for world-class songwriters. Our goal is to curate a festival that presents the absolute best in touring songwriters and performers. We want our audiences to experience musicians representing diverse genres of music – jazz, blues, country, folk, Americana, and rock, with just two stipulations – they have to write their own music and they have to be really great at it!" said Carter.

Grab Your Festival Tickets Today!

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Writer Bio:

Will Estell is a writer, editor, and Northwest Florida media guru with over 700 published magazine features in an array of genres, including tourism, music, real estate, and automobile editorials. Will has penned one-on-one cover interview features with such well-known artists as Kenny Chesney, Jimmy Buffett, Alan Jackson, Darius Rucker, Styx, Amy Grant, Sara Evans and numerous others. He is the chief creative officer of Estell Hussey Media, LLC, and over the past 26 years has been instrumental in co-founding twelve new magazine titles from concept to fruition – both for other publishers and himself – as well as serving as editor in chief for numerous others nationally. Originally from the backwoods of rural Mississippi, Will Estell is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre Beach, along with his wife, ABC 3 Florida news anchor, Laura Hussey-Estell. Will is a regular contributor to Life Media's family of publications.

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A Taste of Mardi Gras, this year's Food and Wine Tasting Festival supporting the Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra's youth programs, will feature a jazz combo, tastes of 40 different wines, local craft beers and samples of cuisine from area restaurants, such as Aegean Greek Restaurant, Cafe Bienville, Magnolia Grill, Peppers Mexican Cantina, Papa's Smokehouse, PB&J Bistro & Cafe and several others.

Scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 16, 2025, from 1-4 p.m. in the Raider Central of Northwest Florida State College in

Niceville, the event will also include a silent auction containing a variety of items such as gift cards, art, jewelry and gift baskets.


Sponsored by the Northwest Florida Symphony Guild, the event raises funds to support the Symphony's youth programs, such as the Fifth-Grade concerts and the annual John Leatherwood Concerto Competition.

Tickets are \$65 and can be purchased by calling the Mattie Kelly box office at 850-729-6000 or online at www.MattieKellyArtsCenter.org.

Happenings Around the Bay

2025
EVENTS

JANUARY

- 01 | **Bloody Mary Golf Tournament**
9 am | Eglin AFB Golf Course | Niceville
- 03 | **Greater FWB Chamber Annual Installation and Awards Breakfast**
7 am | Christian Life Center at FBC | FWB
- 04 | **Cars & Coffee**
7 am | JoJo's Coffee and Goodness | Niceville
- 05 | **2025 Dream Big Intention Setting Workshop**
2 pm | Yoga By You Studio | Niceville
Women's Climbing Circle
5 pm | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
- 07 | **Menopause 2: The Musical**
7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- 08 | **Prime Rib Night**
5 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant | Niceville
- 09 | **Family History Help**
1 pm | Niceville Public Library | Niceville
- 11 | **9th Annual Prohibition Repeal Wine Dinner at Paradis**
6:30 pm | Paradis | Rosemary Beach
- 14 | **City Council Meeting**
6 pm | Niceville Council Chambers | Niceville
- 16 | **Puzzle Swap**
10 am | Niceville Public Library | Niceville
- 16-20 | **30A Songwriters Festival**
Various Times & Locations
- 17 | **Bette, Babs, and Beyond**
7:30 pm | Destin-FWB Convention Center | Okaloosa Island

- 16 | **Prime Rib Night**
5 pm | LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant | Niceville

27 | **Facebook Class**
12 pm | Niceville Senior Center | Niceville

30 | **Crescendo! Kick Off Lunch**
11 am | Bijoux | 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
- Yoga at Turkey Creek**
9 am | Sat | Turkey Creek Nature Trail | Niceville
- Brunch on the Bayou**
9 am | Sun | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville



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Community

Choosing the Right Service for Post-Hospital Care

BY TERESA HALVERSON, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT/COMMUNITY RELATIONS DIRECTOR

When transitioning from hospital to a rehabilitation facility, it is critical for families to know what to look for in post-hospital care to ensure their loved ones receive the best support possible. Choosing the right service for your care is crucial. One of the most important factors is to consider personalized care. Depending on the needs of you or your loved one, be sure to ask questions about specialized programs. Below are some examples of what to look for:



- Stroke Recovery Program: Is there a Certified Stroke Therapist on staff?
- Wound Care – Vaporox wound Treatment – Certified Physical Therapist
- Parkinson’s Rehab: Does the facility offer a dedicated Parkinson’s Therapeutic program (“Big and Loud” Certified Staff?)

- Respiratory Program/Pulmonary Program: OmniFlow Breathing system offered?
- Cardiac recovery
- Dementia/Cognitive Rehab
- Balance/Fall Prevention Programs
- FEES’ Swallowing Evaluations
- Swallowing/Dysphagia Therapy
- Orthopedic recovery programs
- Outpatient Rehabilitation programs

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What Are You Doing December 31, 1937?

By JENÉ EVANS McCRACKEN

Society members, dedicated locals and golf enthusiasts would have been planning their holiday festivities around the Valparaiso Country Club and The Valparaiso Inn.

The Inn, as it was commonly known was built along the blue waters of North Bayshore Drive a hundred years ago in 1924 by James E. Plew. The three-story Spanish stucco structure was patterned after Chicago's famous Edgewater Beach Hotel. It had four wings and 56 guest rooms angled to catch the breeze and provide a panoramic view of Boggy Bayou and Choctawhatchee Bay.

The New Year's Eve menu



The Valparaiso Inn, from the Heritage Museum collection, 1937. Photo by Clifford C. Brabham Studio in Valparaiso. Clifford Brabham was a prominent photographer for many years in Valparaiso.

was delicious, extensive and priced at \$1.25. Well, the year is 1937!

The Inn was listed as being "Open All Year" and boasting Fire Protection with a sprinkler system, modern rooms, swimming, beach and two tennis courts. The nearby Valparaiso Country Club claimed beautiful grass, greens and tees, 6,350 yards and five water holes with fees of \$1 per day.

In June 1941, the Officers Club of Eglin Field made arrangements to take over the Inn as the "O Club."

Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle and many of the "Tokyo Raiders" were housed at the Inn while

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Valparaiso Country Club and The Valparaiso Inn will feature attractions for the New Year Week-End. Unavoidable circumstances forced The Inn to cancel the dance for Friday night. There will be Open House and entertainment to see the Old Year out and the New Year in, to which the public is cordially invited. Boat trips and fishing parties have been arranged for the week-end. Mr. Sidney Danjean, Pro of the Country Club, is offering special amusements for both men and women golfers on Saturday and Sunday.

An actual advertisement in the Okaloosa News-Journal, Crestview, FL, December 31, 1937.

they trained at Eglin Field in March 1942.

The Inn was sold by the Plew family in 1950. It continued to operate as a hotel until 1957 when it was converted into an apartment complex.

On March 2, 1977, a fire severely damaged the Inn and it

NEW YEAR DINNER AT THE INN

Oyster Cocktail	Shrimp Cocktail
Fruit Cocktail	Chilled Tomato Juice
Cream of Mushroom Soup	
Roast young tom turkey with dressing, cranberry sauce	
Swift's Special T-Bone Steak	
Sauteed Lamb Chops with Mint Jelly	
Broiled Florida Lobster with Drawn Butter	
Baked Red Snapper Maitre d'hotel	
Buttered Carrots	Chateau Potatoes
Petit Pois	Steamed Rice
Fruit Salad	Parker House Rolls
Vanilla Ice Cream with Homemade Cake	
Date Fudding	Orange Chiffon Pie
Jello with Custard Sauce	
Old Cheddar Cheese	Philadelphia Cream Cheese
Roquefort	Swiss Cheese
American Cheese	
Coffee	Tea
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The Valparaiso Inn

New Year's Eve hotel menu circa 1937.

remained vacant until fire completely destroyed it on October 25, 1980.

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Community

Women United Empowers Local Teens with Mental Health Tools and Support

On November 16, United Way Emerald Coast's Women United hosted a transformative EmpowHER Seminar at the Boys and Girls Club of South Walton. Presented by Eglin Federal Credit Union, the event provided local teens with essential mental health resources, empowering educational tools, and a supportive community to foster self-confidence and resilience.

Designed to address the growing need for mental health support across Okaloosa and Walton counties, the seminar featured interactive workshops facilitated by dedicated partner organizations,

each volunteering time and expertise to support young attendees. These workshops offered a safe space for teens to connect, share, and gain practical mental health resources.

Emerald Coast Science Center led a session where girls screen-printed their own t-shirts, encouraging creativity and self-expression. Pure & Couture Salon brought stylists to host a braid bar, offering students the opportunity to leave with boosted confidence and a renewed sense of self. Additionally, a yoga session taught attendees relaxation techniques and mindful-

ness practices to help manage stress.

"Eglin Federal Credit Union is proud to partner with United Way Emerald Coast to present this sold-out event, which provides a positive environment for local teens," said SVP Membership and Community Development Neko Stubblefield. "Our goal is to uplift the communities in which we live and work. We see tremendous value in providing tools and resources to empower teens in Walton County."

Attendee surveys revealed that 76.5% of participants experienced increased confidence and self-esteem, highlighting the impact of the EmpowHER Seminar in fostering mental wellness and community for teens in Walton County.

This spring, in celebration of International Women's Day, Women United will host its annual "Brunch & Bubbly" fundraiser on March 8 at Home2 Suites by Hilton, presented by Eglin Federal Credit Union. This event, open to all community members, promises an inspiring gathering with proceeds supporting Women United's mission.

About Women United

Women United is a philan-



Women United Member encourages attendee.

thropic initiative within United Way Emerald Coast, dedicated to improving access to mental health resources, education, and support for women and girls in Okaloosa and Walton Coun-

ties. To learn more about their initiatives or join their efforts, visit www.united-way.org/womenunited.

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Elevate Rate 4	1.98%	2.00%	1.24%	1.25%
Elevate Rate 3	1.00%	1.00%	1.24%	1.25%
Elevate Rate 2	0.75%	0.75%	1.24%	1.25%
Elevate Rate 1	0.50%	0.50%	1.24%	1.25%

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Bay Buzz

30A BBQ Fest Breaks Record for The Sonder Project!

The fifth edition of the 30A BBQ Festival, presented by 360 Blue, raised a record-breaking \$103,228 for The Sonder Project.

The sold-out, annual event in November at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin®, featured 14 regional and local restaurants and catering companies, each competing for the title of “Best BBQ” chosen by the 800 guests in attendance. Participants included 3 Sons BBQ, Back Beach Barbecue, Camp Creek Inn, Cinders and Salt, Dickey’s Barbecue Pit, Evie Mae’s Barbecue, Harry T’s, Local Smoke at The Big Chill, Marrow Private Chefs, The Perfect Pig, Sons of Amvets Post 29, Swiftly Catered, Uncle KU’s BarbeKU, and Vin’tij Food and Wine.

Winners:

1st Place People’s Choice Award: Evie Mae’s Pit BBQ

2nd Place People’s Choice Award: Uncle KU’s BarbeKU

3rd Place People’s Choice Award: Vin’tij Food and Wine

Judge’s Choice Award: 3 Sons Bar-B-Q

“It was great to see the different styles and flair of each participant,” said Chad Zibelman, CEO of The Sonder Project. “We had everything from pulled pork and brisket, to smoked s’mores and sliders. It was a melting pot of the best barbecue around and we’re so grateful to each of our vendors for donating their time and food to be a part of this year’s festival. They are all winners in our book!”

Okaloosa County School Superintendent, Marcus Chambers, Makes Generous ECCAC Donation

Demonstrating his commitment to being a good steward for the community, Marcus Chambers, Okaloosa County School Superintendent, recently donated \$25,000 from his unused campaign funds to the Emerald Coast Children’s Advocacy Center (ECCAC). The donation will greatly benefit ECCAC’s vital programs, such as the Safety Matters prevention program which teaches children in local schools how to recognize and respond to unsafe situations.

Chambers shared with the ECCAC staff, “Investing in the ECCAC is an investment in our community’s future. Their transformative mission is to heal and



support traumatized children, restore lost innocence, and instill hope. Together, we can make a profound difference, ensuring every child feels seen, heard, and understood.”

We Have Whales in the Gulf of Mexico?

Yes! From sperm whales and killer whales to Rice’s whales—one of the most endangered whales on earth—these magnificent creatures play a vital role in the Gulf’s ecosystem. Sponsored by the Choctawhatchee Audubon Society, join Christian Wagley, coastal organizer for Healthy Gulf, to learn about the fascinating story of the Rice’s whale, its critical habitat and its connection to open ocean birds and fish. The program will be held Jan. 9 in Room 800 on the 2nd floor of the Chandler Center (NW door of 519 Helms St.) at Crosspoint Church Niceville. Socializing begins at 6:30 p.m.— program starts at 7 p.m. Admission is free; event is open to the public.

UWF Grant Award Allows Precision Measurement, Inc. to Expand into New Markets

Locally-Sourced Calibration Services to Benefit Area Law Enforcement Agencies

One Okaloosa EDC announced that Precision Measurement Inc. (PMI), a Fort Walton Beach-based Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) that supports local and global industry partners with accredited calibrations and testing services, has recently initiated a new five-year growth strategy to expand services while bringing new quality jobs to Okaloosa County. PMI was established in Okaloosa in 2005 and has experienced considerable growth since that time, growing on average 20% annually.

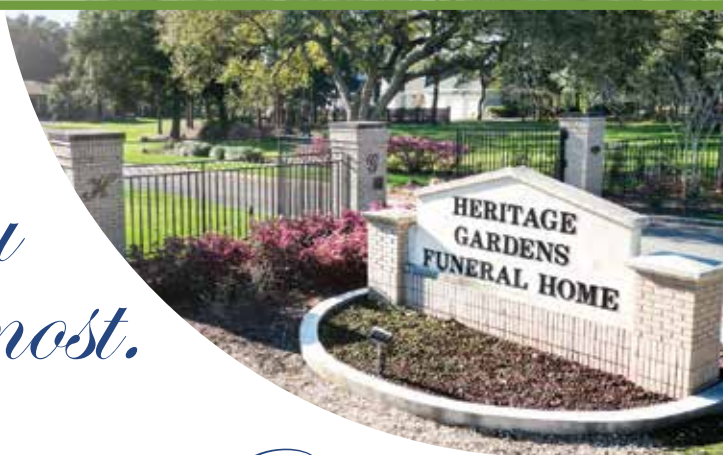
Emerging customer opportunities – including calibration re-

quirements for county and state law enforcement vehicles and equipment – led to initial discussions with Okaloosa County Commission Chairman Paul Mixon and Nathan Sparks, Executive Director, One Okaloosa EDC. Through these discussions, PMI was made aware of the University of West Florida (UWF) Industry Resilience and Diversification Fund (IRDF) grant program. One Okaloosa EDC assisted PMI with submitting an IRDF grant application to support the company’s continued growth. UWF has now notified PMI of their approval for a reimbursement-based grant in the amount of \$509,000.

The IRDF grant will support the acquisition of new equipment and the recruitment of new technicians required to support the company’s expansion of services. Earlier this year, PMI learned that the Tallahassee-based entity that had previously been providing calibration services to local law enforcement agencies would no longer be providing these services. Quickly responding to this critical need, PMI has already acquired the necessary equipment and technical certifications to perform services on vehicle speedometers, radar, laser, and police band radios. Thanks to PMI’s investment and the UWF IRDF grant support, these mandatory certifications will be performed locally by newly-hired technicians using newly procured state-of-the-art equipment and tooling.

This rapid expansion of services will immediately generate four new full-time positions in Okaloosa County with average salaries of \$60,000 annually. Looking to the future, the expanded growth and staffing is expected to require the need for larger facilities. In fact, the company is already exploring potential future Okaloosa County development sites to support their continued growth.

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The Housing Revolution Starts Now

Meet Visionary Bekah Manley

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

Bekah Manley is a holistic realtor, meaning that she looks well beyond the structure of a house. “I take the physical, spiritual and emotional into consideration,” she explains. “I go a little deeper than most realtors when it comes to finding an environment in which a person will best thrive. To me, a house is more than a structure. It’s a sanctuary for your soul.”

Bekah has called the Emerald Coast her home since 2017. After graduating from Auburn University (Manley majored in psychology, which she says she uses every day in her work), she visited her mother who had recently moved to the area. “And me being a broke, confused college student, it was either go back to my hometown or go to the beach,” she says. “I decided to go to the beach.”

The Northwest Alabama native has been engaged to Destin Mayor Bobby Wagner for more than a year now, and I jokingly ask if she has any influence over the city government. “No,” she laughs. “But we have been able to use both our jobs to create a positive impact on the community.”

Bekah and Mayor Wagner worked together shooting videos in Gulf County after Hurricane Michael, letting the rest of the world know that the area was rebuilding. She obtained her real estate license in 2021, and one of the first things Bekah did was ask her brokers:

“Why do we keep building the same thing over and over again and expecting different results?”

Bekah sought out contractors and architects with a passion for revolutionizing the building environment “from the ground up” as well as utilizing political connections to “challenge and change the building standards for the state of Florida.”

For the past three years,



Bekah and business partner Joseph Beeman have been building THEIA Development to create sustainable, resilient and affordable houses using advanced technology like 3D printing. “Due to recent hurricanes, people’s eyes have been opened” to new things, she says. “You don’t have to be an expert to know if something isn’t working. I believe we can change the standards. The ‘Oh, we’ve always done it this way’ isn’t working anymore.”

Bekah says traditional building methods are outdated. “Insurance rates are not going to budge until we have better products for them to cover.”

She is also working to connect with industry people interested in green initiatives. “I know they exist,” says Bekah. “I’m just trying to bring different experts – appraisers, lenders, builders, engineers – out of the woodwork who care about sustainable futuristic building practices.”

Bekah and her team are looking to launch the new housing initiatives here in the Panhandle, with a focus on areas affected by hurricanes. And then, spreading throughout the state and beyond.

“The next step for me is to

build a physical product for people to touch and feel,” she says, “so they can see the whole process and open their minds about how to build in the future.

“It’s not that scary. The big

obstacle is that a lot of people fear change and things they don’t understand. Sometimes people tend to be a little closed-minded when it comes to (housing).” Bekah is working to

create a dialogue and educate the community.

“It should be clear, in light of recent events, why I’m looking to change things. And have been.”

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 Community



By JULIE A. MARTIN

When you live in a community governed by a Homeowners Association (HOA), you might

In a Homeowner's Association? Property Insurance Options

feel like your options for homeowner's insurance are limited. However, working with an independent insurance agent can help you find the right coverage that meets both your needs and the requirements of your HOA.

For instance, some townhomes are covered by a COA, Condo Association, and the Association assumes responsibility

for the exterior walls and the roof of the buildings, so that the unit owners only require coverage for the inside of the dwellings, from the drywall in, as well as their personal property, liability, mold coverage, etc.

Homeowners Associations generally require their unit-owners to purchase insurance coverage that includes coverage for the exterior walls and the roof, in addition to coverage for liability and even flood insurance on that townhome.

An independent insurance agent is not tied to any specific insurance company. So, they can provide you with a range of options and help you choose the one that best suits your situation. They have the knowledge and experience to navigate the complex world of insurance policies and can help you understand the various types of coverage available. This is especially important when dealing with an HOA, which may have specific requirements for the insurance coverage you need.

An independent insurance agent can help you find the right policy that meets these requirements, while also ensuring that you have the appropriate level



of coverage for your individual needs.

Furthermore, an independent insurance agent can help you identify potential gaps in your coverage that you may not have considered. For instance, if you have valuable jewelry or art, you may need additional coverage beyond the standard policy. An independent insurance agent can help you identify these gaps and recommend coverage options that meet your needs.

In the case of Jewelry or fine arts and other related types of valuable personal property, the property itself is more likely to be lost through theft or mysterious disappearance than any other type of peril. There are 12 categories of personal property that require appraisals for full coverage in the event of theft, breakage, or mysterious disappearance.

Carriers require a current appraisal, usually within the last 36 months, along with a picture of the item or set, and a full description. Additionally, they may require the type of location of the item such as in your home or in a bank vault, and rate at least partially based on the location given.

Working with an independent insurance agent also provides the added benefit of having a personal relationship with your agent. You can build a relationship of trust and confidence with your agent, who can

provide ongoing support and guidance throughout the life of your policy. They can help you navigate the claims process and make sure that you receive the coverage you need when you need it most.

Finally, working with an independent insurance agent can save you time and money. They can help you compare policies from different insurance companies and find the best coverage at the most competitive price. They can also help you identify discounts and other cost-saving opportunities that you may not be aware of.

In conclusion, when you live in an HOA-governed community, it is important to work with an independent insurance agent to find the right homeowner's insurance policy that meets both your needs and the requirements of your HOA.

An independent insurance agent can provide you with a range of options, help you identify potential gaps in your coverage, build a personal relationship with you, and save you time and money. Don't leave the protection of your home and personal belongings to chance — work with an independent insurance agent to ensure that you have the right coverage for your needs.

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What Does it Mean to "Age-In" to Medicare?



BY GREG DURETTE, FLORIDA HEALTH CONNECTOR

As many times as I have said the term "age-in" to folks when discussing Medicare, it has never failed to elicit a visceral response like, "What do you mean with this age-in thing?!" or "I don't feel aged-in!"

The fact of the matter is, aging-in means you are turning 65 soon, and it is a good thing. There are many we all know that didn't make it to that milestone. Bravo for making it and cheers for many more.

With Annual Enrollment Period now officially ended (even though there is a little known Special Enrollment Period for certain local counties which extends the period until 3/31/2025!), we are now in the middle of the Open Enrollment Period which runs from January 1 – March 31 of every year for pre-dominantly for Advantage Plan members (you can re-read my article from last month for more information about the ins and outs of that). But, that does not change the fact many people have birthdays all year long and are actually aging-in during this time as well. Confusing but, it can be made sense of with a little guidance.

What generally happens is, folks get confused between what they see on TV with all the pitches about "time running out" and, what they can actually do during the aging-in period. So, let me attempt to de-mystify it a little bit here.

There is a period of time when a person ages-in and becomes eligible for Medicare. Typically, this period of time is three months before the month in which they turn 65 and three months after the month in which they turn 65. Do the math and you will see this is a

seven-month period of time around your birthday. There are a few other exceptions to this eligibility period. But, those will have to be saved for another article or very long-winded phone call for the braver among us!

The first order of business is to obtain your Part A and B (if desired or needed) through Social Security. Without adding a litany of boring details as to qualifications for each, suffice it to say Part A is typically

LONG penalties, you will have to have Part B and Part D (prescription coverage) in place at the time of first becoming eligible. As a reminder, eligibilities are one of those things unique to each person's circumstances so, it is important to know how these things apply to you.

If you choose to obtain a Supplement, commonly called a "Medi-Gap" policy, you will need to also obtain a separate Part D prescription plan as Supplement plans DO NOT INCLUDE such. If you choose to obtain an Advantage plan, the Part D prescription coverage is typically INCLUDED.

As you can see this can, and usually is, a very confusing time for most folks used to having traditional insurance for their whole lives. Suddenly, you are thrust into this new system when everybody and their cousin is calling and/or mailing you every single day with their "better option."

Your best option is the one that best suits you. Maybe it is a great price. Maybe it is a great network of providers. Maybe it is just the peace of mind in knowing you have someone you can rely upon for information when you need it.

If there is only one take away you can have from this article,

it would be to work with someone that can help you navigate the local landscape and help you completely understand this otherwise very confusing time in life.

Happy New Year!

Greg Durette is a qualified, licensed agent with Florida Health Connector providing Medicare insurance throughout the State and is based in Niceville. He has been in the insurance industry for nearly 42 years and can be reached at his office at 850-842-2400 or his mobile at 978-509-2941.



\$0 premium for most folks and Part B for 2024 will typically cost \$185.00 per month. The Part B premium is means tested and can get a little complicated (and expensive)—certainly more complicated than can be described in this article. Again, suffice it to say, some could pay much more or much less, depending on your Modified Adjusted Gross Income from two years prior unless you apply for a break based on current income. There is a form for that.

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 Education

Celebrating a New Cafetorium!

Okaloosa County School District (OCSD) recently hosted a ribbon-cutting at Ruckel Middle School in Niceville for its new Cafetorium building. Cafetoriums are buildings that combine cafeterias and auditoriums, providing versatile spaces for various school activities.



Ruckel Middle School's Cafetorium includes a new STEM room that will double as classroom space and a venue for teacher trainings. The Cafetorium is significantly larger than the original cafeteria, which

will soon be renovated into a new band room. The current band room will become the new chorus room, enhancing the



well-established music program. This project would not have been possible without the half-cent sales tax. "We are deeply grateful to the voters of Okaloosa County for making these projects possible," said

OCSD Superintendent Marcus Chambers. "Your support is transforming our schools and enriching our students' educational experiences. Thank you for helping us build a brighter future for our students!"

READING Paws Inspires Students at Area Schools

The Okaloosa County School District is proud to highlight the remarkable success of the READING Paws Program. This initiative nurtures young readers by pairing them with therapy dogs in a unique and

engaging setting. Through this program, students at Wright Elementary, Kenwood Elementary, Destin Elementary, Bluewater Elementary, and Lewis School are discovering the joy of reading in a supportive and

comforting environment. The READING Paws Program is part of the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.®) initiative, which partners certified therapy dog teams with schools to boost lit-

eracy and confidence among young readers. Scout, a nationally certified R.E.A.D.® dog, visits Wright Elementary weekly to listen to students as they read aloud, offering a fun and stress-free way to improve their reading skills. Similarly, Destin, Bluewater, Kenwood, and Lewis Schools host therapy teams that support their students' literacy journeys.



"Scout has already made a remarkable impact on our students," said Suzanne Boyd, Principal of Wright Elementary. "The enthusiasm and progress we've seen in our young readers are incredible. Scout is more than just a helper—he's a motivator and a friend to our students." Peggy Land, Principal of Kenwood Elementary, shared a similar perspective: "READING Paws is a wonderful addition to our school. Seeing students grow in confidence and joy as they read to these incredible therapy dogs is inspiring. This program brings literacy to life in a truly unique way."

with an Okaloosa student who helped overcome reading challenges years ago. Now 17, she credits her academic success to her experience with the READING Paws program."

Nancy Bown, founder of Dog-Harmony, emphasized the program's broader mission: "The goal of READING Paws is to improve literacy skills in children through the assistance of nationally registered and qualified therapy animal-owner teams. Dog-Harmony has partnered with READING Paws and Intermountain Therapy Animals as an affiliate therapy organization that tests and places therapy dog teams. These teams demonstrate unwavering dedication and have profoundly impacted our community. One team recently reconnected

Superintendent Marcus Chambers praised the program's contributions to student success: "The READING Paws Program exemplifies how creative and compassionate initiatives can transform learning. By fostering a love for reading and building confidence, this program opens doors for our students and shapes their futures. We are incredibly grateful to the therapy teams, volunteers, and community partners who make this possible."

The READING Paws Program continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students across all participating schools, fostering a lifelong love for reading and empowering them to succeed. For more information about the program or to volunteer, please get in touch with hello@dog-harmony.org.



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Next Generation Aircrew Protection Team Conducts AC-130J Vapor Purge Testing

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The Next Generation Aircrew Protection team performed innovative vapor purge testing on an AC-130J Ghost rider gunship at Hurlburt Field from June 24 to December 6, 2024.

The NGAP team's mission is to evaluate how well standard aircraft systems protect aircrews from chemical vapor attacks, identify when it's safe to remove Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear gear; and determine how quickly aircraft can purge harmful chemical vapors. "With the evolving and ever-changing war environment, testing how quickly vapor can be purged from an aircraft, and how protective non-CBRN equipment can be is a key asset to every element of the Department of Defense," said Justin Sperling, an NGAP test engineer "This includes our special operators."

The NGAP team worked with the gunship aircrew to study the chemical environment inside the aircraft during a simulated chemical vapor attack and measure the time it takes for the aircraft to purge the hazardous chemicals while flying.

NGAP has primarily tested



fighter and bomber aircraft but the AC-130J marked a new direction, leading the way for future testing on mobility aircraft. "Air Force Special Operations Command is known for being the first to jump at innovative tactics, and working with the NGAP team was no exception," noted Lt. Michael Rossi, Lead Joint CBRN Aircrew Protection Engineer at the Air Force CBRN Defense Systems Branch. "This directly contributes to development of next-generation

equipment and feeds into new concepts of legacy equipment."

The test begins with a pre-flight spray, followed by the installation of sensors and NGAP team members inside the aircraft to monitor the simulant vapor levels. Once a target concentration is reached the aircraft takes off and sensors continue collecting data as the simulant is purged during flight.

After the test, the data is published in a report uploaded

to the Defense Technical Information Center where it informs the development of CBRN protective gear and aircrew guidelines across the Department of Defense. "Without this information, we would have to rely on older assumptions that aren't representative of what the threat is today," Rossi stated. "This information is helpful to AFSOC because it helps accurately plan for their CBRN operations."

Understanding how quick-

ly Airmen can safely remove chemical protective gear during a chemical attack reduces the burden on both the equipment and the aircrew, allowing them to focus on the mission, explained Sperling. "Seeing what wide-reaching effects a test like this has is the most rewarding part for me," Rossi explained. "This is going to make our aircrew more effective in flight while maintaining their safety."

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2024 Football Guide

Football. Food. Fun. Fans.
Let the Games Begin...



BY SCOTT MILLER

All I want for Christmas is... well, I already have my two front teeth, as the song goes. I credit my mom for that. Why, you ask? Because, as a child, she would never let me or my bro-



ers play hockey.

You see, growing up in Philadelphia in the early 70s, the Philadelphia Flyers were a dominant force in NHL winning several Stanley Cup Championships and the captain of the team was Bobby Clarke.

You couldn't go a day without seeing his smiling face on TV and no front teeth to be seen. It seems that was a common theme among pro hockey players back in those days. And, so, my mom stood firm and said no playing hockey! And she meant



it. To her, football, believe it or not, seemed like a much safer way to go. Maybe that's why I became such an avid football fan. Oh, yes, back to football—I got a little off track for a moment.

December football is here and oh, what fun it is to cheer. We've got the Army Navy game set for December 14 and away we go. Seems like every year there's a new bowl game added to the mix and, why not? These kids deserve it and football fans love it. It will be interesting to watch how the new playoff system shakes out and see who gets crowned National Champion this year! Where will you be watching?

Here are a few of my favorite places to go on game day. I hope to see you there, too!

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 Em-

erald 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 Destin 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...

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Landshark's Pizza

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Continued on page 21

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2024/25 College Football Bowl Games

Friday 12/20

Playoff Game 1st Round Indiana vs. Notre Dame ABC/ESPN 7 p.m.

Saturday 12/21

Playoff Game 1st Round SMU vs. Penn St. TNT 11 a.m.

Playoff Game 1st Round Clemson vs. Texas TNT 3 p.m.

Playoff Game 1st Round Tenn. vs. Ohio St. ABC/ESPN 7 p.m.

Monday 12/23

Myrtle Beach Bowl ESPN 10 a.m.
Idaho Potato Bowl Fresno St. vs. NIU ESPN 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday 12/24

Hawaii Bowl S. Florida vs. San Jose St. ESPN 7 p.m.

Thursday 12/26

Game Above Sports Bowl Pitt vs. Toledo ESPN 1 p.m.

Rate Bowl Rutgers vs. Kansas St. ESPN 4:30 p.m.

68 Ventures Bowl Ark. St. vs. Bowling Green ESPN 8 p.m.

Friday 12/27

Armed Forces Bowl Oklahoma vs. Navy ESPN TBD

Birmingham Bowl Ga. Tech vs. Vandy ESPN TBD

Liberty Bowl Texas Tech vs. Arkansas ESPN 6 p.m.

Holiday Bowl Syracuse vs. Wash. St. FOX 7 p.m.

Las Vegas Bowl USC vs. Texas A&M ESPN 9:30 p.m.

Saturday 12/28

Fenway Bowl U. Conn vs. N. Carolina ESPN 10 a.m.

Pinstripe Bowl Boston College vs. Nebraska ABC 11 a.m.

New Mexico Bowl La. Lafayette vs. TCU ESPN 1:15 p.m.

Pop-Tarts Bowl Iowa St. vs. Miami ABC 2:30 p.m.

Arizona Bowl Miami OH vs. Colorado St. CW 3:30 p.m.

Military Bowl E. Carolina vs. NC St. ESPN 4:45 p.m.

Alamo Bowl BYU vs. Colorado ABC 6:30 p.m.

Independence Bowl La. Tech vs. Army ESPN 8:15 p.m.

Monday 12/30

Music City Bowl Iowa vs. Mizzou ESPN 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday 12/31

ReliaQuest Bowl Alabama vs. Michigan ESPN 11 a.m.

Sun Bowl Louisville vs. Washington CBS 1 p.m.

Citrus Bowl S. Carolina vs. Illinois ABC 2 p.m.

Texas Bowl Baylor vs. LSU ESPN 2:30 p.m.

Fiesta Bowl/Playoff Game Quarterfinal TBD vs. Boise St. ESPN 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday 1/1

Peach Bowl / Playoff Game Quarterfinal TBD vs. Ariz. St. ESPN 12 p.m.

Rose Bowl / Playoff Game Quarterfinal TBD vs. Oregon ESPN 4 p.m.

Sugar Bowl / Playoff Game Quarterfinal TBD vs. UGA ESPN 7:45 p.m.

Thursday 1/2

Gator Bowl Duke vs. Ole Miss ESPN 6:30 p.m.

Friday 1/3

First Responder Bowl N. Texas vs. Texas St. ESPN 3 p.m.

Duke's Mayo Bowl Minnesota vs. Vir. Tech ESPN 6:30 p.m.

Saturday 1/4

Bahamas Bowl Buffalo vs. Liberty ESPN/ESPN2 10 a.m.

Thursday 1/9

Orange Bowl/Playoff Game Semifinal TBD ESPN 6:30 p.m.

Friday 1/10

Cotton Bowl/Playoff Game Semifinal TBD ESPN 6:30 p.m.

Monday 1/20

National Championship Game TBD ESPN 6:30 p.m.

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NFL Football Schedule

Week 18
Saturday, Jan. 4 and Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025

<p>San Francisco 49ers at Arizona Cardinals — TBD</p> <p>Carolina Panthers at Atlanta Falcons — TBD</p> <p>Cleveland Browns at Baltimore Ravens — TBD</p> <p>Washington Commanders at Dallas Cowboys — TBD</p> <p>Kansas City Chiefs at Denver Broncos — TBD</p> <p>Minnesota Vikings at Detroit Lions — TBD</p> <p>Chicago Bears at Green Bay Packers — TBD</p> <p>Jacksonville Jaguars at Indianapolis Colts — TBD</p>	<p>Seattle Seahawks at Los Angeles Rams — TBD</p> <p>Los Angeles Chargers at Las Vegas Raiders — TBD</p> <p>Buffalo Bills at New England Patriots — TBD</p> <p>Miami Dolphins at New York Jets — TBD</p> <p>New York Giants at Philadelphia Eagles — TBD</p> <p>Cincinnati Bengals at Pittsburgh Steelers — TBD</p> <p>New Orleans Saints at Tampa Bay Buccaneers — TBD</p> <p>Houston Texans at Tennessee Titans — TBD</p>
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BEST PLACES

continued from page 18

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.

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1128 E. John Sims Pkwy.
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Landsharkspizza.com

FUBAR Pizza Bar

Looking for a sports bar to call home? Welcome to FUBAR pizza bar nestled on Okaloosa Island. Locally owned and family friendly, Fubar is known for its almost-famous pizza and wings and carries all sports games and live entertainment, along with impeccable service. You can en-



joy all that while enjoying the waterfront view.

FUBAR has plenty of games for the kids along with pool tables, corn hole, dart boards and more. When out on the water all day, come dock your boat on one of FUBAR'S boat slips and enjoy the incredible view. Feel free to bring along your furry friends to join you on the patio.

Need the perfect space to host your holiday party or event? FUBAR is equipped with numerous private sections with the option of having a private bar as well. The outside deck can hold up to 300 people comfortably and can be sectioned off to fit your needs. In addition to the pizza and wings, FUBAR can



customize a menu for you from Italian food to Prime Rib and everything in between. Open 7 days from 11 a.m.-2 a.m.

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Tailfins Waterfront Grill

Hey football fans, Tailfins Waterfront Grill is calling YOU! That's right y'all, Destin's favorite season is here and there's not a better place in Destin to come and watch your team play.

Looking for a locals' favorite breakfast before the game? Start your day off right with Tailfins breakfast from 8-11 a.m., seven days a week. Enjoy a classic



breakfast with bacon and eggs, a seafood or Cajun omelet and even a kid's smiley pancake. Be sure to order up a round of mimosas and bloody marys. Watch Tailfins' sushi chef create right in front of your eyes. Enjoy some of your favorite food and drinks, scrumptious early bird dinner specials Monday to Friday, 4-6 p.m. Happy hour from 4-6 p.m. Monday through Friday, featuring \$24 domestic bottle buckets, \$7 house wines and well drinks and \$5 Long Island iced teas. Live music on the docks. Tailfins is a go-to destination for sports watching featuring more than 70 big screen TVs showing all college football games and Sunday Ticket.

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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

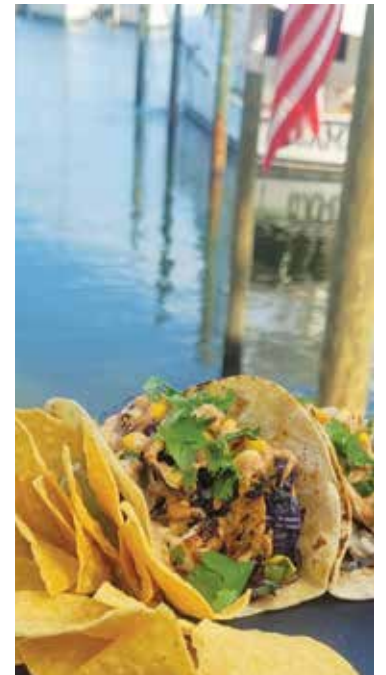
brown casserole. Breakfast burritos are rolled and ready daily! Choose from andouille, bacon, chorizo or veggie. Or tantalize your taste buds with a made-to-order breakfast sandwich on croissants or bagel with two eggs and cheese and then choose if you want to add JoJo's homemade smoked jalapeño beef 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 know your best coffee and mouth-watering edibles are waiting for you at JoJo's in this new year!

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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.



Dec. 31: New Year's Eve Party with Diamond Dan DJ
Sundays: Brunch 9 a.m.-1 p.m. buffet style, bottomless Mimosas!
Sat., Jan. 25, Gumbo Tasting! 4-6 p.m.
Wednesdays: Kids Eat Free

(with adult entrée purchase, 1 child per adult)
Thursdays: Open Mic/Karaoke 6-10 p.m.
College Playoff Games: Game Day Specials!
Jan. 8: Prime Rib Night 5-9 p.m. & Wine Tasting 5-7 p.m., Chess Night 6 p.m.
Jan. 10: National Oyster Rockefeller Day — Specials
Jan. 11: 16th Anniversary Celebration — Food Samples, Prize Giveaways 6-9 p.m., Ronny Dean Garrett 6-10 p.m.
Jan. 22: Prime Rib Night 5-9 p.m. & Cocktail Tasting 5-7 p.m., Traveling Painter 5:30 p.m.
Jan. 25: Jody Lucas 6-9 p.m.
Oyster bar hours: Mon-Thurs 3-10 p.m.; Fri-Sat 11 a.m.-mid-night; Sun Noon-9 p.m.
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Sundays: Brunch 9am-1pm
Wednesdays: Kids Eat Free (with adult entrée purchase, 1 child per adult)
Thursdays: Open Mic/Karaoke 6-10pm
College Playoff Games: Game Day Specials

Jan. 8: Prime Rib Night 5-9pm & Wine Tasting 5-7pm, Chess Night 6pm
Jan. 10: National Oyster Rockefeller Day — Specials
Jan. 11: 16th Anniversary Celebration — Food Samples — Prize Giveaways 6-9pm, Ronny Dean Garrett 6-10pm
Jan. 22: Prime Rib Night 5-9pm & Cocktail Tasting 5-7pm, Traveling Painter 5:30pm
Jan. 25: Jody Lucas 6-9pm
Jan. 31: National Hot Chocolate Day
Visit our Facebook Page for Event Updates

CAA and South Walton Artificial Reef Association Reveal Designs Selected For 7th Underwater Museum of Art Installation

The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA) and South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA) are proud to reveal the five sculpture designs chosen by jury for permanent exhibition in the seventh installation of the Underwater Museum of Art (UMA).

The 2025 installation will include the following sculptures: Seahorse by Jessica Bradsher (Greenville, NC), Concretion by William Braithwaite (United Kingdom), The Neptunian Oak by Nathan Hoffman (Highlandville, MO), Happy Hour by Sarah Wilkinson (United Kingdom), and Hometown by Mandy Yourick (Panama City, FL).

Named in 2018 by TIME Magazine as one of 100 "World's Greatest Places," and recipient of the 2023 CODA Award for Collaboration of the Year, the UMA is the cornerstone of the CAA's Art In Public Spaces Program and augments SWARA's mission of creating marine habitat and expanding fishery populations while providing enhanced creative, cultural, economic and educational opportunities for the benefit, education and enjoyment of residents, students and visitors in South Walton.

UMA sculptures are deployed with SWARA's existing USACOA and FDEP permitted artificial reef projects that includes nine nearshore reefs located within one nautical mile of the shore in approximately 58 feet of water. The 2025 installation will join the 47 sculptures previously deployed on a one-acre permit patch of seabed off Grayton Beach State Park, further expanding the nation's first permanent underwater museum.

Deployment of the 2025 UMA sculptures is slated for Summer.

Project and sculpture sponsorships are available. Please contact Gabby Callaway at gabby@culturalartsalliance.com for details.

The Underwater Museum of Art is the first permanent underwater sculpture garden in the U.S. Located in the Gulf of Mexico, off of Walton Coun-



ty, Florida. The museum lies at a depth of 58-feet and at a distance of .93-miles from the shore of Grayton Beach State Park. Each year, a juried selection of sculptural works, drawn from artists throughout the world, is installed in the underwater garden.

The sculptures quickly attract a wide variety of marine life and, over time, metamorphize into a living reef. This eco-tourism attraction not only entices art lovers and divers from around the country and around the globe, it provides a much-needed habitat for local marine life and fisheries as well as providing marine scientists, wildlife management professionals, ecologists, and students, with an opportunity to study marine life and measure the impact of artificial reef systems on the Gulf ecosystem.

2025 UMA Sculpture Artists

SEAHORSE artist Jessica Bradsher is based in Greenville, NC. As an outdoor sculpture artist, she often creates with the themes of horses and hair. Seahorse will be her 9th full size welded horse and the piece will incorporate a fun twist on its mane and tail as they appear to flow with the ocean waters.

CONCRETION is a concrete and steel sculpture by artist William Braithwaite. Concretion will add an interesting architectural intervention in the Gulf, asking a question about the relationship of art, architecture and the natural world.

Readers may recognize Mis-

souri-based artist Nathan Hoffman from his 2024 UMA sculpture

POSEIDON'S THRONE. For the 2025 installation, Hoffman will create **THE NEPTUNIAN OAK**, a conduit for life and movement although being a representation of a dead and lifeless tree at its first landing on the ocean floor.

HAPPY HOUR by UK based artist Sarah Wilkinson is based on a margarita cocktail glass and provides the visiting divers with time to enjoy an oversized cocktail while diving

the underwater museum site.

HOMETOWN by Panama City artist Mandy Yourick uses

simple shapes to explore the multiple meanings of home. The inspiration for this sculpture is the site itself. The Gulf waters, specifically off the shore of Grayton Beach, which are home to Yourick. This is where she first learned to swim in open water and where she spent many years making memories with friends on the shore. As the sixth generation of her family to be born and raised in the Florida Panhandle, she has deep connections to the area and is committed to the longevity of its biodiversity. Yourick hopes this playful sculpture becomes a hometown for generations of marine life to come.

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Emerald Coast Classic Champions!

By MIKE MAHON

Alabama– Bay Bracket Title

Alabama used a balanced scoring attack and pressure defense to stop Clemson, 73-39, in the championship of the Bay Bracket in the inaugural Emerald Coast Classic women's basketball tournament in November.

Graduate guard Zaay Green, named the outstanding performer of the tournament, collected a game-high 17 points, six assists and two steals to lead the charge by the Crimson Tide.

She was joined on the all-tournament team by teammate Aali-

yah Nye, a second-team all-SEC performer last year, who scored 14 points while dishing out four assists.

Guad Sarah Ashlee Barker, a preseason first team All-SEC selection, tallied 15 points while collecting a season-high five steals. Alabama sophomore forward Essence Cody, who also scored 15 points, grabbed a game-high nine rebounds.

Barker, held to just two points in the first half on 1 of 8 shooting, exploded for 13 points in the second half. Alabama forced Clemson into 18 turnovers, while dominating the paint, outscoring Clemson, 42-20.

Alabama head coach Kel-

ly Curry praised local officials who hosted this inaugural tournament. "I've played in a lot of beach atmospheres and they have all been wonderful experiences," stated Curry. "But, I just feel like, number one, the quality of our host with Northwest Florida and the facility here is second to none. The ability to be right on the beach, is just a beautiful setting."

Can lightning strike twice for the Crimson Tide? The Alabama men played in the 2023 Emerald Coast Classic and then advanced to the 2024 NCAA Final Four.

Other members of the Bay Bracket All-Tournament team were Loyal McQueen, Clemson; Mia Moore, Clemson; and Maddie Walsh, UAB.

Creighton– Beach Bracket Title

Morgan Maly and Lauren Jensen combined for 49 points, including 12 three-point baskets, igniting Creighton to an 86-59 victory past Syracuse in the championship of the Beach Bracket in the inaugural Emerald Coast Classic women's basketball tournament in November.

"We executed and the ball went in," said Creighton coach



Jim Flanery. "Sometimes you might execute, but the ball doesn't go in. When you shoot the ball as well as we did early, you kind of demoralize the opponent."

Creighton finished with 28 assists on 31 baskets, shooting 53.4 percent (31-58) from the floor. The Bluejays made 15 three-point baskets.

Maly, a senior forward, tallied 28 points, going a perfect 6-for-6 beyond the three-point arc.

Jensen scored 21 points, making all five of her three-point shots in the first half. It marked

Jensen's 26th career 20-plus scoring game and Maly's 23rd career 20-plus scoring game.

Jensen was named the most outstanding player in the Beach Bracket and joined on the all-tournament team with Maly. Other members of the Beach Bracket All-Tournament team were Kyra Wood, Syracuse; Georgia Woolley, Syracuse; and Grace Slaughter, Missouri. Freshman reserve forward Keira Scott led Syracuse with 11 points. The Orange shot 35.1 percent (20-57) from the floor, while committing 18 turnovers.





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Continued on page 35

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What Version of You Will You Be?



By **STEPHENIE CRAIG,**
JOURNEY BRAVELY

It's easier to be loving and

kind when you agree and have things in common with others. But, what happens when you're sitting around the table and someone shares an opinion wildly different than yours? Or, what happens when someone you don't really know expresses ideas counterintuitive to your beliefs or values? What happens when someone is rude and critical of your thoughts and beliefs? What version of yourself shows up in that moment?



for? Do you want to be known for being right or for having healthy relationships? Do you want to be known for making people feel small or lifting people up?

So, in a world with so many conflicting perspectives, how do you become a loving, mature version of yourself?

not equal less. When surrounded by others who hold similar views to your own, you can assume people with different views/values/attitudes are less righteous, less intelligent, less moral, less patriotic, less religious, have less inherent worth, and are generally less than you. Viewing others as less leads to self-righteous posture that repels connection and relationship.

Consider you don't have the corner on values definitions. Values such as integrity, kindness, decency, morality, and freedom have various expressions. While it is important that values have some commonly agreed upon definitions, it can be helpful to remember defining values incredibly specifically assumes you are right and most everyone else is wrong.

Hold fast to your values while making space for others. Defining and living by your values is a healthy pursuit. And, remember that others are walking through the same process with different value backgrounds.

Continued on page 35

Culture currently encourages polarized thought and cutting people out of your life when you disagree. News and social media feed the narrative of each person having freedom to do and say what they want regardless of how it impacts others. And, legally, in most cases you do have that freedom. However, it might be wise to take a moment to reflect on who you want to be regarding your long-term character goals.

When you get to the end of life, how do you want to have shown up in the world? Do you want to be known for what you were against or what you were

8 Ways to Engage Your Loving, Mature Version of Self

Investigate value origins. Values originate from sources including family of origin, national origin, faith background, generational influences, trauma background, racial background, ethnic background, media influences, political background, life experience, and many others. Reflect on the tapestry of your own values background. Remember the above variables have many expressions that have shaped another's values.

Consider different does



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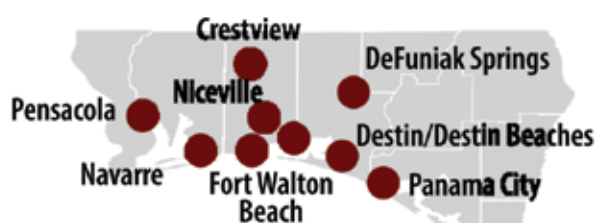


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 Wellness

Is Sleep Apnea Keeping You Awake?

By KELLY STALNAKER

Sleep apnea is a potentially dangerous sleep disorder in which breathing repeatedly starts and stops all night long. There are two common types of sleep apnea: obstructive and central. With obstructive, the muscles in the back of the throat relax too much, causing an obstruction and blocking the airway. Central, on the other hand, happens when the brain fails to control the muscles that

are used to take in air. Symptoms of sleep apnea include loud or abnormal snoring, daytime sleepiness, irritability, depression and waking up tired even after a full night's sleep.

Sleep apnea is a common disorder around the world, affecting nearly 20% of the population. And according to the National Sleep Foundation, it has been reported that roughly 85% of individuals with sleep apnea do not even know they

have it. This is an alarming statistic as there are numerous possible complications if it is left untreated, such as hypertension, heart disease, heart failure, stroke, cognitive/memory issues and more. Fortunately, getting a sleep apnea diagnosis is not difficult. After a thorough discussion and examination with your doctor, he or she will recommend a sleep study. Sleep studies can be done in a lab, or even in the comfort of your own bed!

Treatment options for sleep apnea have improved over the last several years and are now more comfortable and accessible. Lifestyle changes, such as getting regular activity, limiting caffeine and alcohol, quitting smoking, and losing weight, can help treat obstructive sleep apnea. But, if further intervention is required, oral devices and surgical implants are now available. And the more commonly used CPAP machine has also evolved significantly. Considered the “gold standard” of sleep apnea treatment, a CPAP machine is designed to regulate breathing during sleep. It uses a system of tubing and a facemask to gently blow air and open up your airway while you sleep. CPAP machines are now much smaller, about the size of a tissue box. And much quieter,



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too. Your spouse could possibly still hear the machine, but it will likely be quieter than the alternative—snoring! Hundreds of facemasks are now available for the CPAP machines, increasing patient comfort and ease of use.

If you think you might be suffering from sleep apnea, do not delay in getting treatment! Talk with your doctor right away. And, if you're prescribed a CPAP machine, stop by and see us at J&B Medical to get the process started. Even if your doctor sends your prescription to another company, we can still help you as you have the final say in your healthcare. There are so

many benefits to having a local provider; we handle everything in-house, from acquiring the necessary medical documentation to billing and preparing orders. And, best of all, we are available here in the office or by phone every Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., and we're currently accepting new Medicare and Tricare patients! The benefits of CPAP treatment on your quality of life are immeasurable as it is hard to determine the true value of a good night's sleep. You'll have more energy, focus, stamina and overall better health once your sleep apnea is well controlled.

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Three Common Ketamine Myths



The staff at Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions in Destin confirms that providing safe, affordable, therapeutic IV ketamine therapy is their number one goal. However, their commitment extends beyond that. “We’re also dedicated to enlightening individuals on its potential benefits,” says owner Melanie Yost. “Our experience shows that many prospective clients delve into internet research on ketamine, often encountering information that leads to misunderstandings about its use and effects. In response, we aim to clarify some of the most common misconceptions surrounding this treatment modality.”

According to Yost, below are three of the most common misconceptions surrounding the use of ketamine.

The Misunderstood K-hole Phenomenon: The concept of the “K-hole” is frequently misconstrued online, painted with a broad brush of negativity that describes an intense disconnection from reality. While it’s true that ketamine’s psychedelic nature can induce such states, Yost attests that emphasizing only the negative overshadows its therapeutic potential. The psychedelic experience, under clinical settings, offers a unique opportunity for self-reflection and emotional healing, particularly for those wrestling with deep-seated psychological issues. “It’s critical to understand that these challenging experiences are not the treatment’s goal but can be a part of the journey to recovery,” she says. “Our team is adept at navigating these moments, ensuring patient safety and comfort through vigilant monitoring and intervention when necessary.”



Beyond a Simple Cure-All: The narrative that ketamine is a miracle cure requires nuance. Indeed, ketamine has been shown to stimulate neuroplasticity, leading to significant improvements in conditions like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and certain types of chronic pain. “However, it’s not a universal remedy,” affirms Yost. “Success in treatment often involves a holistic approach, including therapy and lifestyle changes, to fully



integrate the insights and emotional breakthroughs facilitated by ketamine therapy.” This comprehensive approach reinforces the idea that ketamine is a powerful tool in a broader therapeutic arsenal, not a stand-alone solution.

Rethinking the Need for Profound Experiences: There’s a common belief that treatment efficacy is directly tied to the intensity of the psychedelic experience. “This is a misconception; healing and improvement can occur in subtle, gentle ways as well. The therapeutic process is highly individualized, with some patients experiencing dramatic visions or emotional epiphanies, while others may

encounter more understated shifts in perception and feeling,” explains Yost. “Our clinical observations affirm that the spectrum of experiences with ketamine therapy is broad, and each patient’s journey is valid and valuable, regardless of its dramatic qualities.”

For those contending with severe depression, anxiety, PTSD or chronic inflammatory pain, and curious about how ketamine therapy might provide relief, Yost and the team at Complete Ketamine Solutions welcomes inquiries and discussions. “Our mission is to provide not only treatment, but also education and support, demystifying the process and empowering our clients with knowledge and understanding,” she adds.

For more information, call 850-786-2051 or visit CompleteKetamineSolutions.com.

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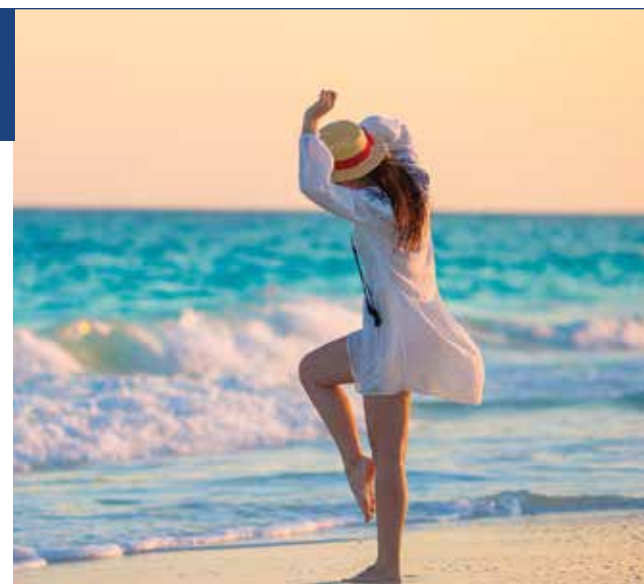
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The Correlation Between Dementia and Exercise: A Path to Better Brain Health



BY KASSIA GARFIELD, OWNER,
MAXSTRENGTH FITNESS,
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The more that modern medicine continues to advance, there is a strong link between a lack of exercise and the risk of dementia. Dementia, a general term for a decline in cognitive ability severe enough to interfere with daily life, affects millions of people worldwide. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form. But, as most people know, dementia varies amongst people. While there is no cure for dementia, research has consistently shown that certain lifestyle choices can help reduce the risk or delay its onset. One of the



most promising interventions is regular physical exercise.

How Exercise Affects the Brain

Exercise has a variety of physical benefits, such as improving cardiovascular health, managing weight, strengthening muscles and reducing injury. Exercise is not just for the body, but also the brain. When you exercise, blood flow to the brain increases, delivering more oxygen and nutrients, which can help support healthy brain function. More specifically, physical activity promotes the growth of new brain cells in the area critical for memory and learning.

Exercise and Dementia Risk

A study published in *The Lancet* found that physical inactivity is a major modifiable risk factor for dementia. The key here is "modifiable," which means controllable. Not genet-

ic, but LIFESTYLE changes. The study indicated that engaging in regular exercise could potentially reduce the risk of developing dementia by up to 30%. In comparison, the bottom 10%

of exercisers, or sedentary people, have almost double the risk of dementia onset.

Research also suggests that exercise can protect brain cells from damage and reduce the formation of plaques, a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. There are other factors that can help reduce the risk of dementia, like decreased inflammation in the body and improving vascular health, both achieved by exercise.

Exercise as a Treatment for Dementia

Exercise's benefits also carry over to improving the quality of life for individuals already living with the condition. For those with mild cognitive impairment or early-stage dementia, exercise can slow the progression of cognitive decline. Regular physical activity has been shown to improve mood, reduce anxiety and depression, and enhance physi-

cal function. Strength training specifically can improve a sense of independence and well-being in those affected.

A study conducted by researchers at the University of British Columbia found that individuals with Alzheimer's disease who participated in regular aerobic exercise showed significant improvements in memory and overall cognitive function compared to those who did not exercise. These findings underscore the potential of exercise not only as a preventative measure, but also as a therapeutic intervention for people with dementia.

The Types of Exercise Most Beneficial for Brain Health

While all forms of exercise offer benefits, some are particularly well-suited for promoting brain health. Strength training exercises, such as weightlifting or resistance band workouts, have also been shown to be effective for maintaining cognitive function by enhancing brain plasticity and supporting overall brain structure.

Additionally, aerobic exercise and activities that engage both the body and the mind, like yoga

and tai chi, are beneficial for dementia prevention and management. These practices combine physical movement with mental focus and have been shown to improve balance, flexibility, and mood, while also reducing stress—factors that contribute to brain health.

Conclusion

The link between dementia and exercise is clear: regular physical activity plays a crucial role in both preventing cognitive decline and improving the lives of those affected by dementia. By increasing blood flow to the brain, encouraging neurogenesis, and reducing inflammation, exercise supports brain health in numerous ways. For individuals looking to reduce their dementia risk or manage symptoms, incorporating exercise into daily routines can be one of the most effective and accessible strategies for promoting long-term cognitive well-being. If you need help getting into a good exercise routine, MaxStrength Fitness of Niceville can help! We provide all one-on-one personal strength training. Give us a call! **850-373-4450**.

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Healing in Harmony: Acupuncture's Role in Modern Medicine



BY DR. KAREN DEVORE

In the story of the tortoise and the hare, there's a lesson we often overlook—the power of steady, patient progress over quick, short-lived victories. True wellness, much like the journey of the tortoise, is about a measured approach. Acupuncture, which has been practiced for thousands of years, aligns with this principle, offering a way to support the body's natural healing processes through slow, purposeful adjustments. It's a reminder that lasting health isn't achieved overnight, but cultivat-

ed over time.

Acupuncture, in its traditional form, works by targeting specific energy pathways, or meridians, within the body. These meridians are thought to carry "chi," or vital energy, and when they become blocked or disrupted, physical symptoms often arise. The careful placement of needles along these pathways reestablishes flow, reducing inflammation and pain, and promoting harmony within the body. In this way, acupuncture doesn't just address surface symptoms but fosters an inner balance that can profoundly support the body's resilience and overall health.

While traditional acupuncture is widely known, the field has evolved to include specialized techniques like Neuro-Acupuncture. Neuro-Acupuncture focuses on conditions that affect the central nervous system, such as stroke recovery, nerve pain, and various neurological disorders and diseases. By blending traditional acupuncture meth-

ods with insights from neurology, Neuro-Acupuncture can help restore functionality in ways that complement conventional treatments. Having studied this technique extensively across the globe and in some of China's most prestigious hospitals, Dr. Lisa Forsythe, Tortoise Clinic's Acupuncture Physician, witnessed its transformative potential. This type of acupuncture integrates Eastern philosophy with Western medical understanding, offering patients an evidence-based approach to address complex neurological challenges.

Today, acupuncture is recognized as a valuable therapeutic modality across some of the world's top institutions, including Johns Hopkins and Sloan Kettering, where it's used alongside conventional treatment protocols. Studies have demonstrated its safety and effectiveness, particularly for pain management, stress reduction, and immune support. For patients dealing with chronic conditions

or those recovering from illness or injury, acupuncture offers a natural, non-invasive way to aid in the body's recovery process and enhance the effects of traditional medical treatments.

At the Tortoise Clinic, we take a holistic approach, recognizing that true health lies in addressing the root causes of imbalance. Alongside acupuncture, we offer an extensive dispensary with customized Chinese medicine herbal formulas and medical grade supplements to further support the body's natural defenses. These herbal therapies work in tandem with acupuncture, nourishing the body from within and offering additional support to systems under stress.

Acupuncture isn't a quick fix; it's a commitment to a path of healing. Each session builds on the previous one, gradual-



ly promoting equilibrium and resilience in the body. Like the tortoise's journey, acupuncture's effects unfold gradually, each treatment moving us closer to a balanced, sustainable state of well-being.

I invite those who are curious to explore this path and learn more about what acupuncture has to offer. In a world often focused on fast solutions, acupuncture offers an opportunity to step back and engage with our health in a meaningful, enduring way—one that prioritizes the journey as much as the destination.

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Eglin Federal Credit Union Infuses \$1.9 Million Into the Community Through Local Nonprofits

Eglin Federal Credit Union has donated \$1.9 million into the community through local nonprofits. Monetary donations were made to the Air Force Enlisted Village, Children in Crisis, Emerald Coast Fitness Foundation, Fisher House of the Emerald Coast, Fresh Start for Children and Families, Habitat for Humanity of Okaloosa County, Habitat for Humanity of Walton County, Okaloosa Public Schools Foundation, the Southeastern Credit Union Foundation and the United Way Emerald Coast.

“Eglin Federal Credit Union is very excited to be able to make this investment in our community,” said President/CEO of Eglin Federal Credit Union Cathie Staton. “Our Charitable Donation Account performed well, allowing us to make such a significant contribution. The intention of the distribution is to satisfy needs within our commu-

nity that align with Eglin FCU’s Mission, Vision and Values, while making a positive impact on the communities where our members live, work, worship or attend school.”

Projects the donation will help fund:

1. Air Force Enlisted Village – benefits our nation’s heroes and defenders

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2. Children in Crisis – impacts lives of vulnerable children and families

The creation of a thrift store and transit vehicles

3. Emerald Coast Fit-



Eglin Federal Credit Union infuses \$1.9 million into the community through local nonprofits.

ness Foundation – provides facilities and programs for youth, teens, the disabled, and seniors in our area who use pools for life safety skills, exercise, competition and rehabilitation

Capital improvements
Kids Water Safety Campaign

4. Fisher House of the Emerald Coast – provides military families with a home away from home at Eglin AFB, keeping them together during treatment of serious illness or

therapy
Capital improvements

5. Fresh Start for Children and Families – helps homeless families with children obtain self-sufficiency

A storage facility next door to their office building at 10 Bobo-link St.

6. Habitat for Humanity of Okaloosa County – helps provide affordable housing by bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope in Okaloosa County

The construction and completion of two homes in Crestview.

7. Habitat for Humanity of Walton County – helps provide affordable housing by bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope in Walton County

Contribution toward the completion of Hope Village Neighborhood, the first Habitat for Humanity neighborhood in DeFuniak Springs, Walton County

A Restore of Walton County Delivery Truck

8. Okaloosa Public Schools Foundation – ensures those students who are motivated and able to go to college have the financial resources to do so

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Continued on next page

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Sean of the South: New Year



BY SEAN DIETRICH

The misperception about New Year's is that it's supposed to be a happy occasion. Sort of like Christmas. Or a birthday party.

But it's not Christmas. New Year's represents the end of something. And goodbyes are not joyous.

New Year's is also a beginning. Beginnings are not entirely happy affairs, either. Beginnings are frightening. You have no idea what you're in for. Could be good. Could be bad.

This year your wife could win the lottery. And when you get home, she might scream, "We won the lottery, honey! Pack your bags!"

"What?" you might reply.

"Should I pack for the beach or the mountains?"

"I don't care!" she might answer. "Just pack your bags and get out of my house!"

Sometimes the worst news you can get is good news.

In many ways, last year was a rough one. Six of my close friends died. I was a pallbearer twice. That wasn't happy.

But last year was also a year I accumulated new friends.

It all started when I adopted a blind dog. Which I wrote about in this column. Which led to me getting invited to schools for the blind.

I spoke at the Helen Keller Art Show. There, I met Henrietta, who has blindness due to a mitochondrial disease. She has practically grown up in hospitals. One of the happiest people I know. "I'm not fearless," Henrietta said. "I'm brave. There's a difference."

I learned how to use a white cane in the hallways of the Calhoun School for the Deaf and Blind. Whereupon a little blind girl traced my face with her little hands and sang "You Are So Beautiful."

I visited Alabama Institute for the Blind and Deaf, where a



little boy felt my face, and said, "Will you hug me so I know what you feel like?"

I met a cheerful 17-year-old girl named Morgan. We were at the Service Dogs Alabama training facility.

Morgan has paralysis on the left side of her body, frequent seizures, diabetes. She has low vision, and is blind in one eye. Today, she is a freshman at UAB. Totally independent, thanks to Clarabelle, the black Lab who has saved her life on more than one occasion.

I'll never forget when Morgan squeezed my hand and said, "You have a choice to be happy or sad. And each moment you

must consciously make that choice."

I inherited a blind goddaughter named Becca.

I met a kid named Owen, who came to one of my shows. He underwent brain surgery that separates the left from the right hemisphere. He hugged me and said, "You're shorter than I thought."

I met a young woman who is blind, who was a national Braille reading champion. She held my hands and in a happy voice, said, "You're officially one of us

now."

In only one year, I was sort of welcomed into the Blind and Deaf community. I have no idea how this happened. Or why. And I don't know what it means.

But I know one thing. And this one thing was told to me by a young man who could not see, hear, or speak. Our conversation was translated by a tactile sign language interpreter.

He said to me, "When I first went blind, I told my mom that this is not the end, Mom. This is just the beginning of an adventure."

And I can't think of better words to begin the new year.

EGLIN

continued from previous page

9. The Southeastern Credit Union Foundation – helps further the impact of Disaster Relief Funds for necessities like food, water, shelter, and more, providing support for immediate and long-term recovery

Disaster relief, especially in the wakes of Hurricanes Helene and Milton

10. United Way Emerald Coast – helps further the efforts for serving and supporting Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed individuals (ALICE)

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New Year's Resolutions: A Journey of Renewal for 2025



BY PASTOR DOUG STAUFFER

On December 31, the clock strikes midnight, and one second later, we step into 2025. Many hearts will be full of hope, eyes fixed on the horizon. Like every new year, the coming year brings a fresh slate, a chance to start again, grow and live more purposefully. But how often do our New Year's resolutions fade as quickly as they are made? This year, let's aim higher. What if our resolutions were not just about temporary change, but were rooted in eternal truth?

God's Vision for Renewal

The Bible reminds us that change is not just possible—God promises change. “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In Christ, the

old—our mistakes, regrets and failures—are swept away, and we are made new! This divine renewal serves as the best foundation for our goals.

When we lean on God, the Bible reminds us that transformation is attainable. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13) isn't just a cliché; it's a declaration. This year, let's anchor our resolutions in God's strength, not our own or that of others.

Resolutions That Matter Most

Here are five key areas where I believe we can align our aspirations with God's purpose:

Spiritual Growth: Why not deepen your connection with the Creator this year? Resolve to pray daily, immerse yourself in scripture, and seek opportunities to serve others. The intimacy you will build with God will transform your life and all those within your sphere of influence.

Physical Health: The Believer's body serves as a temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Caring for it serves as an act of worship. Set realistic goals for movement, rest, and nourishment—honoring God through stewarding His gift of health.

Mental and Emotional Well-being:

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Guard your mind and heart by meditating on God's word, finding support for struggles, and seeking peace that surpasses understanding.

Relationships: Our faith thrives in community relationships. This year, let's resolve to forgive more freely, love more deeply, and invest time in relationships that reflect Christ's love.

Financial Stewardship:

Proverbs 3:9-10 calls us to “Honour the Lord with thy substance.” Create a budget that prioritizes generosity, responsibility and faith. Your giving could fundamentally impact lives.

Practical Steps for a Meaningful Year

- Start each day with a devotional or scripture memory challenge.
- Begin a “Gratitude Journal” that reminds you of God's daily provisions and blessings.
- Schedule time to reconnect with loved ones or mentor someone in faith.
- Commit to eating better, moving more and resting well.
- Track your finances and



pray over your spending choices; not just some spending, but all of it.

A Year of Purpose & Hope

Let's approach 2025 not with fleeting ambition, but with a deep resolve to glorify God in every aspect of our lives. Meaningful change starts with Him—He's the author of transformation, the source of our strength and the reason for hope.

So, as you pen your resolutions, pray over them. Dream big. Trust God for the journey ahead. This could be the year when you step into the abundant life He's prepared for you.

The Greatest Resolution

Let your greatest resolution be to seek God with all your heart. When you do, God promises that everything else falls into place. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteous-

ness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)

Think of the calendar as representing the pages of your life. January 1, 2025, marks a new opportunity to focus on faith, hope and renewal. Start or continue an unforgettable journey with God at your helm. All of us probably remember the license plates, “God is my co-pilot.” Change your perspective from God is your co-pilot to God is your pilot!

This renewed perspective shifts the focus from us being in control (with God merely assisting) to God controlling entirely as we surrender to Him. When God pilots your life, you recognize His authority, trust His perfect wisdom and depend on His guidance and timing. Let go of the steering wheel and let God chart your course and direct your ways. **Happy New Year!**




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SEASIDE RACE

continued from page 24

the educational experiences of students at Seaside Neighborhood School™ and Seacoast Collegiate High School.

“The Seaside School™ Half Marathon + 5K is a cornerstone of our fundraising efforts, and the support we receive from participants, sponsors and the community is invaluable,” said Teresa Horton, Executive Director of the Seaside School Foundation™. “This event not only raises crucial funds, but also brings together a diverse group of individuals who share a passion for education and community, making a lasting impact on the future of our students.”

“It’s not just about the race itself—runners and their families fill Seaside’s Central Square, enjoying our shops and restaurants throughout the entire weekend,” said Kevin Boyle, General Manager, Seaside Community Development Corporation. “What makes it even more special is that every race registration, ticket sold and silent auction item won raises

funds for vital programs at the charter school, making a direct impact on the students’ education. Personally, after nearly 16 years of being a part of this incredible weekend, it’s inspiring to see how it continues to be a milestone event for our community.”

Race weekend kicks off on Friday, February 14th from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., with the highly anticipated Taste of the Race.

The excitement continues on Saturday, February 15th, with the Race Expo from 12-4 p.m. at Seaside Neighborhood School™, where runners can pick up their race packets and explore offerings from sponsors and vendors. Locals’ Packet Pickup is Thursday, February 13th, from 3:30-7:30 p.m. at Seacoast Collegiate High School.

The main events take place on Sunday, February 16th, with the Half Marathon starting at 7 a.m. and the 5K at 7:30 a.m. along the iconic Scenic Highway 30A, offering breathtaking views of the Coastal Dune Lakes and picturesque communities. The race is US-

ATF certified and serves as a qualifier for both the NYC and Chicago Marathons, making it a must-do for serious runners. The weekend concludes with an after-race party featuring entertainment, local food and beverages, and an awards ceremony to celebrate the participants’ achievements.

“The philanthropic funds raised from this event are instrumental in supporting our mission to foster the success of every student, both academically and personally,” said Dr. Tom Miller, Executive Director of the Seaside School™. “Through the dedication of our community and the impact of this race, we are able to provide our students with a personalized learning approach to prepare them for college and beyond.”

The Seaside School™ Half Marathon has earned numerous accolades, including being ranked the #4 Flattest Half Marathon in the U.S. by USA Today Sports and recognized as one of the Best Seaside Road Races in the U.S. by Outside-Online.com. As one of the largest events on 30A, the race



draws over 12,000 attendees annually, making it a signature event in Northwest Florida.

The success of race weekend would not be possible without the dedication of over 500 volunteers, including students, teachers and parents from the Seaside School. “Their hard work and dedication make this event possible, and we are truly thankful for their commitment to our school and our mission,” said Kim Mixson, Prin-

cipal of Seaside Neighborhood School™.

Registration for the Seaside School™ Half Marathon + 5K includes an exclusive gift from the Swag + Merch Sponsor, The Seaside Style™, a commemorative race medal and t-shirt with artwork from renowned local artist, Billie Gaffrey, and much more. Special discounts are available for military personnel, first responders and educators. RunSeasideFL.com.

WHAT VERSION

continued from page 26

You can be clear about what you believe while respecting the humanity of those with different views.

Disagree with curiosity rather than judgment.

Knowing what you believe and living your life in open alignment with your values is good. When interacting with someone who holds conflicting ideas, try suspending judgment and asking curious questions about how they developed their perspective. Openness to others’ life experiences often results in growth for the listener and we all have room to grow.

Focus more on your character than on the conflicting values.

Acknowledge the conflict of values while asking yourself what character you want to exhibit toward other humans. Allow your character goals to lead as you engage conflicting values rather than allowing the values conflict to lead your character.

Engage boundaries before ending relationship.

If values conversations get heated or disrespectful, try suggesting

avoidance of the topic to preserve the relationship or refuse to participate in conversations that feel hostile. Ending relationships can be necessary at times when boundaries are continuously disrespected, however, working through boundaries communication first helps preserve relationship in many cases.

View people with different values as a challenge to grow rather than as villains.

When we define others as villains, we give energy to feeling resentful and disempowered. When we define others as a challenge to grow, we give energy to expanding our emotional and behavioral capacities both in immediate interactions with those who challenge us and beyond into many other areas of life.

Remember to give yourself and others compassion and patience as you evaluate and grow in showing up as a loving, mature version of yourself in the world. The discomfort of growth most often results in widespread positive life change over time. Connect with us as Journeybravely.com for counseling and coaching support along your journey.

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Arts & Music

Emerald Coast Music Alliance Foundation Announces 9th Annual Music Festival with Renowned Lineup

Celebrated Musicians | Free Concerts | January 12-19

BY DEBORAH CARLONI

Northwest Florida will come alive with the sounds of classical music this January as the Emerald Coast Music Alliance Foundation (ECMAF) hosts its 9th Annual Music Festival from January 12-19, 2024. This year's festival promises an unforgettable celebration of music, featuring performances by internationally acclaimed artists led by Musical Director Alon Goldstein, a celebrated Carnegie Hall pianist.



Joining Goldstein is an impressive lineup of virtuoso musicians, including:

- NeoArt Piano Duo
- Medehlan Duo (piano & violin)
- Amit Peled and the Peabody Cello Gang of Johns Hopkins Music Conservatory
- Eleni Katz on bassoon
- Matt Fitzsimmons, a trombonist with the U.S. Navy Band

Throughout the festival, ECMAF musicians will complete 50-60 performances, engaging audiences through interactive dialogue and hands-on experiences with their instruments. The performances will take place in local schools, senior centers, and organizations serving disadvantaged or disabled individuals, making classical music accessible to a broad range of communities.

In addition to these commu-



nity performances, the ECMAF will present two free public concerts, open to all:

- January 16:** Fort Walton Beach Civic Center, 6 p.m. sponsored by AnchorsGordon Law
- January 17:** Crosspoint

Church, Niceville, 6 p.m. sponsored by Bayou Mechanical and Judy & Carey Huff

Seating is limited, and free tickets will be available for reservation through the ECMAF website beginning in January.

"The Emerald Coast Music



Alliance Foundation is passionate about preserving and sharing the beauty of classical music," said an ECMAF spokesperson. "By engaging directly with audiences, especially in underserved communities, we create moments of inspiration and deeper connections through music."

The ECMAF is a 501c3 organization funded by generous donations of organizations and individuals. Learn more about supporting our mission at <https://www.emeraldcoastmusic.org/supportthemission.html>

For more information or to reserve tickets, visit <https://emeraldcoastmusic.org>.



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Writing Off into the Sunset: Destin Word Weavers Brings Authors Together

Everyone loves a story, especially a tale they can cry about, bleed with, or laugh at. Anyone who can tell such a story will have their face carved onto the mountain of immortality. Just ask Ernest Hemingway, William Shakespeare, or Theodor Seuss Geisel (author of the Dr. Seuss books). Do you dream of writing stories that will live in people's hearts?

Literature is human. Fiction or non-fiction, humor or tragedy, prose or poetry: we all want to communicate. Did you know there are local friends helping each other write well?

Groups of Christian writers work together on the craft of writing called "Word Weavers." One such group is here on the Emerald Coast. Meeting monthly in Niceville, the Destin Word Weavers meet to listen to one another's works and give

positive critiques and encouragement.

The members range from amateurs to published authors and publishers, all from various walks of life. The genres they represent include non-fiction, mystery, humor, memoir, devotional, biographical, fiction and poetry. With mutual respect and finely tuned skills, they edit, correct, and inspire one another.

Most of the members are Christians who attend various churches including Catholic, Protestant, Charismatic, and non-denominational.

Alice Murray currently leads the Destin Word Weavers Chapter. She is an author of an annotated Agatha Christie book and she's had several jokes published in Reader's Digest. Numerous magazines have published her articles. The group meets on the second Saturday morning of

each month at 9:30 a.m. in the Crosspoint Church, Bluewater Bay Campus, 214 Partin Drive S, Niceville, Florida, 32578. The next meeting is on December 14th.

All kinds of people participate in the Destin Word Weavers group. Freeport resident Paul Renfroe has written a theological series, while Dave Holland has published a series of devotionals based on the Gospel of Luke. Susan Neal writes books fostering good health and maturity while she also leads the Christian Indie Publishing Association (CIPA.Podia.com). Jud Stone, our chaplain, writes histories of great Christians who are little known.

You can join our hearty band of writers, poets, Bible commentators, and historians. Whether it's a legacy for your family or the next blockbuster,



Word Weavers members who recently received various writing awards at the Blue Lake Writers Conference.

you are welcome in the Destin Word Weavers! We convene the second Saturday morning of each month at 9:30 in the Crosspoint Church, Bluewater Bay Campus, 214 Partin Drive S, Niceville.

You can learn more about the Word Weavers at <https://>

word-weavers.com/. For more information, please call Dave Holland at 970-691-9017 or email at davidvholland54@gmail.com.

Word Weavers members who recently received various writing awards at the Blue Lake Writers Conference.

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Arts & Music

Virtuoso Voices Scholarship Fundraiser Feb. 22

By LISA CYR

The Choctaw Bay Music Club of Niceville is excited to invite you to the Virtuoso Voices 21st Annual Scholarship Fundraiser Brunch on Saturday, February 22nd at Crosspoint United Methodist Church, 214 Partin Dr. South, Niceville, in the Fellowship Hall beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Virtuoso Voices Scholarship Fundraiser along with the Jan Miller Studio Artists of the Pensacola Opera will present an engaging theatrical show by their talented artists in residency with professional singing and acting for most all ages to enjoy. The money raised is for the worthy cause of supporting our upcoming musically talented youth in their endeavors to develop into fine musicians for generations to come.

Virtuoso Voices is fun filled

with attention grabbing singing, drama, laughter, live music, comedy and emotion, to lift your heart and spirit. The artists in residence share the story line behind each song to actively engage the listener before they perform. Last year, \$10,000 was awarded to deserving students for college, high school senior awards and summer music camp scholarships.

This year's theme centers around the show "Pagliacci." Pagliacci (the main character) tells the story of Canio, a jealous actor leading a traveling theater troupe, who discovers his wife Nedda is having an affair with a man named Silvio and, in a fit of rage, murders them both on stage during a performance, blurring the lines between his real life and the play he is acting in. The title translates to "Clowns" in Italian, highlight-



ing the tragic irony of a clown's personal life being so painful.

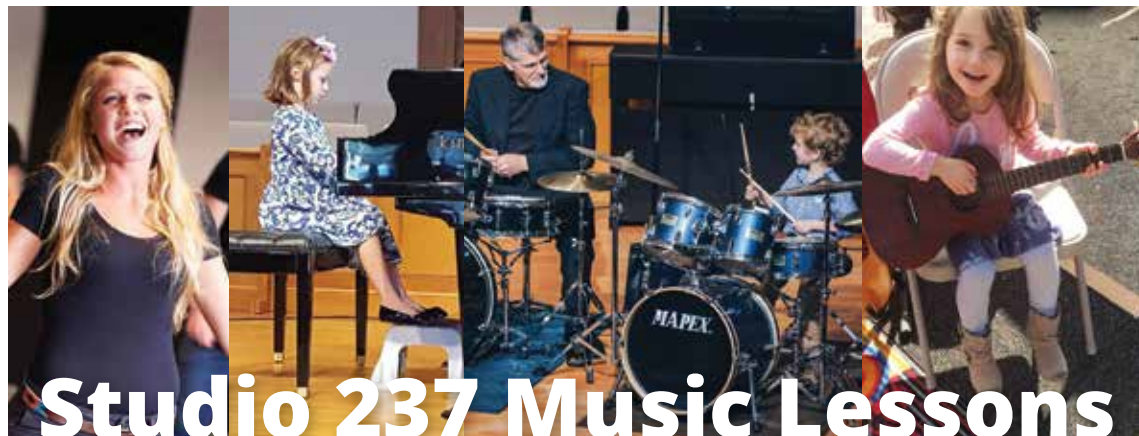
A fun raffle will be held during the first part of the event and winners are announced/presented towards the end. Local

businesses and private donors contribute a variety of raffle items such as gift cards, wine, fine chocolates, artwork, interior decor, personal services and event tickets. Raffle tickets are (1

for \$1, 7 for \$5, 15 for \$10) and will be for sale (cash or personal check) during the luncheon.

Please join us at Virtuoso Voices for an exceptional experience of theatre, singing, food, and fun that's designed for all ages to enjoy as we support our local young aspiring musicians.

Tickets are \$40 for adults and \$25 for students and may be reserved/purchased by calling or texting Karen or Phillip LeGrand at 850.527.4200 or 850.855.0068. Tickets may also be purchased online at EventBrite <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtuoso-voices-brunch-scholarship-fundraiser-tickets-1112614492899?aff=oddtcreator>. For more information, visit the club's website under the events tab at www.ChoctawBayMusicClub.org



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Niceville's Hidden Gem: Artful Things Niceville!

By SHARE NORVILLE, ARTFUL THINGS NICEVILLE OWNER

Have you driven through Niceville and noticed the sign for Artful Things Niceville gallery, and have not found the time to stop in for a visit? Well, here is your invitation to take that time, come in and see our locally curated fine art, custom framing options and name brand art supplies.

Our management, staff and volunteers are local artists, ar-

tisans and published authors. While this is a labor of love for the art community, our main goal is to provide inspiration to our surrounding community, as well as exposure and opportunity to create. Artful Things Niceville currently boasts 60+ participating vendors and consigners. Most weekdays, you can visit with gallery member artists who are creating in their studio space.

Continued on next page

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ARTFUL THINGS

continued from previous page

We offer small and individual classes in various mediums that are taught by accomplished artists. Whether your interest is piqued by contemporary trends or wanting to understand a traditional modality, please talk with us. We will do our very best to put you in touch with a teacher either here at the gallery or in the community.

I purchased Artful Things Niceville in 2019. I took what the previous owners had started and embroidered it by adding additional classes, artists, expanding the art supply and creating the community hub.

In November, the gallery held a Small Business Saturday sale and in December an Open House Saturday that included artist giveaways, deeply discounted art supplies, artist discounts, light refreshments and as usual, a specific local



non-profit benefitted from sales. Weekly, sometimes multiple times a week, people stop in who have newly discovered us and are surprised at how large an inventory we carry. We invite you to visit our website, www.ArtfulThingsNiceville.com

where you can also sign up for our monthly newsletter. Hard copies are always available in store.

Yes, we are tooting our own horn and proudly sharing with you that the Valparaiso - Niceville Chamber of Commerce re-

cently called us "Niceville's hidden gem!"

Business hours are Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Appointments are available upon request. Find us on Facebook and Instagram as Artful

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