



PRSRT STD ECRWSS - EDDM U.S. POSTAGE PAID Santa Rosa Beach, FL PERMIT NO. #11

Postal Customer Local

### Yo Ho Ho! Billy Bowlegs and His Krewe Return to Fort Walton Beach in May

By Christopher Manson

"Now and then we had the hope that if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates."

- Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi

The Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival returns to Fort Walton Beach May 15-19 with fireworks, a parade, fun family activities and much more. This is the 69th festival benefiting the William Augustus Bowles Historical Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization that promotes a love for local history.

In 1955, Fort Walton Beach businessman Nathan Fleet reigned over the inaugural festival as Captain Billy Bowlegs. The successful event led to the current multi-day festival that takes place at the Landing Park. Around 5,000 pirates and landlubbers are expected to attend this year.

Captain Billy Bowlegs LXIX Michael Castleberry has called Fort Walton Beach



home since 1998. He will be joined by Pirate Queen Zabrina Horne, along with First Mate and Mistress Matt and Kacy Turpin.

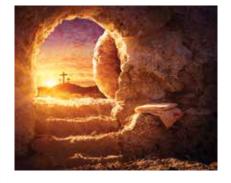
High school students from Niceville, Destin, Choctawhatchee and Fort Walton Beach will serve as Princesses and Privateers. The Honor Guard LXIX consists of Shane and Jessica Atkinson, Ben and Jaris Buehler, Creed and Elizabeth Burkhart, David and Remi Densmore, Scott and Regina Groundwater, Larry and Donita Messinger, Joe and Tammy O'Gallagher, Matt and Becky Scaringe, John and Channa Schuster, and Michael Voit and Angela Hassell, all of whom look forward to representing the Krewe.

The Krewe of Bowlegs was founded in 1954 with the goal of attracting tourists to

BILLY BOWLEGS continued on page 2

# **Easter Reflections:**

It's Friday Now, But Sunday's Coming!



By Rev. Gueary Clendenning

There is a prophecy in the Old Testament of the Bible concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.It is found in Isaiah 52: 13-15 in the New Living Translation: "See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. But many were amazed when they saw him. His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. Yet He will startle[b] many nations. Kings will stand speechless

**EASTER** continued on page 2



# REGISTER NOW! OPEN ENROLLMENT: APRIL 14

NWFSC.EDU • 850.502.2895





LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED SINCE 1982

WWW.FUDPUCKER.COM

FREE ADMISSION TO GATOR BEACH - OPENS AT 11AM





#### **BILLY BOWLEGS**

continued from page 1

the area. Today, the Krewe provides invaluable service beyond the annual festival. According to the Krewe's website, you can find them "wherever a daring, adventurous swashbuckler (or just a guy in a funny pirate hat) is needed.'

#### 2025 Events

The Bowlegs Treasure Hunt begins in April, with clues being announced on local radio. Participants can search for Bowlegs coins and win a piece of Captain Billy's treasure. Look for updates at kreweofbowlegs.com, along with an irresistible poem.

On Thursday, May 15 at 4 p.m., Captain Billy and his Krewe arrive on Ferry Road for the Pre-Invasion. Children will be greeted, photos taken and treasure given away until 6 p.m.



The Skirmish at the Landing Park follows on Friday, May 16, at 8 p.m. An Arts and Crafts Festival is planned for 5 p.m., followed by a performance by blues rockers Thin Ice at 6 p.m. Captain Billy and his scouting party are expected to land at 7 p.m., and make sure you stick around for a spectacular fireworks show at 8:45 p.m.

Saturday, May 17, much-anticipated pirate invasion takes place at the Landing Park with Captain Billy and his Krewe landing around 3:30 p.m. Arts and crafts begin at 10 a.m., followed by live music



from The Friskeys from 1 to 3 p.m. The celebration continues until 7 p.m.

The band Duchess kicks off its first Bowlegs gig at 4 p.m. Duchess has performed at numerous Krewe of Bowlegs parties, as well as the Concert on the Landing series. Duchess' Doug Bowers and Chuck



Tidwell have played the festival before with the band 423. Bowers says festivalgoers can expect "high-energy Seventies and Eighties classic rock (from a) band that loves to interact with its audience." Learn more at duchessband.com.

The 2025 festivities wrap up with the Torchlight Parade

years, millions of people have

believed the accounts of Christ

Monday, May 19, beginning at 7 p.m. The parade route begins at First Street and Eglin Parkway and rolls northward to Hughes Street, with sea-worthy floats, eye-popping floats and non-stop entertainment. For registration information and more, visit fwbchamber.org.

Videos of previous parades

#### **EASTER**

continued from page 1

in his presence. For they will see what they had not been told; they will understand what they had not heard about..."

Seven hundred years later, on a Friday, the Roman soldiers beat Him (the Son of God) with their fists until His face was horribly swollen and His eyes were nearly shut. They stripped Him

of His clothes and whipped hIm with a rock-laced leather whip. His back was ripped open, his skin was shredded, exposing his internal organs. They crowned Him with a bed of thorns, put a reed in His hand, and clothed Him in a scarlet robe, spit on Him and mocked Him as the King of the Jews. They led Him in a procession outside of the city gate of Jerusalem to a place called Golgotha (Translation: A

Hill Called the Skull).

And there they crucified Him, nailing His hands and feet to a wooden cross. The soldiers then gambled for His robe. The religious leaders mockingly shouted, "He saved others but can not save himself." At around 3pm on that Friday, Jesus cried out "It is finished!" Finally, they laid Him in a borrowed tomb, and sealed it with the Governor's seal. A group of soldiers were stationed around the tomb to prevent anyone from stealing the body. The events of His death all occurred on Friday-Only Jesus knew Sunday was coming!

"But very early on Sunday morning the women came to the tomb. They found the stone covering the entrance rolled to the side. They went into the tomb but couldn't find the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Suddenly, two men appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. The women were terrified. Then the men said, "why are you looking in a tomb for someone who is alive?, He isn't here. He has risen from the dead. Don't vou remember what He told you back in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men, that He would be crucified, and that He would rise again the third day." (Luke 24:1-7)

Friday has past and Sunday

has come, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah!

For the past two thousand

as revealed in the scriptures, and as a result their lives have been changed. The message is simple; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, (to die on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins against God) so that everyone who believes in Him, will not perish but receive Eternal Life....For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved." (John 3:16, Romans 10:9). Saved means to be forgiv-

en of our sins; placed into the family of God to receive a new life of peace and purpose and to have the assurance of life after death with God forever!

I encourage you, if you have not received God's gift provided by His Son, that you pray to Christ today! For anyone who calls on the name of the Lord, will be saved (Romans 10:13). That's God's promise; believe and receive.

Finally, these past few weeks we have experienced our own "Friday." All of the things we have relied on have been shaken or removed. I don't know what the future holds but I do know who holds my hand. Regardless of the outcome, because of Christ, Sunday's coming!

Gueary Clendenning is a retired Assembly of God pastor, having served as Senior pastor of the Valparaiso Assembly.



Published Monthly Mailed FREE to the communities of Bluewater Bay & Hammock Bay

> P.O. Box 1424 Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

#### Publisher/Executive Editor Lori Leath Smith

Lori@LifeMediaGrp.com

#### **Director, Advertising Sales** Scott Miller

Scott@LifeMediaGrp.com **Production & Layout** 

> Kim Harper **Advertising Sales** Ray Cyr

#### Writers

Rev. Gueary Clendenning Christopher Manson Barbara Palmgren "Doc" Doug Stauffer Michael Smith

> To Advertise 850.688.9886

Bay Life assumes no financial liability for errors or omissions in printed advertising and reserves the right to reject/edit advertising or editorial submissions

© Copyright 2025 Bay Life





#### **BILLY BOWLEGS**

continued from page 2

are widely available on a number of YouTube channels, notably Emerald Coast TV's clip from the 2018 event which has attracted thousands of viewers.

This year's presenting/title sponsor for the Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival is Felicity Plastic Surgery, specifically noted reconstructive/plastic surgeon Dr. Liz Sager. "We would not be able to have this festival at all if we didn't have her generous sponsorship," says Festival Coordinator Cali Hlavac. Felicity's slogan is, appropriately enough considering the Bowlegs Festival vibe, "Pursue your happiness." Discover more at felicityplasticsurgery.com.

"The tradition of Billy Bowlegs has spanned over 75 years and has become an important part of our local history," says Hlavac. "From finding the hidden coins and the Friday fireworks to watching Captain Billy take over the Landing, there is something all ages can enjoy. We are looking forward to bringing the community together for another great year of festivities."









# To Get You in the Pirate Mood

#### A Dozen Tunes To Get Your Pirate Playlist Starrrrrr-Ted

- Jimmy Buffett, "A Pirate Looks at Forty"
- Roger McGuinn, "Jolly Roger"
- The Irish Rovers, "Drunken Sailor"
- Klaus Badelt, "He's a Pirate (From the Motion Picture Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl)
- Ukelele Jim, "Yo Ho (A Pirate's Life for Me)"
- The Celtic Connection, "The Last Shanty"
- Kenny Chesney, "Pirate Flag"
- Zac Brown Band featuring Mac McAnally, "Pirates & Parrots"
- Jesse Rice, "Pirate Girl"
- Peppa Pig, "Pirate Treasure"
- The Poker Dogs, "Pirate Rap"

• Pinkfong, "Pirate Baby Shark"

#### A Half-Dozen Groan-Worthy Pirate Jokes

- What did the pirate say on this eightieth birthday? "Aye, matey!"
- How much did the pirate pay for his earrings?
  A buccaneer!
- What's a pirate's favorite letter of the alphabet? You might think it's "R," but it's the "C"!
- Why couldn't the pirate play cards?

He was sitting on the deck!

- What's a pirate's favorite fast food restaurant? ARRRRRR-by's. But if they're closed will settle for HARRRRRR-dee's!
- What's a pirate's favorite music?
  ARRRRRR & B, or ar

ARRRRRR & B, or anything with a good "hook"! *Sources: Various.* 



Trust The Experts

In-House Certified Technicians

MCCASKILL & COMPANY

— Finest Jewelry & Watches —

13390 Highway 98 West | Destin, FL (850) 650-2262





### Meet Our Hometown Hero:

# Engineering the Future: Tamika Richardson's Mission to Advance Warfighter Readiness

By Michael Smith, Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division

Inside the control room at China Lake in 2016, Fort Walton Beach native Tamika Richardson watched intently as live missile evaluations and guidance system trials played out on the monitors. She took detailed notes and was intrigued by the testing process. Surrounded by the real-time challenges of weapons development, she discovered her passion for engineering solutions that strengthen warfighter readiness.

That hands-on exposure to weapons testing set the foundation for her career.

"Where am I?" Richardson recalled thinking during her early experiences at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division. "They took me and the other engineers around to all the different groups, showing us live fire missile testing and ordnance work. It was an entirely different experience from what I had imagined."

She launched her career as a mission data engineer, developing expertise in electronic

Where Members Matter Most YEAR

warfare and mission data programming. As she worked, she saw a clear challenge: the need for better integration between mission data development and the software that enables quick reprogramming.

Determined to close that gap, she earned a Master of Science in Systems Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, equipping her with the technical knowledge to transition into her current role.

Today, Richardson is a systems engineer at the F-35 United States Reprogramming Laboratory (USRL), where she plays a key role in guaranteeing that software tools used in mission data production align with operational requirements. As the liaison between USRL and its suppliers, she validates and verifies software developed by contractors, making certain it meets warfighter needs.

"The key to improving our tools is making sure they work the way warfighters need them—not just how they're designed on paper," Richardson explained. "If we get intelligence about a new threat, we



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Local native Tamika Richardson, a systems engineer at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, was recognized during Engineer Week 2025 for her contributions to advancing F-35 reprogramming and warfighter readiness.

need to integrate it into mission data in days, not weeks. That's a game-changer."

#### Delivering Critical Capabilities on an Accelerated Timeline

While she is no longer directly involved in mission data file production, Richardson played a key role in recent efforts to support rapid updates. In 2024, the NAWCWD team delivered a crucial F-35 MDF update to Marine Fighter Attack Squad-

ron 314 aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), making certain that mission-critical data was available before deployment.

She recalls how unforeseen IT challenges and data validation requirements required swift action and coordination to keep the project on schedule.

"When issues arise, making sure they're addressed quickly is key," she said. "Our team worked hard to ensure there were no delays in getting the data to the Fleet."

The urgency of mission data development required working across multiple time zones. Intelligence analysts, software developers, and military leaders coordinated closely to ensure the data was accurate and thoroughly tested. That experience reinforced Richardson's drive to improve software solutions that enhance the efficiency of mission data programming.

#### Balancing Engineering, Military Service, and Mentorship

Beyond her role at NAW-CWD, Richardson is a Staff Sergeant in the Air Force Reserves, where she recently completed cyber warfare training. She has worked on critical network defense operations, supporting the Air Force Intranet Control (AFIN C) Weapons System.

Adaptability is required to switch between her roles as an engineer, cyber warfare specialist, and mentor.

She attributes much of her success to time management and discipline, skills that allow her to balance the high demands of her career and military service.

She is also passionate about mentoring future engineers, having guided over 900 students at 14 universities, including Tuskegee University, Alabama A&M, and Florida State.

"A lot of students don't realize that careers like this exist," she said. "If I can help even one person see their potential in engineering, that's a win."

For Richardson, mentorship isn't just about guiding students. It's about giving them confi-

dence in their abilities. She vividly remembers her early career moments when she felt uncertain whether she belonged in such a technical field. Now, she helps others navigate those same challenges with confidence.

### Overcoming Challenges & Leading the Way

Richardson credits mentors and hands-on experience for helping her navigate her career's technical and leadership demands. Early on, she had to advocate for her ideas, prove her expertise, and adapt to an ever-changing defense landscape. She also learned the importance of collaborating across disciplines, particularly as she transitioned into systems engineering.

"I focused on being prepared, staying confident, and making sure my work spoke for itself," she said. "You have to be adaptable, but you also have to trust your skills."

As a recognized Subject Matter Expert (SME), Richardson continues to lead with determination, confirming that mission-critical software tools meet operational requirements and directly support warfighter readiness.

#### Designing the Future: Advice to the Next Generation

As Engineer Week 2025 celebrates the power of engineering to shape the future, Richardson shares words of encouragement:

"Find a mentor who you aspire to be like because they can help with networking and building your career foundation," she said. "I would tell them to aim for the sky and not box themselves in but challenge themselves by going beyond what they thought they could do. To not quit when the going gets tough, because every day is not going to be sunshine. But after the storm, a rainbow appears."

Richardson's work is making an impact. Whether improving mission data production tools, defending cyber networks, or mentoring other engineers, her influence drives advancements in warfighter readiness and innovation.



**Community** 

# Deer Moss Creek®



110 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,481 SF \$740,000 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



1165 DEER MOSS LOOP, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,950 SF \$1,020,000 | construction completed Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



607 CHAMOMILE COURT, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 4 Bath | 3,048 SF \$978,000 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



512 LEMONGRASS LANE, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 4 Bath | 2,999 SF \$995,000 | construction completed Listed by Jodie Snell 850.621.6535



180 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,737 SF \$874,900 | construction completed Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



114 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 3 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 3,021 SF \$969,088 | construction completed Listed by Jodie Snell 850.621.6535



707 REINDEER ROAD, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,026 SF \$601,000 | ready April 2025 Listed by Yeska Sand 850.368.5936



236 FOXGLOVE RUN, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,513 SF \$765,000 | ready April 2025 Listed by Yeska Sand 850.368.5936



PHASE 11 LOT 82 ON SORREL WAY \$100,000 | 0.16 acre Other Vacant Lots Available in DMC Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



Visit our model home in Deer Moss Creek®

1413 CLARY SAGE LANE

Monday - Saturday 12 - 4 pm Sunday I - 4 pm



### **Bay Buzz Events**

#### Strength in Unity Conference & Business Expo - March 30

Celebrate Women's History Month at Conexion Media Group's Strength in Unity Conference & Business Expo on Sunday, March 30, from 11 AM – 7 PM at The Island Resort, Okaloosa Island (Maui & Capri Rooms). For more information, contact David at 850-368-3505 or conexionflorida@gmail.com.

### Sixth Annual Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo

#### March 28-29 | Freeport Regional Sports Complex

Dust off your boots and get ready to rodeo! The 6th Annual Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo presented by Builders FirstSource returns to the City of Freeport Sports Complex March 28th –29th, 2025. Come watch some of the nation's top cowgirls and cowboys competing in the Professional Cowboy Association Circuit (PCA) – bring the family and friends for a fun-packed weekend!

Contestants will compete in events including Bareback Riding, Calf Roping, Saddle Bronc Riding, Ranch Bronc Riding, Steer Wrestling, Breakaway Roping, Barrel Racing, Team



Roping, and Bull Riding at the professionally sanctioned rodeo. Rodeo gates open at 6 p.m. with rodeo start at 7:30 p.m. each night. Spectators are encouraged to come early to enjoy pre-rodeo excitement including the kids' gold rush, food vendors, children's inflatable play area and more!

Westonwood Ranch is an organization whose mission and programs serve teens and young adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). "We are so thankful for the partnership with Walton County Sheriff's Office, the City of Freeport, our community sponsors that make it possible

Bav Area Awards

to raise funds that help support our programs. So many youths with developmental disabilities miss irreplaceable opportunities to gain critical life skills and job skills needed to lead an independent life. These special individuals want the same thing as we do — to be fully participating members of society," shared Lindy Wood, Founder of Westonwood Ranch.

Westonwood Ranch is located in Freeport and provides therapeutic programs designed to fill the transition gap from high school into adulthood by incorporating functional learning opportunities in a therapeutic farm environment. All net proceeds from the event go to support Westonwood Ranch programs.

Tickets at the gate for the Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo are \$20 for adults and \$15 for children 12 years and younger. Free admission for children ages 2 and under. There will be no presale of tickets, so spectators are encouraged to arrive early. Westonwood Ranch is

actively seeking additional local business sponsorships for this event. For more information about how to support the rodeo and Westonwood Ranch, email admin@westonwood.org or visit www.westonwood.org.

# Niceville Hosts Parkinson's Community Walk to Raise Awareness and Support April 5

Residents of Niceville are invited to participate in the Parkinson's Community Walk on Saturday, April 5, 2025, at Turkey Creek Park, located at 340 W. John Sims Parkway. This inspiring event is an opportunity for the community to come together in support of those affected by Parkinson's disease while raising awareness and funds for the Parkinson's Foundation.

#### **Event Details:**

- Registration: 9 a.m.
- Walk Starts: 10 a.m.
- Location: Turkey Creek Park, 340 W John Sims Pkwy, Niceville, FL 32578
- Cost: No registration fee (donations appreciated)

Participants will walk in unity to show their support, share stories and advocate for Parkinson's research and resources. The event welcomes individuals, families, caregivers and anyone looking to make a difference in the lives of those impacted by Parkinson's disease. "This is a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together, raise awareness, and take action," said event organizer Diane Gordon. "Every step we take brings us closer to a future without Parkinson's."

To register for the event, scan the QR code provided or visit the official event webpage. For more information, contact Diane Gordon at nicevillersb22@ gmail.com. Join the fight to end Parkinson's—one step at a time!

### Pull for a Cause! Charity Fire Truck Pull - April 12

The Rotary Clubs of Destin, Midbay, Niceville/Valparaiso, and Crestview are hosting the Charity Fire Truck Pull on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at noon at 3rd Planet Brewery, Niceville.

Teams of 10 can register for \$250 to compete in pulling a fire truck, with proceeds benefiting Twin Cities Pavilion & Crestview Manor Assisted Living.

The event also features a 50/50 raffle, silent auction, kids' fun pull and face painting. Check-in starts at 10:30 a.m.; first pull at noon.

Register online: form.jot-form.com/240494111268150.

Pull together. Lift lives.

#### **SeaLight Festival Is Here!**

Thursdays to Sundays, Now – April 13, 2025. Kaleido Entertainment presents a dazzling wonderland of light and Chinese culture, running January 30 through April 13, 5:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m., with last entrance at 8:30 p.m. at Seascape Golf, Beach & Tennis Resort in Miramar Beach. Tickets start at \$24.99 for adults and \$17.99 for children ages 12 and under. Purchase at sealightfestival.com. For more information, visit www. sealightfestival.com/destin.

Continued on page 10



50/50 Raffle Silent Auction Free Kid's Fun Pull Face Painting

\$250.00 Per Team of 10 • 10:30 am - Check-in • 12:00 pm - 1st Pull

Register Online: https://form.jotform.com/240494111268150

Knights of Columbus Council: 13527



**BOOTH SPACE SELLING OUT FAST** 

Mention You Saw This Ad in Life Media and Receive A 10% DISCOUNT on Your Booth Space



























To Become a Vendor or Sponsor in This Great Event - Contact
Wes Fell (Event Promoter) at 850-353-2832 or WesFell@Cox.Net
More Info & Registration Form at www.ParadisePromotionsfl.com
This is Another Great Paradise Promotion



### Happenings Around the Bay

2025 **EVENTS** 

#### APRIL

Niceville Young Professionals Lunch Meeting 11:30 am | Niceville Valparaiso Chamber | Niceville 6 pm | Niceville Community Center | Niceville

Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee 7 am | Christian Life Center at FBC | FWB

> 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Classical Connections featuring Howard Levy 7:30 pm | Destin High School | Destin

Big Truck Day 10 am | Parking Lot of the Softball Complex | Niceville 3rd Annual Gumbo Cookoff by the Jr. League of the Emerald Coast

> 5 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville 3rd Annual Family Sock Hop benefiting The Pearl Project

5 pm | Crosspoint Community Life Center | Niceville

PJs & Puzzles for Autism benefiting Emerald Coast Autism Center

5 pm | The Preserve: A Bluewater Taproom | Niceville

Live Music: Shenanigans 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Live Music: Bluegrass Jam 06 12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville Women's Climbing Circle

5 pm | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin Family Egg Drop Challenge 2 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

A Walk Down Magnolia Lane 6 pm | The Lakehouse Watercolor | SRB

City Council Meeting 80 6 pm | Niceville Council Chambers | Niceville Chess Night 6 pm | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville

Niceville Valparaiso Chamber ng l Second Wednesday Breakfast 7:15 am | Niceville Community Center | Niceville

Live Music: Bluegrass Jam 12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville Art Opening: Kanisha Carson 2 pm | Artful Things | Niceville Family Egg Drop Challenge 2 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville Concerts in the Village: The Fabulous Thunderbirds 6 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin 11 | Live Music: Josh Davis 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville Full Moon Restorative Experience

7 pm | Yoga By You Studio | Niceville

**Emerald Coast Autism Center's** ONE Run 5K

8 am | NW Florida State College | Niceville

Niceville Flower Festival

9 am | Katie's House of Flowers & Gifts | Niceville

Spring Fling Vendor Fair

10 am | Niceville High School | Niceville

Sandestin Wine Festival

1-4 pm | Village of Baytowne Wharf | Sandestin

Classic Car Club

11 am | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Fire Truck Pull benefiting Twin Cities Pavillion & The Manor

12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Jacobe Turner Teen Center **Bowling Tournament** 1 pm | FWB Bowl | FWB

La Luna's 3rd Annual Spring Fashion Show benefiting Caring & Sharing of South Walton

2 pm | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach

Live Music: Parker Willingham and Ivoree 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Ode to Joy

7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville

15 Paint the Bay with The Traveling Painter 5:30 pm | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville

Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours 5:30 pm | Zatitude Apartments | FWB

> Concerts in the Village: Journeyman: An Eric Clapton Tribute

7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin

Doggie Eggstravaganza benefiting Dog-Harmony 5:30 pm | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach Live Music: Below Alabama

6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Crawfish Boil benefiting The Ground Up Project 4 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

**Grand Easter Brunch** 20 9 am-2 pm | Crystal Ballroom | Henderson Beach Resort Destin

GSSF Indoor League

10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso Knowledge by the Slice presented by GitMoose

11:30 am | Greater FWB Chamber | FWB

Concerts in the Village: Yacht Rock Revue 7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin

**EOD Memorial Challenge** 26 6 am | EOD Memorial | Niceville

Earth Day

9 am - 2 pm | E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport

Saturday in the Park

10 am - 4 pm | Heritage Museum of NWFL | Val'p

Heritage Museum 5K Run/Walk

8 am | Around the Bayou-115 Westview Ave. | Val'p

C.A.R.E. on the Coast

3:30 pm | Gulfarium | Okaloosa Island

Spring Vendor Fair benefiting United Way Emerald Coast

11 am | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

**Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation's** 20th Annual Wine Auction Weekend 26 Various Times & Venues

South Walton Wine & Food Festival 24-27 Various Times & Venues

Greater FWB Chamber Honoring Our 28-

Heroes: Stories of Service & Voices of 29 5 pm | Air Force Armament Museum | FWB

Dine + Dive benefiting the Underwater Museum of Art

> Greater FWB Chamber Heroes' Tribute Banquet: Honoring Our Vietnam Veterans 5 pm | Destin-FWB Fairgrounds + Event Center | FWB

#### ONGOING EVENTS

Bingo Night

6 pm | Tues | Bayou Brewing Company | Niceville

One Stroke Painting (Lvl 2) with Sheila Mahony 10:30 am | Fri | Artful Things | Niceville

Yoga at Turkey Creek

9 am | Sat | Turkey Creek Nature Trail | Niceville

Brunch on the Bayou

9 am | Sun | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville

Niceville Community Saturdays | 9 am - 1 pm Palm Plaza | Niceville

Hammock Bay 1st & 3rd Sundays | 8 am Victory Blvd | Freeport

Grand Boulevard Saturdays | 9 am - 1 pm Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach













LISTEN.

Hello Frances Podcast

VISIT.

FrancesRoy.com

SAY HELLO.

hello@francesroy.com



CONNECT.





### NHS Theatre to Bring Hello, Dolly! to the Stage

The Niceville High School (NHS) Theatre Department will present the Broadway musical comedy classic Hello, Dolly! in May at the NHS Auditorium. With a score by Jerry Herman and book by Michael Stewart, the show tells the story of turn-of-the-century widow matchmaker Dolly Levi and her pursuit to win over and marry Horace Vandergelder, Yonkers' "well known, unmarried half a millionaire" all the while meddling in the love lives of those around her. "Musical comedy is my favorite genre of theatre, and I have been a huge fan of Hello, Dolly! ever since I was in high school and saw the movie on TV, says NHS Theatre

Director Ritchie Jackson. "It's always a joy to direct a show that you have loved for years, and it's an even sweeter joy to introduce my cast and crew to this delightful show – many of whom were not familiar with the show going into it. When we did A Chorus Line, it was much the

same. Many of my students had no knowledge of the show other than its title. I love opening their eyes to great Broadway classics and watching them fall in love with them too."

A 1982 NHS graduate, this is Jackson's ninth year and fifteenth production as Theatre Director at NHS. His depart-



ment has enjoyed tremendous community support over the last few years, and their runs of A Chorus Line, Chicago, and last year's production of Disney'sNewsies ", broke all previous Okaloosa County high school box office records. "We continue to set the bar high at NHS Theatre, and I take great

theatre shows can be painful to watch. Some school programs give a part to anyone who wants one or do shows just for the fun of it without much care about production values or doing truly good work, but at NHS we mean business. Our department's mottos is 'Bringing theatrical excellence to the stage', and we won't settle for anything less. You have to really work to land a role in a NHS production. Auditions for our shows bring close to a hundred students each time, so you have to really be on your game and work hard if you want a role in one of our shows. Our actors then do character analysis and scene study work to help them truly grasp their character and motivations, and the result is top notch entertainment that features the tremendous talent pool we have at Niceville High. Together with a recent massive lighting and sound upgrade, a new stage floor and curtains, amazing set designs, and gorgeous costumes, NHS' shows truly stand out and keep bringing our crowds back for more", says Jackson. "Audiences routinely leave our shows marveling at the fact that what they just saw was a high school production, and that gives us a great source of pride. So if you

pride in that. I know better than

anyone that some high school

Jackson has brought Choreographer Nicci Fahle and Vocal Director Michael Walker on board to put their professional stamps on the show. Fahle returns after having previously worked with Jackson on NHS' A Chorus Line, Chicago, and Newsies. "We simply could not do this without Nicci's talents", says Jackson, "She has an absolute gift of taking amateur dancers and making them look as though they have been in dance classes for years. She has

have never seen a NHS Theatre

production, here comes your

chance. We promise that you

will not be disappointed."

the Midas touch for sure when it comes to leg and foot work". Walker returns as well, having previously served as Vocal Director for NHS' Newsies. "Michael coaxes really great harmonies and vocal work out of our actors, and his talents give the show's score a beautifully polished

panache. We have a really stellar team, and when the three of us join forces, the results are really nothing less than amazing.

Jaiden Rae Strange brings Dolly Levi to life alongside Jaron Music's Horace Vandergelder. Eli Pancoast and Drew Cook portray Cornelius Hackl and Barnaby Tucker respectively, Lyla-Christine Payne and Caylee Konradt play the roles of Irene Molloy and her hat shop apprentice Minnie Fay, and Nicholas Venture and Sara Marello fill out the roles of Ambrose Kemper and the ever-crying Ermengarde.

VIP seating is \$20 and includes early seating a half hour before performance and a free bag of popcorn and a free small bottle of water. General Admission tickets are \$15, with seating beginning twenty minutes before show. "People who have never seen a show of ours sometimes ask why our ticket prices are over ten dollars, but when a show can cost ten to fifteen thousand dollars to put on, it's easy to see why the ticket prices are set where they are", say Jackson. "People are stunned when they hear how much it costs to produce a show. The rights alone for Dolly were \$7,500, and that's just for permission to do the show. Then you have to finance the building of sets, purchase props, hire a choreographer and a vocal director, and purchase period piece costumes. Simply put, show business is expensive, but we know our shows are worth every, single, dime."

Hello, Dolly! runs May 2, 3, 9, and 10 with 7 p.m. shows each night, and a 2 p.m. matinee on May 3 and 10. The auditorium's concession stand will be open for drinks and snacks both before the show and during intermission, and accepts cash only. Purchase tickets beginning April 1st on Gofan.co. Hello, Dolly! is presented through arrangement with Concord Theatricals of New York, NY.



performances and iconic songs.

Tickets: www.mattiekellytickets.com or call 850-706-5206

reserved tickets \$19.50-\$44

**Community** 



PROUDLY PRESENTS



MAY 2 & 9 AT 7PM, MAY 3 & 10 AT 2PM & 7PM

\* NHS AUDITORIUM \*

\*VIP TICKETS \$20, GENERAL ADMISSION \$15

\*VIP TICKETS INCLUDE EARLY SEATING AND A FREE SMALL POPCORN AND SMALL BOTTLED WATER



BOOK BY MICHAEL STEWART MUSIC AND LYRICS BY JERRY HERMAN BASED ON THE PLAY "THE MATCHMAKER" BY THORNTON WILDER ORIGINAL PRODUCTION DIRECTED AND CHOREOGRAPHED

BY GOWER CHAMPION PRODUCED ON THE BROADWAY STAGE BY DAVID MERRICK & CHAMPION FIVE, INC.



### FOLLOW THE SHOW!





"HELLO, DOLLY" IS PRESENTED BY ARRNGEMENT WITH TAMS-WITMARK, A CONCORD THEATRICALS COMPANY WWW.CONCORDTHEATRICALS.COM









#### **EVENTS**

continued from page 6

#### Dog-Harmony's 10th Annual Doggie EGGstravaganza Returns to Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

Dog lovers, mark your calendars! Dog-Harmony presents the 10th Annual Doggie EGG-stravaganza, a fun-filled, canine-only Easter egg hunt and social event happening on Friday, April 18, 2025, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin.

This one-of-a-kind event invites leashed pups and their human companions to sniff out 800 colorful eggs filled with delicious dog treats. With two designated hunting areas for dogs over and under 35 pounds, every furry friend gets a chance to join in on the fun.

For a \$20 donation in advance (\$25 on the day of the event), attendees will receive a souvenir bag to collect treats while enjoying an evening of live music, pet photos, family-friendly games, and exciting prizes. Guests can also indulge in delicious appetizers from JC's

Gourmet while sipping on beer and wine.

Funds raised help Dog-Harmony continue its mission of keeping dogs out of shelters through humane education, training, and community outreach.

Doggie EGGstravaganza is part of the Coastal Culture Series, made possible by the Grand

Boulevard Arts & Entertainment Program. Purchase tickets at https:// events.humanitix.com/doggieeggstravaganza-2025. To sponsor, contact hello@dog-harmony.org.

#### Wine Walkabout April 24

A Wine Walkabout benefitting the Taylor Haugen Foundation and hosted by The Shop at Baldwin Turf will take place on Thursday, April 24th from 6-8 p.m. There will be five wines with food pairings by Chef Dan Pettis along with a silent & live auction. Attendees will have the opportunity to shop at The Shop at Baldwin Turf who will also donate a portion of their sales to Taylor Haugen Foundation. Tickets are \$100 per person at TaylorHaugen.org. Come join the fun for a great cause!



### 12th Annual Tequila & Taco Fest - May 8-11

So. Many. Tacos! Chicken, Pork, Beef, Steak, Shrimp, Barbacoa – you name it; they have it at the wildly popular Tequila & Taco Festival - the 2nd longest-running Tequila and Taco Fest in the U.S.! Sample many types of Tequilas and Margaritas from Blancos, Reposados, Anejos and even Mezcals. So, get ready for Tacos, Tequila and fun and find your favorite at the 12th Annual Tequila & Taco Festival, happening May 8-11, 2025, at The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin! Local restaurants and food trucks will compete for the Best Taco on the Emerald Coast with a \$2,500 grand prize. Enjoy Tequila and Margarita tastings, live music, DJ and face painting.

#### Grand Boulevard Lawn Games Fridays & Saturdays

Bring the entire family out

to Grand Boulevard to enjoy some fun! Spring Lawn Games will take over Grand Park from 5-8:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday through April 25. Grab some food and drinks from one of the many restaurants in Grand Boulevard before you settle in to a fun round of corn hole, giant lawn chess, checkers and more.

### Celebrate Earth Day at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center!

Mark your calendars for an exciting Earth Day Expo on Saturday, April 26, from 9 AM to 2 PM at the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center, located at 4956 State Hwy 20 East in Freeport, FL.

This community-centered event, sponsored by CHELCO Operation Round Up, is a celebration of nature, sustainability, and environmental education. A variety of Expo Vendors will be present, including:

- Native Plant Nurseries
- Community Food Forest
- Master Gardeners & Garden Clubs
- Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance
- Camp Rudder's Army Rangers Reptiles
- Vale of Paradise Mushrooms
- NoWal Farm
- And many more!

In addition to vendor exhibits, attendees can enjoy theater presentations featuring experts from Vale of Paradise Mushrooms, the Community Food Forest, and Sandhill Native Nursery, who will share insights into sustainable practices and local ecosystems.

Admission Information:

- \$10 for ages 13 and up
- \$7 for ages 4-12

Local food vendors, including The Bentea Stop and The Rican Vegan, will be offering delicious refreshments for guests to enjoy throughout the event.

Join us in celebrating our planet, connecting with the community, and learning how we can all contribute to a healthier, more sustainable environment. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to experience the best of what nature has to offer!

For more information, visit the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center or check their website and social media pages.

Continued on page 17







# Museum Series: Heritage Museum Honors 50th Anniversary of Eglin Refugee Camp with Exhibit

By Barbara Palmgren

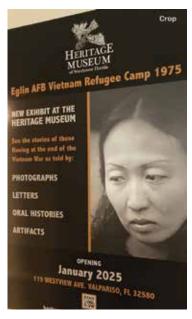
This is the 50th year of the ending of the Vietnam War in April, 2025, and many military and civic groups will conduct tributes to the veterans of our nation who served. In addition, the U. S. military organized three refugee camps to help citizens of South Vietnam escape from the current regime and come to the United States of

America to begin new lives.

Eglin Air Force Base was selected as one of these camps. From early May through mid-September, 2015, more than 10,000 Vietnamese refugees were housed in a tent city on Eglin property awaiting relocation by a sponsor in the U.S.

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida recently added a 1,400 sq. ft. exhibit hall to the museum and is completing the Vietnam Refugee Camp as its first exhibit. During the weekend of May 3, approximately 60 former refugees from Texas, Massachusetts, North Carolina and California will visit the exhibit as well as the original site for the camp itself, also attending a reception at the museum with a luncheon courtesy of Magnolia Grill in Fort Walton Beach.

The exhibit contains a mockup of one of the tents with photos and articles about each of the three phases of operation: Phase One-The Buildup; Phase Two-The Pipeline; and Phase Three-The Phasedown. Newspaper articles for these phases are enlarged and mounted for easy reading. In addition, a touchscreen allows viewers to



read the daily Dot Moi newsletter, written in both Vietnamese and English as well as photos digitized from the collection of USAF Col. (Ret.) Bill R. Keeler, former Commander for this operation. The Heritage Museum is also recording oral histories from military leaders, former refugees and volunteers who worked during this five-month operation. A movie is shown about the camp, donated by Ngiep Tran who currently resides in Niceville. It is an excellent overview from start to finish of the five-month event.

Please plan to visit the new room addition and special 2025 exhibit of the Vietname Refugee Camp at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida located in old downtown Valparaiso at 115 Westview Ave, Valparaiso, Florida 32580. There is a minimal charge for museum entrance and no additional charge for this exhibit

#### **WCSO Art in the Park:**

### A Creative Collaboration for Community Growth

The Walton County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) is calling on the community for support in their latest initiative, Art in the Park, an inspiring project aimed at enhancing public spaces while fostering creativity among local students. More than just a celebration of artistic talent, this initiative strengthens community engagement, promotes local pride and provides valuable scholarship opportunities for young artists.

This year's Art in the Park will focus on two key locations:

Wee Care Park – The restroom building near the disc golf area will be transformed with murals themed around disc golf and soccer. This project will be a collaboration between Walton High School art teacher Chris Wolfer and his students, completing the final building mural at this site.

#### Choctaw Beach Park

A second restroom building will receive a creative makeover thanks to a partnership with Freeport High School art teacher Amy Rasz and her students.

Students will submit artwork based on these themes, and approximately 20 top entries will be selected for sponsorship. Businesses and individuals who sponsor a \$500 scholarship will have the opportunity to choose their favorite painting from the selected works. The goal is to secure at least eight



sponsorships for both mural locations.

Once the murals are completed, scholarship funds will be processed through the school's accounting system and held until the student graduates and enrolls in college courses. These funds will be used for tuition, books and other academic expenses, disbursed directly to the institution. Sponsors will also be recognized with their name displayed on a sign near the finished artwork, highlighting their commitment to community enrichment.

Beyond its artistic impact, this initiative serves a deeper purpose. Public art fosters a sense of ownership, enhances neighborhood safety and contributes to a welcoming environment. Research shows that well-maintained artistic spaces can reduce crime rates in previously neglected areas by encouraging social interaction and natural surveillance.

If you, your business or your community group would like to support this inspiring initiative, please reach out to Deputy Ted Toedte for more information on sponsorship opportunities and how you can make a difference.





### **Covering Your Assets**

By Julie A. Martin

Insurance is everywhere, and there are so many different kinds, it gets confusing. What kind of coverage are you supposed to have to cover your homes, cars, boats and other fun things that you and your family

use? Is it Property Insurance or Casualty Insurance?

The answer is both. **Property Insurance** covers your homes, your condos, your furniture, electronics and all the things you use in your home that is not permanently attached to

your home. **Casualty Insur- ance** usually refers to the items that move, such as your cars, motorcycles, boats and jet skis.

Both Property insurance and Casualty insurance include coverage for your covered items as well as liability. The liability coverage levels may go as high as 500K on a single policy. When you feel it isn't enough to protect you and your family, there is the Umbrella policy.

Umbrella policies include coverage for liability losses over and above what your primary underlying policies would pay. For instance, if you are playing golf and you accidentally hit someone in the head with a golf ball, that person can sue you if they are hurt, even if you yelled "Fore." The incident would need to be sudden and accidental in nature, as no intentional acts are covered.

The umbrella policy covers in levels from \$1M to 5M, with requirements to maintain a minimum level of liability on the underlying policies for auto, boat, etc. of 250/500 Bodily Injury Liability and 100K Property Damage Liability. The minimum underlying liability requirement for home insurance or any property policies the umbrella covers would be 300K.

It is a common misconception that if someone has an umbrella policy, that its primary function is to pay out what is demanded. That is not how this works. The umbrella policy acts to defend its policyholder and attempt to keep the client from financial ruin. Many standard carriers offer umbrella coverage, and it is even possible to bundle your auto insurance with your umbrella in many cases for an extra multi-policy discount.

If you have more than one home, two cars and even one toy, whether it's a motorcycle,





boat or wave runner, it would be a good idea for you to have an umbrella to cover excess liability over all of your assets. Speaking with an independent agent to find out what kind of coverage is right for you will give you the peace of mind in knowing that there are no coverage gaps. And you can live your life not worrying about your insurance!

Covering your assets is only a phone call away. For more, contact me, Client Advocate at Abora Insurance Group, at 1-800-494-1333, Julie@GetAbora.com or visit www.GetAbora.com





#### VISIT MYBAYLIFENWFL.COM





### Ode to Joy—A Grand Symphony of Unity and Joy!

Beethoven's Ninth Featuring World-Class Opera Stars April 12, 2025 | 7 p.m. | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Tickets: \$35

Join Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra (NFSO) and Todd Craven Music Director and Conductor for the Season Finale: "Ode to Joy" – April 12 at 7 p.m. at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center in Niceville. "Ode to Joy" is more than music—it is a resounding anthem of brotherhood, hope and the unbreakable bond of humanity. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony calls us together in a powerful celebration of unity, and now, this timeless masterpiece comes to life in an unforgettable performance at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center!

The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra (NFSO), the NFSO Chorale and the Niceville High School Chorus join forces to present this monumental work, featuring internationally renowned opera soloists:



Katherine Henry,
soprano – A
Metropolitan
Opera rising
star, American soprano Kathryn
Henry is acclaimed for

her "clean coloratura and silvery voice." A native of Sheboygan, Wis., she earned her Master of Music from The Juilliard School and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Henry has performed notable roles such as Lucy Harker in the world premiere of The Lord of Cries at The Santa Fe Opera, the title role in Janáček's Jenůfa at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Arminda in Mozart's La finta giardiniera at Juilliard. She was a finalist in the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council



Cierra
Byrd, mezzo-soprano

A powerhouse artist
fresh from
her acclaimed
performances at the Met
and Houston

Grand Opera, American mezzo-soprano Cierra Byrd is a recent graduate of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Op-

era. In the 2024/25 season, she joined Chicago Opera Theater for the world premiere of She Who Dared and Opera Theater of St. Louis for their New Works Collective. She has performed at the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Boston Lyric Opera, including roles in Fire Shut Up in My Bones, Madama Butterfly, Omar and Dialogues des Carmélites. A winner of the Duncan Williams Voice Competition, she holds degrees from Ohio State University and Peabody Conservatory.



Christopher Bozeka, tenor – A dynamic and expressive performer, lighting up opera houses across the country, Ten-

or Christopher Bozeka is gaining recognition for his "expressively captivating" performances and "beautiful, piercing tone" (San Francisco Chronicle). Recent highlights include Alfredo Germont (La traviata, Opera Las Vegas), Rodrigo (Otello, Central City Opera), and soloist appearances with the New Mexico Gay Men's Chorus. He has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Opera Southwest, covering roles in Nabucco, Le comte Ory, The Magic Flute, and Salome. A Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions winner, he holds a master's degree from University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.



William
Guanbo Su,
bass-baritone — A
commanding presence
on the world
stage and a
Grand Finals
Winner of the

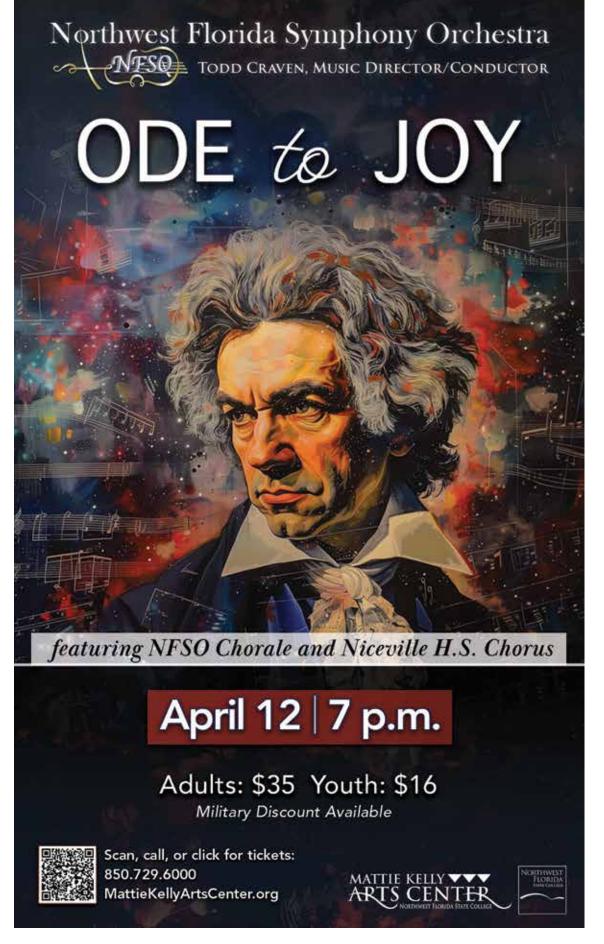
Met Opera National Council Auditions, Chinese bass William Guanbo Su is acclaimed for his "musical taste" and "solid voice" (The New York Times). A 2019 Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, he has performed with Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Boston Lyric Opera, portraying roles such as Zuniga in Carmen, Olin Blitch in Susannah and Colline in La bohème. Su holds degrees from The Juilliard School and the Manhattan School of Music. In the 2024 season, he is set to debut as Masetto in Don Giovanni with The Santa Fe Opera.

Tickets: Call 850.729.6000 or visit MattieKellyArtsCenter.

org. Adults: \$35; Youth: \$16. Military discount available.









### ECCAC Bratkowski Award Winners Help Local Children

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (EC-CAC) recognized two couples for their remarkable dedication to the community and children in need. Jim and Tammy Pierce and Mike and Valerie Thompson received the prestigious 5th Annual Zeke Bratkowski Award this year at ECCAC's recent Gala.

The professional football quarterback, and later NFL coach, played for three NFL teams for 14 seasons. After his retirement, Zeke Bratkowski lived in Northwest Florida and was a major supporter and spokesperson for ECCAC before he passed away in 2019. He was also responsible for the beginning of ECCAC's annual signature event, now in its 27th year, the Gala & Golf Weekend.

In the fall of 2014, Walton County residents, Jim and Tammy Pierce, stepped forward at the groundbreaking of EC-CAC's second center in DeFuniak Springs with a generous \$1 million donation. Subsequently, in honor of the Pierce's, EC-CAC named the facility The

Pierce Family Children's Advocacy Center. Since that time, they have continued with their support of ECCAC in many ways, including Tammy Pierce serving on ECCAC's Board of Directors from 2015 to present, and serving as the Board President in 2018/2019.

Jim Pierce, a retired business executive, experienced a disruptive child-hood first-hand, so he can relate to the needs of the children ECCAC serves. He commented, "We are incredibly honored to receive the Zeke Bratkowski Award alongside Valerie and Mike Thompson. Supporting the Emerald

Coast Child Advocacy Center means giving children a voice, a safe place to heal, and hope for a brighter future. Every child deserves to feel safe and heard, and we are grateful to be part of an organization that works tirelessly to make that a reality."

The other couple being recognized for the Zeke Bratkow-



Jim and Tammy Pierce, along with Valerie and Mike Thompson, were recognized for their philanthropic endeavors at the recent ECCAC Gala with the important Zeke Bratkowski Award.

ski Award, Mike and Valerie Thompson, are also residents of Walton County. As well, they also own a vineyard in the Russian River Valley area of California where they created Thompson 31Fifty winery. A long-time ECCAC supporter, Mike Thompson has served on ECCAC's Board of Directors

for 15 years, and he is still on their Board.

One of the Thompson's greatest endeavors to support area children's charities came about in 2007 when they began hosting a backyard barbeque party. It became the Chi Chi Miguel Throwdown in their Walton County home to raise

funds for area charities. Created and organized by Valerie Thompson, this event continued to grow and became a 100% charity auction in 2011. It then moved out of the Thompson's backyard to Churchill Oaks. It has grown to a very large annual happening, and since 2016 has been run by the Emeril Lagasse Foundation, and the name has changed to The Throwdown. The event has raised in excess of \$12 million over the years. ECCAC has always been a beneficiary and has received \$1 million+ over the many years of the event.

As well, now their Thompson 31Fifty vineyard and wines have become a fund-raising staple for 12 charities all around the country, including ECCAC. They are also involved with another 40+ smaller charities.

Mike Thompson remarked,

Continued on next page





### Oh No! Please Say It's Not So... Yellow Flies!

By Bernadette Canut, Public OUTREACH COORDINATOR AND AMY ANGUIANO, BIOLOGIST

Yellow Flies, known for their persistence and painful bites, are about to make their return to South Walton. If you haven't had the "pleasure" of encountering this dreaded insect, well, you just might want to have a seat and buckle up because you are about to embark on a bumpy 6-week adventure! Let us, your friends at South Walton Mosquito District introduce you to the terrifying yellow fly!

Unlike mosquitoes, these nasty flies create an open wound to draw your blood. Their mouth is well designed for this, featuring stabbing and scissors-like appendages. The combination of these allows the dreadful yellow fly to stab its host and to hang on. It then inserts the scissors to enlarge the wound before piercing further inward. We



know what you're thinking, and yes! It does get worse! The scissors have both sharp and serrated edge surfaces, and then they release anticoagulants to keep the blood flowing which potentially may trigger an allergic reaction, in some. Finally, another specialized mouth organ absorbs the meal from blood

Like mosquitoes, only the females seek out blood meal for egg production while males feed on nectar and pollen. These daytime feeders are often found near tree lines in wet areas, especially on cloudy days. They're fast and quiet, often going unnoticed until they bite and will

continue to bite until they're sat-

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be an effective means of population control, but we have some possible words of wisdom for you. We recommend NOT wearing dark colored clothing, as the female yellow flies are attracted to those black yoga pants and dark baseball caps. Dark sunglasses can also catch their attention. Aside from staying inside, we also recommend loose, light colored clothing, and you will want to use a mosquito repellent containing DEET. As we stated above, these mean ladies are out all day enjoying the weather and looking for their

victims, but their numbers do seem to increase during dusk and dawn hours.

Oh, and please don't forget your pets! Yellow flies love your furry friends just as much as they love you! If you have concerns about how yellow flies might affect your pets, please contact your vet.

Your friends at South Walton Mosquito District wish you the best of luck this yellow fly sea-



LISA Y. SHORTS PITELL ATTORNEY AT LAW

- Wills, Trusts, Estate **Planning**
- Corporation, LLCs, **Business Law**
- Taxation law & Tax returns
- Contracts
- Guardianship, Probate & **Estate Administration**

1402 Cat Mar Rd., Suite B, Niceville, Florida 32578 850.897.0045 | LYP@LYP-LAW.COM

The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience.

#### **ECCAC**

continued from previous page

"The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center has always been near and dear to Valerie and me. Their mission is so crucial to provide many needed services at no cost to Walton and Okaloosa County children who have been mistreated. We have worked with the Pierce's on so many important projects for area children. It is our honor to share this special ECCAC recognition with them."

ECCAC's mission is to heal and prevent the trauma of childhood abuse and neglect by providing advocacy, child-friendly therapies, and a safe environment for kids to feel seen, heard, and understood. In 2024 alone, ECCAC served 1,440+ kids and 12,500+ students received Child Safety Matters prevention education in area schools. Though ECCAC doesn't house children, they provide services to children and their families at

no cost in their Okaloosa and Walton County centers.

information further about ECCAC, visit www.eccac.org. If abuse is suspected, report it by calling the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

#### Bluewater Bay Area **Affordable Climate Control Mini Storage**

#### **Increase Your Living Space!**

Store your excess furniture and keepsakes in a climate control unit to protect them from mildrew and humidity.

850-897-3314 pollyconc@cox.net



**Military Discount Move in Special** Call for Details Climate & Non-Climate Business & Residential Multiple Sizes Available 1466 Cedar St., Niceville Call for reservations



Your Pest Control Heroes

#### YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD PEST CONTROL PROVIDER



**OUR TEAMS HAVE DECADES OF EXPERTISE** TO ENSURE YOUR **FAMILY LIVES IN A** PEST-FREE HOME.

> **INITIAL SERVICE ONLY \$25!**

22602 PANAMA CITY **BEACH PKWY** PANAMA CITY, FL 32413 (850) 988-1852

TRUNORTHPEST.COM



# ROCKY BAYOU CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

#### RBCS Junior Classical League Regional Forum Wins

Rocky Bayou Christian Academy Latin students recently earned the Ordo Tertius (3rd place) overall trophy and individual ribbons at the Junior Classical League Regional Forum on Saturday, March 1, at

# Kenny Wilson Painting

40 years experience to guarantee quality work and a timely completion of your painting project!

Your Paint is Our Pleasure

Licensed and Insured FREE ESTIMATES

(850) 368-2710





Specialty Roofers, Inc., is one of the fastest growing roofing companies in Northwest Florida. Our company specializes in residential, commercial, and solar projects and take pride in our commitment to quality workmanship.



850-974-ROOF | SPECIALTYROOFERS.COM 124 TROUT BRANCH DR. FREEPORT, FL 32439

### Bay Buzz

Gulf Breeze High School. Five local high schools from four counties were in attendance. Individual RBCS winners for the academic testing were Seniors- Oliver McKinney, 2nd in Advanced Heptathlon and 5th in Adv Mythology; Jonas Mosley, 5th Adv Greek Literature and 5th Adv Latin Literature; and Austin Sanders, 1st Adv. Latin Derivatives and 5th in Adv Latin Grammar; Juniors-Lela Cawood, 4th in Adv Latin Grammar and 3rd in Adv Latin Derivatives and Everly Willis, 3rd in Latin Derivatives 2; Sophomores- Gaige Adkins, 4th in Greek Derivatives 2 and 5th in Latin Derivatives 2; Brianna Nutt, 2nd in Adv Latin Derivatives and 5th in Adv Mythology; and Nolan Weisbruch, 2nd in Heptathlon 2; and Freshmen-Collette Schnieders, 2nd in both Latin Grammar 1 and Pentathlon 1 and Ronin Weiss, 1st in Latin Derivatives 1 and 2nd in Ancient Geography 1. Three club members won ribbons for

their creative entries: Jada Stine won 3rd for her Pandora painting and 5th for her Impromptu Art, while Gaige earned 5th, Everly earned 3rd and Janessa Laemmel (not in attendance) earned 2nd for their Modern Myths. Lela also won 1st for Impromptu Art. Finally, seven of the above earned enough ribbons in the Forum Olympics top earn a second place trophy amongst all five schools. JCL Sponsor Julie Mosley is very proud of this small school group for earning wins amongst much larger high schools in this "total points" competition. Pictured are left to right: Lela Cawood, Nolan Weisbruch, Ronin Weiss, Brianna Nutt, Everly Willis, Collette Schnieders, Jada Stine and Sponsor. Not in the photo are Gaige Adkins, Oliver Mckinney, Jonas Mosley, and Austin

For more information about Rocky Bayou Christian School, please visit www.rbcs.org.

#### Results from Recent Niceville Election

Referendum #1: This ballot proposal would allow the current city clerk to work with the city while living outside city limits

- No: 416 votes, or 53.82%
- Yes: 357 votes, or 46.18%

Referendum #2: This allows the mayor of Niceville to be the deciding vote if a tie is reached among the council members when filling a vacancy on the council. This came up as recently as last year when Mayor Dan Henkel used a coin flip to decide Niceville's next city council member after the sudden resignation of council member Abner Williams.

#### **Earth Day Town Hall**

By Carolynn Zonia

Walton County continues to be one of the fastest growing Counties in the Country, and this is leading to a lot of chang-

Continued on next page

### North Bay Fire Control District First Responders Use Lifesaving Equipment to Save Local Woman

In a remarkable demonstration of skill, dedication, and the power of community support, first responders from the North Bay Fire Control District successfully revived a 72-year-old woman in cardiac arrest. This lifesaving rescue was made possible through specialized equipment funded by the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation.

The emergency unfolded just outside the North Bay Fire Control District's coverage area when firefighters arrived to find the woman unresponsive. Using an automated chest compression system, a device designed to deliver continuous, high-quality compressions at a constant rate and depth, they worked tirelessly for 29 minutes before restoring the patient's pulse. The device, valued at \$17,117, was granted to the department to improve survival rates and



reduce first responder fatigue during critical situations.

"Since adding this tool to our arsenal four months ago, it has already made a significant impact," said Ryan Adair, Battalion Chief, North Bay Fire District. "In addition to this case, we've seen three other cardiac arrest patients regain pulses and achieve positive outcomes thanks to this lifesaving device. This remarkable outcome would not be possible without the support of the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation."

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation has been instrumental in equipping emergency responders across the nation. Since its inception in 2005, the foundation has awarded more than 6,745 grants, totaling over \$92 million in lifesaving equipment and resources. This grant is one of more than 120 awarded in recent

months, collectively valued at \$2.8 million, aimed at improving emergency response capabilities.

The North Bay Fire Control District continues to prioritize cutting-edge technology and innovative solutions to enhance emergency response efforts. This grant-funded device not only increases efficiency but also ensures first responders can focus on critical decision-making while the machine delivers precise, uninterrupted compressions.

#### **Community**

#### **BAY BUZZ**

continued from previous page

es. Much of the remaining land that is undeveloped is in flood zones or contains wetlands that pose risks to water quality and natural habitats if developed. Taking into account that we live in a disaster-prone area, questions remain around these developments. Are they safe? Is it smart? Is it even sustainable? Please join us on Saturday, April 5 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. in Padgett Park as we ponder answers to these questions and more at the Fourth Annual Earth Day Town Hall. The theme this year is "Building Our Community." Topics to be discussed include community adaptation of recent Florida Statutes like the Live Local Act; Strategic Planning and Mitigation in Walton County; Success Stories and Generational Impact of Affordable Housing; Updates on Recycling in our County. The event is free and open to the public. We will have speakers from a range of organizations, including the Florida Housing Coalition, the Emerald Coast Chapter of the Florida Planning Association and Habitat for Humanity. Also, please plan to tour the Community Garden in Padgett Park during the event to learn about their programs. Hosted by the Environmental Democratic Caucus, the Democratic Wom-



en's Club and Cultivate Community Gardens. For questions please email waltonenvironmentalists@gmail.com.

#### Cheers to 100 years!

The Walton Area Chamber of Commerce recently celebrated its 100th Anniversary at Hilton Sandestin. Originally formed in 1925, the Walton Area Chamber of Commerce has been a steadfast proponent of the local business community from its inception. This year's Gala was a celebration like no other, marking a century of achievements, partnerships and community impact. Successes of the past year and 100-year legacy were honored, while looking ahead to an exciting future. The evening featured a seated dinner, networking reception and an inspiring awards ceremony, all set in an elegant black-tie atmosphere. It was a wonderful evening honoring the Chamber's century of service and dedication to the community. Photo credit: Walton Area Chamber of Commerce

### **ECP Announces First-Ever Nonstop Flight To NYC**

Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) announces that Delta Air Lines will be launching new seasonal Saturday service between LaGuardia Airport (LGA) and ECP for Summer 2025. The new service will begin on June 14, 2025, and will operate once weekly on Saturdays. Additionally, Delta will offer daily service from June 28, 2025, to July 6, 2025, to accommodate travel-

ers for the 4th of July holiday. The flights will run through Labor Day and will be operated on Delta's CRJ-900 aircraft. Starting Saturday, March 1, 2025, passengers can book their flights directly through Delta or by using the new FlyMyAirport booking tool available on the ECP website.

### Okaloosa County School District to Host Job Fair

The job fair, free to attend, will take place on Saturday, April 5, from 9 to 11 a.m. at Choctawhatchee High School's Multipurpose Building, located at 110 Racetrack Road, Fort Walton Beach.

OCSD is hiring for various positions including teachers, substitute teachers, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, custodians, and more.

In addition, the Professional Services Department will offer a class on "How to Become a Teacher" during the fair. Contact Human Resources at (850) 833-5800 for more information.

### NHS Student Surprised with Donated Car From Local Shop

Niceville High School student, Cadet Zikeara Flowers, recently received a huge surprise when local auto body shop, Mullens Auto Body, bestowed her a new set of wheels.

Amber Carter, Niceville High alum and owner of Mullins Auto Body announced that the vehicle, a 2013 Chevy Malibu LTD, was going to a very well-deserved young lady.

Mullins Auto Body bought it from a customer, did the repairs and made it safe, all with the goal of donating it where it would make a difference.

High School senior Zikeara plans to serve in the Army while attending college to become a marine biologist. Carter says this is the second car that Mullins Auto Body has donated. Previously, they gave one to "Caring and Sharing."

#### **EVENTS**

 $continued\ from\ page\ 10$ 

### **Swing Into Action May 3 FORE the Love of Animals**

Get ready to hit the greens for a great cause May 3 at the Links Golf Club at Sandestion! Registration is now open for the FORE! the Love of Animals Golf Tournament, presented by Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort and benefiting Alaqua Animal Refuge. This premier event combines friendly competition, camaraderie, and a shared commitment to helping animals in need.

#### **Secure Your Spot Today!**

Gather your team and join us for an unforgettable day on the course. Foursomes are \$850 and individuals are \$250 with proceeds directly supporting Alaqua's mission of providing shelter, safety, and second chances to animals in need.

REGISTER NOW a

https://app.eventcaddy.com/events/fore-the-love-of-animals-2025.

#### Take Your Support to the Next Level – Become a Sponsor!

Want to make an even bigger impact? Sponsorship opportunities offer premium visibility, brand exposure, and the chance to be a leader in supporting animal welfare. Whether you're a business or an individual passionate about animals, there's a sponsorship level for you!

#### Sponsor a Hole for Just \$100!

A Hole Sponsorship is an easy and impactful way to show your support. Whether you're a business, an individual, or a family, your sign will be displayed proudly on the course for all players to see!

Spots fill up fast, so don't wait! Join us on the course and help change lives – one swing at a time.



#### **ApexHomeDesign.com**



# Expert solutions for your home design inspiration!

# Transform your home with a beautiful new MANNINGTON. floor featuring:

#### **Restoration Collection® Laminate**

Offering beautiful looks that emulate the warmth of hardwood, with easy maintenance and super durability. Mannington's Restoration Collection\* Laminate has the most complete line of wood designs that you'll find anywhere.

#### ADURA® Vinyl Plank

Incredible detail. Stunning style. High performance. Available in a variety of shapes, sizes, textures, and installation options, any ADURA\* luxury vinyl plank floor will deliver award-winning fashion to your home. All featuring Microban\* surface protection.

#### **Mannington Hardwood**

Designed to reflect the latest trends in American home furnishings and cabinetry, Mannington hardwood floors offer beauty and performance. And our floors are crafted with care to ensure that you get a floor you'll love for many years to come.

Contact us to schedule your consultation or visit us in our Niceville showroom!

#### 4641 HWY. 20 E. NICEVILLE | 850-424-6062 ApexFlooringFl.com

Located 1/2 mile west of the Mid-Bay Bridge on Hwy. 20, directly across from JoJo's Coffee Shop and Lilly Pads (Pineapple) Shopping Center.



### **Physical Rehabilitation**

# Reclaiming Independence in a Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Setting

By Teresa Halverson, Director of Business Development/Community Relations

Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) play a vital role in the continuum of care, particularly for individuals recovering from illness, injury or surgery. While medical care is paramount, physical rehabilitation is equally crucial for restoring function, promoting independence, and enhancing quality of life. Listed below are some benefits of why physical rehabilitation in SNFs is so important:

### Restoring Function and Mobility:

#### **Targeted Therapy:**

- Physical therapists in SNFs develop individualized treatment plans to address specific needs, focusing on improving strength, balance, coordination, and range of motion.
- This targeted approach helps patients regain the ability to perform daily activities, such as walking, dressing, and bathing.

#### **Post-Surgical Recovery:**

- Rehabilitation is essential after orthopedic procedures, such as hip or knee replacements, to facilitate healing and restore mobility.
- Therapists guide patients through exercises that promote joint flexibility and muscle strength, enabling them to return to their previous level of function.

#### Stroke Recovery:

- For individuals who have experienced a stroke, physical therapy can help regain lost motor skills and improve functional independence.
- Therapists utilize various techniques to address muscle weakness, paralysis, and balance deficits.

### **Enhancing Quality of Life:** Increased Independence:

• By restoring function and mobility, physical rehabilitation empowers individuals to perform daily tasks with greater ease, reducing their reliance on others.

• This increased independence fosters a sense of self-worth and improves overall well-being.

#### Pain Management:

- Physical therapy can help alleviate chronic pain through targeted exercises, manual therapy, and other modalities.
- By reducing pain, individuals can participate more fully in activities and enjoy a higher quality of life.

#### **Fall Prevention:**

- Balance and strength training are essential components of fall prevention programs in SNFs
- Therapists work with patients to improve their stability and reduce their risk of falls, promoting safety and preventing injuries.

### The Importance of Comprehensive Approach:

#### **Interdisciplinary Care:**

• Effective rehabilitation requires a collaborative approach

involving physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and nursing staff.

• This interdisciplinary team works together to address the individual's needs and ensure a coordinated plan of care.

### Individualized Treatment:

- It is very important that each patient's plan is designed for their own personal needs.
- A good rehabilitation program will have the flexibility to change and adapt as the patient progresses.

#### **Focus on Functional Goals:**

• Rehabilitation programs should focus on achieving functional goals that are meaningful to the individual, such as returning home or participating in favorite activities.

In conclusion, rehabilitation is an indispensable component

pro- of skilled nursing care. By re-

of skilled nursing care. By restoring function, enhancing quality of life, and promoting independence, physical therapy empowers individuals to live their lives to the fullest.

The Manor at Blue Water Bay offers in-house and out-patient skilled nursing and therapy programs. Contact our admissions department at 850-897-5592 or email us at wecare@manoratbwb.com for additional information or to schedule a



### **CNA Opportunities**

Looking for a new opportunity in health care? Join the team at The Manor at Blue Water Bay.

Now hiring **CNAs** to join our team. Apply today and inquire about our career opportunities and tuition reimbursement.





850-897-5592

www.manoratbwb.com 1500 N. White Pt. Road Niceville, FL 32578



By Stacy Sarikanon, STUNNING SPACES—DECORATING DEN INTERIORS

A central focus of interior design is enhancing well-being within living spaces. Recently, the interior design community has embraced the Danish term "hygge" (pronounced hyoo-guh), which encapsulates a design philosophy rooted in fostering contentment and overall well-being through thoughtful space planning and decoration.

It's no surprise that hygge has found a place in the world of interior design, as our homes play a pivotal role in our comfort and happiness. While everyone's lifestyle may lead to their unique interpretation of hygge, there are several common themes that everyone can incorporate into their own living spaces.

First and foremost, think about **comfort**. What elements make you feel at ease? Is it the in-



viting touch of soft textures, the luxury of lounging on a plush sofa, or the soothing presence of neutral colors and earthy tones? Consider what's underfoot and the appeal of throw pillows that cradle your back or head. When the temperature drops, do you reach for a cherished blanket, an heirloom afghan, or a quilt that evokes fond memories? Does your furry friend have a cozy spot by your side?

Now, let's talk **lighting**. What kind of illumination sets the perfect mood for you? Is it the warm and intimate glow of candles, the mesmerizing flicker of a real or simulated fire, or the flexibility of a dimmer switch? Don't forget the subtle influence of scents, which can also contribute to the

Nature can be a powerful source of comfort. How do another mood-setting design element. Use fabrics like cotton, polyester blends, velvet or even wool to add texture and create a sense of warmth. Soft neutral colors like white, grays or pastels create a calming serene backdrop that complements the hygge style. Pairing window treatments with shades are also functional to provide a dimmed-

Window treatments are

to-light filtering to fully exposed glass effect.

Incorporating these elements into your home's design will help you achieve a hygge-inspired interior that's tailored to your unique tastes and needs. In the end, it's all about creating a space where you can truly relax and find contentment, because your home should be your sanc-



greenery and plants affect your space and your mood? Consider incorporating plants, whether they're hanging from the ceiling or adorning your shelves. Additionally, images of nature as wall art can introduce a sense of tranquility and connection to the outdoors.

Don't forget **wood**. Even the most contemporary of rooms warms up when elements of wood are introduced. You don't have to go full hunting-camp look to experience the effect of

Outdoor spaces, too, can benefit from thinking hygge. Make that deck or patio the perfect space to say "Let's eat outside" or "Let's have happy hour outside." Elements of fire, wood, lighting, and textures all can add to the coziness of your outdoor





#### DECORATING DEN INTERIORS®

Your space - Simply stunning



Stacy Sarikanon Interior Decorator/Owner (850) 244-2255 stacy@decoratingden.com www.ss.decoratingden.com Niceville, FL

WINDOW TREATMENTS FURNITURE | ACCESSORIES WALL, FLOOR AND BED **COVERINGS** 



Family owned & operated to bring you quality and reliable outdoor living services.

#### STOP IN TO SEE US TODAY!

- Lawn Care & Landscaping
- Irrigation & Pest Control
- Outdoor Furniture Patio & Garden Decor
  - Unique Supplies & Gifts

#### THE SHOP

739 John Sims Pkwy, Niceville Open Monday-Friday 10AM-5PM • Saturday 10AM-4PM 850-842-2221 • shop@baldwinturfniceville.com

#### LAWN & LANDSCAPE LOCATION

1440 Live Oak Street, Niceville Open Monday-Friday 7:30-4 850-897-9060 • office@baldwinturfniceville.com





### Local Dining, Drinks, Coffee & Entertainment

#### **Brozinni Pizzeria**

Brozinni Pizzeria's family-friendly pizza place offers you a taste of New York right here in Niceville. Featuring the Big Apple's signature crust, its famous buttery garlic knuckles will leave you wanting more, including appetizers such as bread sticks, homemade stuffed pepperoni or sausage sticks, cheese bread, meatball sticks, pizza, Cocoons Famous smoked tuna dip, and crackers/pita chips. There are also salads, build your own pizza, specialty pizzas, pasta/spaghetti, calzones, drinks and desserts. Every ingredient used has been hand-selected. Call to Order or Order Online at bronzinnis.revelup.online and have your mouth-watering fare delivered!

(850) 678-7778 144 Palm Blvd N., Niceville brozinnispizza.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 a 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 from Italian food to Prime Rib and everything in between. Open 7 days from 11 a.m.-2 a.m.

850-226-7084



114 Amberjack Dr., Okaloosa Island fubarfwb.com

### Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

Locally owned and operated since inception in 1982, Fud-pucker's restaurant stands out by being dedicated to its owners' three favorite "F" words: Food, Fun and Family. Featuring live alligators, family entertainment and teen nights, Fudpucker's is the only place in Destin where you can see, feed and even get your picture taken with a live alligator, shop for "World-Famous" t-shirts, write your names on the walls, play arcade games and enjoy quality casual food in an upbeat and family friendly atmosphere. There's even a special kids' menu and a playground with lots of space to play. Stop by Fudpucker's Destin for a relaxing meal, a cold drink and a friendly locals' smile. Fudpucker's is not just a restaurant, it's not just a bar, and it's certainly not just a "tourist" place - it's a one-of-a-kind entertainment experience, and one that can be enjoyed by kids and families of all ages. Special: World Famous Fudpucker Punch – \$8 'til 4 p.m. every day: Father Fud's special cure-all elixir and legendary medicinal concoction made with a combination of orange and pineapple juices, four types of rum and a splash of Grenadine—\$8 'til 4 p.m. every day.

(850) 654-4200 20001 Emerald Coast Pkwy., Destin fudpucker.com

### JoJo's Coffee and Goodness

An iconic favorite of locals, owner and operator of Jojo's Coffee and Goodness Angela "JoJo" Stevenson invites you to enter her cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere for a daily dose of "goodness." Stop in for mouth-watering cinnamon rolls; scones: cranberry orange, chocolate caramel and cheddar

**SLICE SPECIALS** 

Slice \$5.99

Slice + drink \$8.99

Slice + drink + salad +

bread stick \$10.50

Slice + drink + wings +

bread stick \$14.99

2 slices + drink \$13.99

Open Monday – Thursday

11am-8pm and Friday -Saturday 11am-9pm 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 madeto-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-just what you're craving for Spring!

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

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

#### LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant

Suds, Songs and Romantic Sunsets! 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.

Saturday, April 12: Crawfish Boil 5 p.m. until out

Tuesday, April 15: The Traveling Painter 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 19: Dive Clean Up 10 a.m.; The Aces Band 6-10 p.m.

Continued on next page

# Get a taste of New York right here in Niceville! Weekly Specials APRIL



Pizza Calzones Wings Salads Pasta

Fizza Place

Monday: One 20" Specialty Pizza \$21.99
Tuesday: Two Calzones \$20

Wednesday: Family Size Chicken, Alfredo

or Spaghetti & Meatballs, Family Salad, 6 Breadsticks, 2l/Gal Tea \$40

**Thursday:** Buy One Pizza, Get Another 1/2 Price

**Friday:** Two 16" 1 Topping Pizzas \$29.99 **Saturday:** Family Night XI 20" Pepperoni, 1/2 Cheese Bread, 6 Wings, Tea/2I \$40

Dine-In - Pickup - Delivery • Call to Order or Order Online

850-678-7778 • 144 Palm Blvd N., Niceville • www.brozinnispizza.com

### Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar

**4552 US Hwy. 98 Santa Rosa Beach, FL** (Next to Louis Louis)

vkijapanesefl.com • (850) 267-2555



Raw fish dishes & grilled foods prepared by lively chefs in a sleek, modern environment.

#### Offi Octificates Available

Lunch 11am-3pm | Dinner 3pm-9:30pm Hibachi Grill open all day 11am-9:30pm



### Wine Fests on Tap!

### Sandestin Wine Festival April 10-13

The 38th Annual Sandestin Wine Festival at the Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort will take place April 10-13. Topping area polls as a must-experience event, this beloved festival offers four full days of unique events including wine dinners with ce-



lebrity chefs, yoga, live music, interactive experiences, culinary tents, and, of course, wine tastings. Tickets, schedule and lodging info: www. sandestinwinefestival.com.

Wine novices are able to learn more about wines and sample from a comprehensive selection in all varieties, styles, and price ranges. Wine aficionados enjoy meeting winemakers, asking detailed questions, and acquiring hard to get selections. Everyone gets to enjoy the live music, interactive experiences at the Culinary tents, and shops and dining of the Village of Baytowne Wharf.

### **Destin Charity Wine Auction April 25-26**

The Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) marks 20 years of fundraising with the 2025 Destin Charity Wine Auction, presented by the Jumonville Family, on April 25-26. Proceeds benefit 17 children's charities in Northwest Florida. Patron packages are on sale now at dcwaf.org/tickets. Sponsorships available—contact info@dcwaf.org.

Continued on next page

#### DINING

continued from previous page

Sunday, April 20: Easter Sunday Seafood Brunch 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Wednesdays: Kids Eat Free 5-9 p.m.

Thursdays: Open Mic and Karaoke Nights 6-10 p.m.

Fridays: Steak Night 5-9 p.m. Sundays: Brunch 9 a.m.-1 p.m. buffet style, bottomless Mimosas!

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

Restaurant hours: Mon-Tues closed. Wed-Sat, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sun, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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

#### VKI Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar

VKI Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar offers an authentic Japanese dining experience. Known for its fresh sushi rolls and entertaining hibachi, the local's revered South Walton restaurant provides a diverse menu that includes teriyaki, tempura, katsu, noodles, fried rice and bento combo boxes. Guests can enjoy lunch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and dinner from 3 to 9:30 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday; the restaurant is closed on Mondays. VKI Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar is celebrated for its high-quality ingredients and friendly atmosphere, making it a popular choice for both locals and visitors seeking a memorable Japanese meal in the Santa Rosa Beach area. Hours: 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. Dine in or order online for take out.

vkijapanesefl.com (850) 267-2555 4552 U.S. Hwy. 98 W., Santa Rosa Beach



### MARCH MADNESS IS BACK...

Who Will Make It to the Final Four?

Catch Every Minute of Every Game Right Here!

### SEC Basketball HQ

The Masters / NBA / MLB... Catch All the Action Here!





pizza bar

114 Amberjack Drive Fort Walton Beach 850-226-7084 www.fubarfwb.com

### **\$5 OFF** purchase of \$25 or more

(One per person/visit. Not valid with any other promotions.)

15% off for Military and First Responders 7 days a week!



#### \$.49 Cent Wings

Monday & Wednesday

#### **Daily Lunch Special**

11am-2pm

#### **Happy Hour**

7 Days a Week 3-7pm

Military Monday 6-9pm Service Industry Night (SIN Night) Every Night

**POOL TABLES • FAMILY FRIENDLY** 



FUBAR and Paradise/Sunset Liquors DELIVERY: Door Dash • Uber Eats • Grubhub

#### **Welcome to Paradise Liquors and Sunset Liquors**

Large Selection of Beer, Wine & Spirits • Same Day Delivery



Niceville

• 1106 John Sims Pkwy.

Mary Esther
• 251 Mary Esther Bly

• 251 Mary Esther Blvd.

Pensacola
• 4051 Barrancas Ave.

LIQU(

• 901 Beal Pkwy NW

1285 Eglin Pkwy.290 NE Eglin Pkwy.

• 297B James Lee Blvd.

www.850liquors.com

LIQUORS

Panama City
• 1360 West 15th St

Callaway • 809/807 N. Tyndall Pkwy.

Pensacola
• 4600 Mobile Hwy.

Hwy.

\$5 OFF purchase of \$25 or more

(One per person/visit. Not valid with any other promotions.)

15% off for Military and First Responders
7 days a week!

Like us on Facebook get 10% off in store!



### Horsepower Pavilion: A Unique Dining Experience

Just west of Freeport on Hwy. 20 sits the iconic Horsepower Pavilion. British expatriates Kate and Freddie sold their business in England, moved to the Florida panhandle and purchased this distinctive property in 2023, complete with two, gold-gilded horses standing approximately 30 feet tall—an impressive feature that cost \$83,000.

The couple established the restaurant and named it Hamilton's Bistro after their 12-year-

old son. The spacious venue features ample seating and an outdoor stage for musicians, creating an inviting atmosphere that even attracts neighborhood horses on Sundays for what Kate playfully refers to as "a bit of a brunch,

Kate, who admits she's working herself to death as she manages the bustling establishment, has assembled an impressive culinary team. Chef Tommy, who has built his reputation at various fine dining establishments throughout area—including the former Pandora

Steakhouse in Destin, Barefoot Barbeque, Elmo's, and Great Southern in Seasideexceptional dishes that keep patrons coming back.

The menu highlights include classic English fish and chips and a popular Sunday brunch featuring Kate's legendary Bloody Mary cocktails. Currently operating on winter hours, Ham-

ilton's Bistro opens at 11 a.m Thursday through Sunday.

All in all, Horsepower Pavilion offers a delightful destination for visitors seeking quality cuisine in a unique setting—the perfect place to enjoy a cold



Stella Artois and some crispy fries while soaking in the distinctive ambiance.



Breakfast: Bakery - Breakfast Sandwiches - Burritos Lunch: Chicken Salad - BLTs - Paninis - And MORE

Inside & Outside Seating Available 7:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Tues. - Sat.

Come for the coffee, stay for the goodness.

Looking for event space? Give us a call!







#### Come create with us! ART CLASSES FOR ALL AGES!

We do PARTIES! Kid's Birthdays • Girl's Night Out Team Bonding • Office Gatherings • In-House Catering

FOLLOW US FOR CLASS CAMP SCHEDULES: 🛐 🧓 📀

4652 HWY. 20 EAST • NICEVILLE • (850) 737-6193 bigorangehousedesigns.com

#### WINE FESTS

continued from previous page

**Event Highlights:** April 25 - Patron Dinners: Exclusive vintner and chef pairings at private homes, supporting DCWAF charities.

April 26 - Charity Wine **Auction:** A Reserve Tasting & Live Auction at Grand Boulevard Sandestin Town Center featuring world-class wines, gourmet cuisine, and high-energy bidding on rare wines, trips, and more.

The auction coincides with the South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival, offering hundreds of premium wines and culinary delights. Auction attendees receive access to the festival's Grand Tasting on April 27 at 1 p.m. Learn more at dcwaf.org/

#### **South Walton Beaches** Wine & Food Festival **April 24-27, 2025**

A dazzling roster of celebrity winemakers, mixologists, and chefs will converge April

24 - 27, 2025, for a world-class wine and food experience—the South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival in Grand Boulevard Town Center—to wine, dine, educate and entertain guests as part of the four-day celebration of wine, spirits, food, music, sunshine, fun and goodwill.

South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival features a stunning showcase of some of the best in the world—the perfect blend of 600+ world-class wines, industry experts, culinary icons, Nashville singer/songwriters, educational seminars and a sprinkle of fun and funky activations.

Celebrity wine producers and chefs present fine wine and food pairings from the world's most famous appellations. The Culinary Village offers a sumptuous array of foods to taste, wines to pair, as well as wine and food tasting seminars.

**Event Highlights:** Botanicals, Bitters & Brews April 25 | 5:30-8

Enjoy a cocktail competition, craft beer, lite bites and live music in a stunning garden-inspired setting under the stars. Sample specialty cocktails and vote for your favorite, sip local craft brews, and nosh on delectable cuisine while vou dance the night away to The Forrest Williams Band!

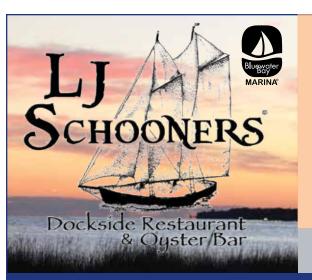
#### **Saturday Grand Tasting** April 26 | 3-6 p.m.

At SoWalWine, it's all about the quality, diversity, scope and relevance of wines being offered and the people bringing them to the table. There are over 600 high-quality, diverse selections!

#### Sunday Grand Tasting April 27 | 1pm - 4 pm

Welcome back to day two of the Grand Tastings, where you can taste wines from around the world and buzz-worthy, award-winning craft spirits, then stroll on over to sample delicious foods while listening to live music.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.So-WalWine com



### **Sunset Shrimp Boil**

LAST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH March 30, April 27, May 25, June 29, July 27, Aug. 31, Sept. 28, Oct. 26

Shrimp, Sausage, Corn on the Cob, **Potatoes, Bread (Market price per plate)** 

**March 30:** Live Music from Parker & Ivoree Willingham 4-8pm

Saturday, April 12: 10% of food sales will be donated to the Niceville Fireworks Fund



ay: \$5 Well Ma sday: Throwdown Paddle Board Race 6pm

April 11: Ed Wrann 6-10pm 12: Crawfish Boil 5pm-until out, Purple Monkey 6-10pm

ril 18: Rockers 4 Life 6-10pm ril 19: Dive Clean Up 10am, The Aces Band 6-10pm ril 20: Easter Sunday Seafood Brunch 9am-1pm

ril 25: Parker & Ivoree Willingham 6-10pm ril 26: One False Move 6-10pm

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

Off the Hook

### A Celebration of Marine Life:

# Gulfarium's 2nd Annual CARE on the Coast Fundraiser!

Get ready for an unforgettable evening of conservation, celebration, and coastal fun at Gulfarium's CARE on the Coast on April 26, 2025, at 3:30 PM! This annual festival brings together delicious food, refreshing drinks, live entertainment, and marine animal encounters for a one-of-a-kind event benefiting the Gulfarium CARE Center's mission to rescue and rehabilitate sea turtles.

As soon as you arrive, you'll be swept up in the excitement of this vibrant, festival-style event, complete with mouthwatering cuisine, cocktails, and lively music to set the mood. Whether you're mingling with fellow ocean enthusiasts, bidding on exclusive experiences in the silent auction, or enjoying a frontrow seat at the dolphin presen-

tation, there's no shortage of things to see and do.

For those eager to dive into marine conservation, CARE on the Coast offers a rare chance to go behind the scenes and learn how Gulfarium's dedicated animal care team works to rehabilitate sick and injured sea turtles. Hear inspiring success stories, get up close with some of our current patients, and discover how you can play a role in protecting these incredible creatures.

Kids and adults alike will love the interactive activities and hands-on experiences scattered throughout the park, including conservation-themed games, crafts, and fun challenges designed to inspire the next generation of ocean advocates. Whether you're exploring these activities, sipping a cool drink under the Florida sunset, or dancing to live music, the night promises to be a true celebration of marine life.

Tickets are on sale now, and they're going fast! General admission grants access to all activities, entertainment, and behind-the-scenes insights, while VIP packages offer exclusive perks like early entry, premium seating, and a special meet-and-greet with Gulfarium's animal care experts.

Don't miss out on this incred-

ible evening of food, fun, and conservation for a cause. Visit our official event page at gulfarium.com/cotc to purchase your tickets today, and get ready for an unforgettable night at CARE on the Coast!

The Genuine. The Original.



### OVERHEAD DOOR COMPANY OF NORTHWEST FLORIDA™

\$100 OFF a new WI-FI DOOR OPERATOR and FREE DECORATIVE DOOR HARDWARE

with each door purchase. (No other discounts apply.) Financing as low as \$79/mo. w.a.c.

Don't wait until an emergency - we offer savings with an Annual Service Plan - includes complete diagnostic of door systems!

Discounts for Sr. Citizens, Veterans, Active Duty and First Responders.

(850) 269-3246 • destinoverheaddoor.com

Residential and Commercial











### BOAT LIFTS/SLIPS

#### Now available in Freeport!

- New, covered 10,000 lb.
   & 12,000 lb. capacity
- Slips accommodate boats up to 30'
- Fuel available on site

Each lift has remote control, 120v outlet, water, and hose for wash downs. Well lit with security cameras and management on site daily.

Located on the fresh water of Black Creek less than 3 miles from Choctawhatchee Bay!

Freeport, FL 334-248-4437



### CAA Awarded \$20,000 Grant to Expand the Underwater Museum of Art

The Cultural Arts Alliance (CAA) of Walton County was recently approved by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for a Grants for Arts Projects award of \$20,000! This grant will support the 2025 installation of sculptures to expand the nation's first Underwater Museum of Art (UMA). The NEA awarded 1,127 Grants for Arts Projects awards nationwide totaling more than \$31.8 million as part of the recent announcement of fiscal year 2025 grants.

"The CAA's very first NEA grant was received in 2018, making it possible for us to collaborate with the South Walton Artificial Reef Association to create the nation's first Underwater Museum of Art. So, it is incredibly rewarding to be recognized again by the NEA now that the UMA is approaching its seventh anniversary," said CAA President & CEO Jennifer Steele.

In addition to this exciting news, J & The Causeways will return to headline Dine + Dive, CAA's upcoming fundraising event benefiting the Underwater Museum of Art, Wednesday, April 30, 6-9 p.m. at Grand Boulevard's Town Center. Dine + Dive serves as the official kick-



off for Art Month Walton County, a month-long celebration of the arts featuring a diverse line-up of cultural events throughout May.

This year, the CAA and South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA) are elevating the former Under the Sea event into an immersive celebration of fine art, exquisite cuisine, exceptional wines and marine conservation. This multi-sensory experience will feature an extensive selection of incredible wines to sample, more than a dozen tasting stations showcasing exclusive dishes from the area's most renowned restaurants and celebrated chefs, and a cash bar serving signature cocktails and craft beer.

In addition to continuous live music, Dine + Dive party-goers will have an opportunity to meet UMA artists from current and previous installations as well as receive an exclusive preview of several of the original works created for the 2025 installation before the sculptures are deployed to the UMA site over the summer

Tickets fare \$100 per person in advance and \$125 per person day of the event, if available. Purchase at CulturalArtsAlliance.com/upcoming-events.

The event is produced by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County with support from Visit South Walton, Grand Boulevard Town Center, and SWARA. To become a sponsor, contact Gab-by@culturalartsalliance.com.

Funds raised will directly support the 7th deployment of sculptures into the UMA. A collaborative initiative with SWARA, the UMA is the nation's first permanent underwater sculpture museum. Recognized as one of TIME magazine's 100 World's Greatest Places (2018), National Geographic's Best Trips (2019), and a 2023 CODA Award winner, the UMA continues to gain international acclaim for its unique fusion of art, marine conservation, and eco-tourism.

The UMA is a signature initiative of the Cultural Arts Alliance's Art in Public Spaces program, developed in partnership with SWARA. Designed to serve both ecological and artistic purposes, the UMA enhances marine habitats and supports the growth of fish populations while also enriching South Walton's cultural landscape.

The 2025 UMA installation will include the following pieces of sculpture: Concretion by William Braithwaite (United Kingdom), Seahorse by Jessica Bradsher (Greenville, NC), The Neptunian Oak by Nathan Hoffman (Highlandville, MO), Hap-

py Hour by Sarah Wilkinson (United Kingdom), and Hometown by Mandy Yourk (Panama City, FL), and The Menina of the Reef: An Infinite Message by Antonio Azzato (Spain).

Select sculptures, including The Menina of the Reef: An Infinite Message, which is a special collaboration between the Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation and CAA, will be on display at Dine + Dive and during the 37th annual ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival in Grand Boulevard's Town Center May 3 and 4 and will then be transferred to Orange Beach, Ala., to be prepared for their deployment into the Gulf this summer. The UMA site is located less than one mile off the coast of Grayton Beach State Park in a one-acre permit patch of seabed.

The UMA project is produced with support from Visit South Walton, the National Endowment for the Arts, Walter Marine / The Reefmaker, the St. Joe Community Foundation, the Florida Cancer Specialists Foundation, Beachy Blooms 30A, The Ellis Family and Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. For more information, visit UMAFL.org.







### Hurlburt Field Air Commandos:

### Basketball's Impact on Service Members

By 1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

As the final seconds ticked away on the game clock, the crowd cheered, and teammates came off of the bench to congratulate one another.

The Hurlburt Field Air Commandos basketball team had clinched yet another win with a 76-68 win over the Eglin Eagles on Jan. 10.

This season, the Air Commandos basketball squad has added to their 11-year legacy of consistent home wins. But, victory isn't the only take away for the team.

"The whole point of varsity sports in the military is to build resiliency, fitness and mental health," said the Hurlburt Field Air Commandos coach. "It brings a lot of people from wherever together; it's like a second family."

An Airman assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing, and starting forward for the team, said that for many service members in the Air Force, being an Airman is central to their identity. The mission is always a priority, but finding an outlet outside of work is essential.

"It 100% boosts my morale," the starting forward said. "I look forward to this a lot of days when I have a hard day at work. The Air Force definitely pushes that career-focused attitude but taking a break and doing something you love is just a way to relax and have fun."

The Hurlburt Field Air Commandos are currently ranked 2nd in the Military Basketball Association. They're also a part of the Atlantic Coastal Military Basketball Conference, which offers tryouts to any reservists, guardsmen, DoD civilians and contractors over the age of 18, regardless of branch.

"I don't feel disconnected even if we're different branches," said a Soldier playing as a guard for Hurlburt Field. "We're all the same people, and they don't treat me differently just because I'm in the Army. I learn a lot from the Airmen. Building connections and bonds with my fellow players has been a pleasure."

The team's diversity extends beyond service-specifics and job titles. According to the coach, the team has a wide demographic of different ages, religions, races and upbringings.

"We have a lot players from different backgrounds, but we do a lot of activities outside of the game to make our team feel whole," said the coach. "We become a family."

Hurlburt Field is the only DoD basketball team that competes in multiple leagues: Southeastern Military Athletic Conference and the MBA's ACMBC. This schedule averages 70-80 games per season against every branch across the DoD.

"I think my team definitely helps me network," said Team Hurlburt's starting forward. "We play against and meet so many new people; we get together for charity and volunteer events, so we're making a bigger difference than just basketball."



While the court focuses on competition, the impact of these intramural sports extends far beyond the game itself. For the players, participating provides a sense of purpose outside of their daily duties, fostering connections that strengthen both professional and personal bonds,

added Hurlburt's guard.

"For the people who watch, it gives you a way to come together and have something to look forward to," the starting forward explained. "It's cool to come home to family or friends and say 'Hey, let's get ready and go to the game.""







SALES • SERVICE • PARTS AND ACCESSORIES • FINANCING • RENTALS

# Join the Neighborhood Fun

SHOP BY BRANDS

Garia Star EV EVolution GEM Car Tomberlin

Club Car

Yamaha Denago EV Atlas



Santa Rosa Beach (850) 622 2000

www. ElectricCartCompany.com





### **Blood Sugar:** How's Yours?



By Kay Leaman, Health Architect, HealthyDay HealthyLife

I don't know of anyone who

doesn't know someone who is either pre-diabetic or diagnosed with type II diabetes. I decided to write about it in hopes of equipping people to take charge of their health and be equipped to support those they know.

We have insulin receptors throughout the body. Insulin, which is released by the pancreas, stimulates these cell receptors which allows glucose to leave the bloodstream and enter the cell. The receptors can be damaged by free radicals. These free radicals steel electrons from molecules of cells and tissues and this includes the receptors. When this happens, it causes oxidative stress which results in inflammation.

Oxidative stress and inflammation are the underlying pathologies to nearly every chronic degenerative disease.

The lifestyle choices that can contribute to this cycle are smoking, lack of vitamin and mineral intake, environmental toxins, excessive sugar consumption and sedentary lifestyles.

Glucose is used as fuel by the



mitochondria of the cells to give us energy. When we eat and/ or drink, insulin is released in response to rising sugar levels. Think of insulin as the key and the receptors as the lock. Once this process happens the glucose is metabolized in the mitochondria and converted to ATP (adenosine triphosphate-energy currency molecule).

As inflammation grows and persists due to an overabundance of sugar intake the lock becomes deformed and can no longer hold its molecular shape. This prevents the key from be-

ing able to open the lock (receptor).

And it's not only the receptors which are damaged but the arterial walls and the LDL cholester-ol. This cycle leads not only to type II diabetes but loss of kidney function, loss of circulation to extremities, stroke or heart attack are also of concern.

Type I diabetes happens when the beta cells are not producing enough insulin; the keys are missing. Type II diabetes occurs when the receptors become 'rusty'; they no longer have the correct molecular shape to receive insulin. This is insulin resistance.

To overcome this cycle, drugs are used to reduce blood sugar levels or insulin is given to overwhelm the receptors and force the glucose into the cells. However, any rapid rise of insulin, either artificially or naturally, occurring from eating high glycemic foods causes even more

oxidative damage!

The cell continually makes new insulin receptors and IF the new ones are correctly shaped, they can be protected by a constant source of antioxidants so insulin sensitivity can prevail.

Here are the lifestyle choices to get and keep this important cycle in shape:

- Exercise 30-60 minutes daily
- Consume 30-40 grams of soluble and insoluble fiber daily
- Avoid trans fats
- Eat low glycemic foods
- Reduce stress
- Quality sleep -7-9 hours
- Supplementation

If you have compromised kidney function, you must be careful regarding mineral intake. It should be decreased, but can still offer benefits.

If you would like to view the supplemental protocol prescribed by a doctor you can reach out to me via email. Please put DIABETES in the subject line.

Here's to Heath! succeed.hdhl@gmail.com



# WHITE-WILSON MEDICAL CENTER, P.A. QUALITY CARE AU Under One Poof



Scan the QR Code or Call to Schedule **Pediatric, Family Medicine and Internal Medicine** 

850.314.6194

white-wilson.com 2001 East Highway 20 Niceville, FL 32578









Quality Pediatric Care



Accepting New Patient



Walk-Ins Immediate Care

Wellness

### Aging Gracefully: A Guide to Longevity and Vitality



By Dr. Karen DeVore

Aging is a privilege, but how we age is largely within our control. While genetics

play a role, lifestyle choices and proactive health management significantly impact our vitality, mobility and overall well-being. The good news? You don't have to accept aches, fatigue and chronic diseases as inevitable. You can age on your own terms by implementing a few key strategies.

#### 1. Annual Check-Ins & Lab **Work: Stay Ahead of the** Game

Prevention is the cornerstone of longevity. Annual health check-ups allow you to track changes, address concerns and monitor key health markers before minor issues become major problems. Many conditionssuch as metabolic disorders, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis—develop silently over time, making regular lab work

essential for early detection and allows problems to worsen over intervention.

Too many people avoid these appointments due to frustration with dismissive healthcare providers. If your practitioner isn't listening to you or supporting your health goals, find a team that will. Healthcare should be a partnership, not a battle.

#### **Key Lab Markers** to Monitor:

- Inflammation & Metabolic Health: CRP, fasting insulin,
- Hormonal Balance: Thyroid panel, testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, DHEA
- Nutrient Status: Vitamin D, B12, ferritin, magnesium
- Cardiovascular Health: Lipid panel, homocysteine, ApoB

#### 2. Listen to Your Body: **Symptoms Matter**

Your body is always communicating with you. Fatigue, brain fog, unexplained weight changes and joint pain aren't just random annoyances—they're signals. Ignoring them doesn't make them disappear; it only

Being proactive about your health doesn't mean dismissing symptoms in the name of "natural" healing. It means staying in tune with your body, recognizing patterns and addressing imbalances early. You know your body better than any textbook or algorithm—if something feels off, advocate for yourself.

#### 3. Know Your Family's **Aging Patterns**

While lifestyle choices have the greatest impact on longevity, understanding your genetic predispositions can help you make informed decisions. Look at how your parents and siblings are aging. Are they dealing with cognitive decline, cardiovascular issues or bone loss?

Genetics don't determine your fate, but they do provide insight into potential vulnerabilities. By identifying patterns, you can take proactive steps to mitigate risks through targeted lifestyle and medical interventions.



#### 4. The Fundamentals **Never Get Old**

Some health advice remains timeless because it works. If you want to age gracefully, these fundamentals are non-negotiable:

- Movement is medicine. If you don't use it, you lose it. Regular exercise supports mobility, cardiovascular health and cognitive function.
- Hydration matters. Dehydration contributes to fatigue, joint pain and poor circulation.
- Sleep is the ultimate reset. Quality sleep is essential for hormone balance, brain function and immune resilience.
- Laughter truly is the best medicine. Joy and social connection improve mental and emotional health while reducing stress and inflammation.
  - You are what you eat. A

nutrient-dense, whole-food diet fuels longevity and vitality.

#### 5. Muscle Mass: The Fountain of Youth

One of the most powerful predictors of longevity? Muscle mass. Research consistently links muscle maintenance with reduced mortality risk, improved metabolic health and greater resilience against age-related diseases such as osteoporosis, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

#### Why Muscle Matters:

- Improves metabolism and helps regulate blood sugar
- Reduces fall risk by supporting balance and coordination
- Strengthens bones through mechanical stress, helping prevent osteoporosis
- Supports cognitive health by enhancing blood flow and reducing inflammation

The takeaway? It's never too late to build muscle. Resistance training—even starting in your 70s or 80s—can lead to signifi-

Continued on next page



### WELLNESS IS A MARATHON, no a sprin

#### Schedule your in-person or virtual consultation today!

2441 U.S. Hwy 98 Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459 TortoiseClinic.com | 850.267.5611

Scan to learn more and book today!



Where East Meets West

WHOLISTIC HEALTH • ACUPUNCTURE • MASSAGE • APOTHECARY





### The Only Person You Can Change Is You



By Stephenie Craig, Journey Bravely

Do you ever find yourself exhausted, irritated and re-

sentful when a person in your life won't start or stop certain behavior? Maybe they don't take care of themselves as you think they should or they won't stop a habit you think is negative. Maybe you want them to study more, drink less, exercise more, be happier, be more punctual, focus better, work less, be less angry, be less critical, parent differently or relax more. Behavior of others that is not aligned with your life approach can create significant discomfort and can feel annoying or even infuriating.

How do you respond to difficult behavior? Common approach-

es include passive aggressive remarks, nagging, withdrawing or saying mean things. While these strategies give a momentary sense of "taking action," none produce meaningful change. Often, your desire for change comes from a positive desire for the person to have a good life. Other times, the desire for change is motivated by you believing your way is the right way and everyone else should just get on board. Regardless of the motivation, you can't change other people. Period. Science and years of experience reveal humans change when the discomfort of their current behavior outweighs the inherent discomfort of change.

Change is an internal job. People change when they decide they are willing to do the uncomfortable and unfamiliar work of trying something new even when it is difficult. No amount of external pressure from you has the power to motivate change in another. While hard to accept, it is incredibly freeing to realize it has never been and will never be your job to get someone else to change. You can invest the energy you've been putting into changing others into your internal work of change and growth. So, how do you shift from trying to change others to engaging personal growth?

#### 12 Ways to Engage Personal Growth and Stop Trying to Change Others

**Notice.** Notice frustrated, irritated, annoyed, angry, resentful energy you are feeling toward someone. Notice where you feel it in your body. Try being curious about the origin of the feelings. Notice patterns of irritated feelings and how they relate to a pattern of behavior in the other person.

**Admit.** Ask yourself if you are trying to control or change someone else's behavior. Am I trying to get someone to start or stop a behavior? If the answer

is yes, admit to yourself you are trying to control something you can't control.

**Remind.** Remind yourself despite your best desires and efforts, you have never and will never have the power to change another person.

**Rest.** Rest into the reality and freedom of not being responsible for changing others.

**Decide.** Decide how you will respond to difficult behavior. You are in charge of your response despite the behavior of someone else.

**Discover.** Look inside yourself to discover the deeper reasons the behavior is bothering you. Do you have historical wounds around the behavior? Is the behavior a barrier to connection in your relationship? Does the behavior scare you? Does feeling out of control create feelings of insecurity for you? Do you hold a belief that bad things will happen if others don't do things the way you do?

**Sort.** Sort whether the difficult behavior is something you can let go. Every behavior does not need to change. Sometimes making space for the other person to be different than you without judgment is most helpful. If you determine the behavior is truly causing problems, reach for directness rather than nagging.

**Communicate**. If you've identified the behavior as a true problem, calmly and directly communicate your concerns. Try going light on judgment and asking curious questions to understand the other person's perspective about the behavior.

**Boundaries.** Decide what you will do or not do if the behavior continues long-term. Follow through on boundaries over time.

**Model.** Model healthy behavior in your interactions with the other person. If you are asking them to relax more, prioritize relaxing. Try modeling with a joyful attitude rather than one of

judgment.

**Encourage.** Verbally acknowledge positive change the other person makes regarding the difficult behavior.

**Accept.** If the other person chooses not to change the behavior, accept their choice. You can't make them choose differently. Instead, focus on how you will interact in the relationship.

Accepting you can't change anyone but yourself is uncomfortable, but freeing. Lean into the freedom and be gracious with yourself and others as you navigate letting go of trying to change others. Connect with us for counseling and coaching along your journey at Journeybravely.com.

#### AGING GRACEFULLY

continued from previous page

cant improvements in strength, mobility and longevity.

#### **Aging on Your Own Terms**

Aging gracefully isn't about avoiding every wrinkle or pretending time isn't passing. It's about maintaining independence, vitality and quality of life for as long as possible. It's about making informed choices, staying proactive with your health and surrounding yourself with a supportive healthcare team.

Longevity isn't just about adding years to your life—it's about adding life to your years. Take care of your body now, and it will take care of you in the decades to come.

I'd be honored to support you on your wellness journey. Let's create a personalized plan that nurtures your unique body, helping you feel vibrant, strong and at ease as you age gracefully. Schedule a consultation with me at the Tortoise Clinic (850.267.5611)—because you deserve to feel your best, every step of the way.









Basic Monthly Membership \$25.99 • Premium \$35.99 • Premium Add Ons \$15.99

Niceville 850.481.3999 Ft. Walton Beach 850.533.0555

Destin 850.428.2333

**Wellness** 

### Why It's Hard to Keep Up with New Year's Strength Training Resolutions



By Kassia GARFIELD, Edd, PT, DPT, ATC, OCS, COMT, CERT.

As new year be-

gins, the gym fills up with people determined to transform their bodies and improve their health. Strength training is a common New Year's resolution, with many setting goals to build muscle, get stronger or improve overall fitness. But, by the time February or March rolls around, many find themselves struggling to stay committed to their weightlifting routine. I always tell people you should work out because you LOVE your body, not because you hate it. Here are a few reasons why it might be hard to keep up the routine or goal.

#### 1. The Initial **Motivation Fades**

At the start of the year, the excitement of setting a fitness goal can be incredibly motivating. Whether it's hitting new



personal records or achieving a weight loss goal, the vision of success can fuel workouts for the first few weeks. However, as time goes on, that initial enthusiasm often fades. Strength training is a slow process—muscle growth and strength development take time. After a few weeks, when progress isn't as immediately visible as one might hope, motivation starts to dwindle. The excitement that once drove you to the gym can give way to the realization that results take time and effort, leading many to lose

#### 2. Winter Fatigue and Lack of Energy

Strength training requires energy and consistency, and when it's cold, dark, and gloomy outside, it's easy to feel drained. The winter months are notoriously difficult for those trying



to stick to a regular fitness routine, and for strength training specifically, the lack of sunlight and shorter days can leave people feeling sluggish. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which affects many during the winter, can exacerbate this feeling of fatigue, making it harder to get motivated to go to the gym, let alone lift heavy weights. It's hard to push yourself to train your muscles when you're battling low energy and a lack of enthusiasm for physical activity. This is when a buddy system helps to keep the motivation and routine. Accountability is the best way stick to a goal!

#### 3. Unrealistic Expectations and Overloading

A common pitfall for those starting a strength training regimen in the new year is setting unrealistic expectations. Many people dive into intense lift-

ing programs with the goal of seeing drastic changes within a few weeks. They may aim to lift heavier weights, work out six days a week, or drastically increase the volume of their workouts without giving their body the time it needs to recover. Strength training requires patience and consistent effort, but when the immediate results are slow to show, it can feel discouraging. Here at MaxStrength Fitness we expect twice a week. This is realistic, attainable and can fit into a schedule easily. Sometimes, it's important to be kind to yourself during a transition and when making new

#### 4. The Challenge of **Building Habits**

Strength training, like any form of exercise, requires building a consistent habit. However, forming a new habit takes time, and strength training isn't an instant gratification process. At first, lifting weights might feel difficult or uncomfortable, and progress may seem incremental. Many people expect fast results, but muscle growth takes several weeks, if not months, to notice. Especially the older you are, the

longer results take. Without a solid routine in place, it's easy to skip workouts or feel unmotivated. Hiring a professional, finding a buddy, or adding something to a routine you already have is an easy way to help with this hang up.

#### **Work Out Because You Love Your Body!**

Strength training resolutions are often abandoned during this time of year due to fading motivation, winter fatigue, unrealistic expectations, and the difficulty of habit-building, but strength training is one of the best gifts you can give yourself! Muscle is the fountain of youth. However, success in strength training isn't about quick fixes or flawless consistency. It's about gradual progress and persistence. If you've found yourself struggling, it's normal! Remember, even small steps forward are steps toward becoming

If you need help and guidance, MaxStrength Fitness offers one on one personal training that is appointment based in a climate controlled environment. Reach out if you need



Ear, Nose, Throat, Allergies Hearing **Facial Plastic Issues** 

From newborns to the elderly

Stop suffering from painful sinus issues. Services offered by Emerald ENT are comprehensive and unique to this area.



We are thrilled to announce our second location in Panama City Beach.

12909 Panama City Beach Parkway, Panama City Beach, FL 32407

#### **Accepting New Appointments!**

(850) 797-6191 | Emerald-ENT.com 141 Mack Bayou Loop, Suite 102, Santa Rosa Beach 12909 Panama City Beach Pkwy., Panama City Beach, FL 32407

### Claim 2 FREE SESSIONS!

**New Clients Only** 



- Slow continuous motion style
- Science based protocol
- · As low as \$54 per session

Our clients' experience: increased strength, balance, energy, functional ability with decreased join pain, blood pressure, cholesterol, insulin sensitivity and so much more!









**TRANSFORMATION** 



4576 E Hwy 20 Niceville, FL (850) 373-4450



www.maxstrengthfitness.com/niceville



### What a Pain in the Neck!



By Dr. Jessica Monteleone, PT P<sub>H</sub>D

It was over three decades ago. I remember it well. My neck reacted

poorly to a job that I absolutely despised. Stuck in middle management, the stress of that job was overwhelming. Between the back of my neck and shoulders, spasms and pain gripped my soft tissue. It was hard as a rock! Then, it spread up to the back of my skull creating a severe headache. I lost my concentration. Where did this thing come from and how do I get rid of it? I stood up to change my position, laced my fingers, lifting them up over my head. It was time for a break, some shoulder circles and a change of scenery or was that permissible at this employ?

#### What To Do For Neck Pain Caused By Posture Or **Body Mechanics**

Avoid slouching or a head-forward posture. Sit straight in your chair with your lower back supported, feet flat on the floor, and shoulders relaxed. Don't sit for long periods without getting up or changing positions. Take short breaks several times an hour to stretch your shoulders and neck muscles.

- If you work at a computer, adjust the monitor so the top of the screen is at eye level. Use a document holder that puts your work at the same level as the screen.
- If you use the telephone frequently, use a headset or speaker phone. Don't cradle the phone on your shoulder.
- Adjust the seat of your car to a more upright position that supports your head and lower back. Make sure that you are not reaching for the steering wheel while driving. Your arms should be in a slightly flexed, comfortable position.
- When storing items that you frequently use, place them where they can be easily accessible, not where you are forced to extend your neck into unconventional positions.
- Use a pillow that keeps your neck in optimal alignment. Special neck support pillows called cervical pillows or rolls may relieve neck stress. A hand towel rolled up tightly, placed over a conventional pillow, under the pillow case may be helpful if a cervical pillow is unavailable.
- Don't sleep on your stomach with your neck twisted or bent.
- If you read in bed (not good for low back pain), prop up the book on several bed pillows so you aren't using your arms to hold it up.

- If stress is adding to your neck pain, practice relaxation exercises throughout the day. Try breathing through your nose, inhale 1-2-3-4, hold 1-2-3-4-5-6, and then slowly exhale 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 several times a day or breathe in 1-2-3-4 out 1-2-3-4-5-6 stop 1-2-3-4 then
- Strengthen and protect your neck by doing shoulder blade and neck exercises each day. I enjoy doing "the plank" and quadruped exercises to build the core...the foundation for the support of the neck.
- Stay at a healthy body weight and hydrate well.

#### **Home Treatment**

- If you have sustained an actual neck muscle injury, the tissue is warm to the touch and swollen, so, heat is not recommended. Use an icepack for 10 minutes 3-4x per day. If you don't have one, you can use a bag of frozen vegetables covered with a pillow case, or make one using ½ dish soap and ½ water placed in a Ziploc bag in the freezer.
- If your neck pain is due to stress, I enjoy a long hot bath with medicinal aromatherapy such as lavender or chamomile with Epsom salts.
- If you don't have a tub, try a hot shower, allowing the water to beat down on the painful area.

- Don't sit. Recliners do not support your spine. Instead, lie down with your body in alignment and your natural curves in your back supported.
- If your neck is not considerably better within 48 hours, visit a health professional. It may need more medical attention than home remedies.
- Use wisdom in your recov-

#### Get Moving, But Carefully

- Ease back into your normal daily activities as soon as you can. Movement helps your muscles stay strong.
- Examine your lifestyle. Avoid or modify activities such as lifting and sports that increase pain and stiffness.
- Do stretching and strengthening exercises to keep your neck and shoulders flexible, strong and to prevent stiffness. Do include aerobic exercise such as walking.
- Modify any activities that may be causing your neck pain, such as sitting for a long time at the computer or doing too much overhead work at a time. Support the natural curves in your spine during work or activity. We call this ergonomics.
- · Gently massage or rub the area to relieve pain and encour-

No separate fees. My house or yours.

age blood flow. Nonprescription creams or pads, such as Ben gay, Bio-freeze, or Icy Hot may provide pain relief.

- Stop smoking. Smoking slows healing because it decreases blood supply and delays tissue
- Limit your caffeine to one cup of coffee or tea in the morn-
- A good B-complex vitamin in the morning and Magnesium at night are both essential to my muscle relaxation.
- Practice gratitude, laugh more, reduce your stress and breathe deeply.

#### Complementary and **Alternative Treatments**

• Physical therapy can evaluate posture, pain, and body mechanics. They utilize modalities such as manual techniques, ultrasound and electrical stimulation; teach ergonomics and exercises to optimize function.

Continued on next page





850-974-0970

Call today for a free 15-minute

consultation with Dr. Jess to





#### Meet Dr. Jessica Monteleone, PT MS PhD Wholistic Therapy at Home

Wholistic Therapy at Home, a trusted establishment owned and operated by David and Dr. Jessica Monteleone, PT MS PhD, boasts a remarkable legacy of over 40 years in providing top-notch physical therapy and holistic health education to clients in the Emerald Coast and beyond.

- An integrative approach to health that works with a strong emphasis on addressing the root cause of health issues by combating inflammation at a cellular level.
- Personalized treatment plans that are tailored to enhance wellbeing and quality of life.



Physical Therapy • Muscle Work & Massage • Red Light Therapy Therapeutic **Ultrasound • Electrical Stimulation** Women's Health • Nutrition Education • Exercise Instruction

Learn More at www.wholistictherapyathome.com

### Get the Smile You Deserve

#### Smile with Confidence Again

- · Are you embarrassed about smiling in front of people?
- Do you ever put your hand up to cover your smile?
- Do you dislike your smile in photographs?
- When you look through magazines, do you envy the models' smiles?
- Do you wish your teeth were whiter?
- Do you think you show too much or too little of your teeth when you smile?
- Would you like to change the way your teeth or gums are shaped?
- · Do you have gaps or spaces in between your teeth?

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



### GULF COAST DENTAL

Steven G. Robinette, DDS (850) 897-9600 4566 Hwy 20 East Ste 108 Niceville, FL 32578 gulfcoastdental.com









### The Royall Treatment:

### Where Beauty Reigns in Niceville

By Maryann Royall, Licensed Esthetician & Owner of the Royall Treatment Room

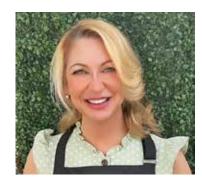
When I set out to write this article, I found myself wondering—do most people truly know what an esthetician does? The term may sound fancy, but at its core, an esthetician is a state-licensed skincare professional trained to perform treatments that promote healthy, radiant skin. These treatments include facials, superficial chemical peels, body treatments and waxing. Beyond treatments, estheticians provide expert advice

and help clients navigate the often-overwhelming world of skincare products to develop a personalized routine tailored to their skin type.

At the Royall Treatment Room, I offer a range of services designed to help my clients achieve their skincare goals:

**Dermaplaning:** A precise, sterile blade gently removes dead skin cells and fine hair, leaving the skin ultra-smooth and radiant

**Hydrafacial:** A multi-step vortex system that cleanses, exfoliates, extracts impurities and



hydrates the skin. Enhancements include targeted boosters, eye and lip treatments, lymphatic drainage and LED light therapy.

Procell Microchanneling with Stem Cell Growth

**Factors:** This innovative, minimally invasive treatment creates tiny microchannels in the skin to stimulate collagen and elastin production. Procell Therapies harness the power of stem cell growth factors derived from the bone marrow of healthy volunteers to promote tissue regeneration and skin rejuvenation.

**Superficial Chemical Peels:** A gentle chemical solution using lactic, salicylic or retinol acids exfoliates dead skin cells, revealing a fresh, glowing complexion.

All of these treatments are

designed to improve the health and appearance of your skin, ensuring you feel confident in your natural beauty.

Now that you're educated about what an esthetician does, why not experience it for yourself? Book a consultation or treatment with me at royalltreatmentroom.glossgenius.com.

Have a skincare question or concern? Email me directly at maryannroyall@yahoo.com, and you might be featured in my next article!

XO, Maryann – Your Royall Beauty Advisor

#### **WHAT A PAIN**

continued from previous page

- Cervical (neck) collars may be used for short periods of time to help reduce pain by restricting neck movement and allowing muscles to rest.
- Traction is a technique used to stretch the neck and relax the spinal nerve root openings. It may be used if there is no risk

of instability in the neck. I prefer traction that is offered while lying down. (supine position)

- Low-level laser therapy and red-light therapy use targeted light energy to decrease pain and promote healing. A review of studies suggests that it can help both sudden (acute) and long-term (chronic) neck pain.
- Massage helps with relaxation, decreased muscle pain,

and increased circulation and flexibility

- Yoga, Thai chi and other martial arts programs may help improve flexibility and breathing, decrease stress, and maintain health.
- Chiropractors can realign bones that may have become out of alignment causing stress on the structures around them.
- Acupuncture and dry needling which is done by inserting very thin needles into the skin is used to relieve pain and to treat many health conditions.

Get hugs, not drugs. Muscle

relaxants, anti-inflammatory and analgesics may take away pain and discomfort for a while, but they don't fix the problem. It is important that we examine our lifestyle and change the way we accomplish our work and leisure to prevent these challenges from happening in the first place.

Pain can be a good thing. It tells us that something is wrong. Today, I am very aware of what my neck is doing. When pain is minimal, I integrate breathing techniques, exercises and change positions before it gets any worse. I now work at a job that I enjoy and with people who are fun to work with. It all makes a difference

Got a pain in your neck? Try incorporating techniques listed above. Yes, we only have one body while living here on earth. The choices that we make today are an investment into our tomorrows. Let's choose to be healthy.

Jessica Monteleone PT MS PhD is a physical therapist providing services in the local area. She and her husband reside in Freeport. wholistictherapyathome.com

Look Healthy,

Feel Alive!

biote





M-F 10-6 • Sat. 10-2 4590 Highway 20 • Niceville (850) 585-3134 royalltreatmentroom.glossgenius.com



### **Hormone Imbalance?**

Optimize your health the natural way with bioidentical hormones.

Now offering Semaglutide/B12 for weight loss. Experience real weight loss results without hunger, extreme diet or exercise



Three Years In A Row! Thank you Destin!

Dr. Richard Chern, MD
12889 Hwy 98W, Suite 107B

Miramar Beach, FL (850) 837-1271



thehormonerestorationcenter.com



### Meet Our Local Wellness Pro - Dr. Steven Clark: A Trusted Name in Wellness & Transformation

For more than 25 years, Dr. Steven Clark has been more than just a board certified plastic surgeon—he's been a guide, a confidant and a trusted expert for those seeking renewal, confi-

physically and emotionally-here on our own Emerald Coast. His work isn't just about aesthetics; he's dedicated to helping people feel their best-inside and

dence and transformation-both out. "I always strive to achieve safe results that enhance each person's natural beauty while preserving individuality and uniqueness. I want my patients to still look like themselves-

only better," he says.

This philosophy has resonated deeply with the countless men and women who have walked through his doors, searching not just for cosmetic changes, but for a renewed sense of self, represented by 300, 5-star Google reviews.

#### A Legacy of **Excellence & Dedication**

A proud U.S. Air Force veteran, Dr. Clark was once stationed at Eglin AFB and Hurlburt Field, where he quickly gained recognition as one of the top plastic surgeons on the Gulf Coast. In 1999, he launched Bluewater Plastic Surgery in Niceville, later expanding to Santa Rosa Beach, and most recently Watersound, to welcome patients from throughout the country.

His expertise is unparalleled, with more than two decades of membership in the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) and the American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS—which selects board certified plastic surgeons who have demonstrated advanced experience in cosmetic surgery)—ensuring he stays at the forefront of an ever-evolving field with sterling credentials. Most recently Dr. Clark was honored to be made a board member and serve the Florida Society of Plastic Surgeons

From facelifts and breast augmentations to liposuction and tummy tucks, along with their newest solution-Ultra-Clear, a laser facial rejuvenation treatment that targets multiple skin layers to reduce the signs of aging-Dr. Clark's approach blends technical precision with a deep understanding of his patients' goals, addressing a full range of aesthetic needs. "There is no substitute for excellent surgical training and experience," says Dr. Clark, "but having a warm, supportive staff is equally important. We want our patients to feel comfortable, confident and informed at every step."



#### Compassion **Meets Expertise**

At Bluewater Plastic Surgery, that supportive environment starts with his dedicated team, including Board-Certified Nurse Practitioner Michelle Sasala (ARNP-BC). With 20 vears of healthcare expertise, Michelle's passion for helping patients feel their absolute best shines through in every consultation.

Dr. Clark also holds a deep respect for those who serve, offering military discounts for cosmetic procedures to current and former U.S. Armed Forces members. "It's important to me that we give back," he says, reflecting on his time in uniform and his admiration for military families.

#### **Making Transformation Attainable**

Understanding that cost can be a hurdle, Bluewater Plastic Surgery partners with Care-Credit to offer flexible financing, making procedures more accessible than ever.

One patient's heartfelt words sum up Dr. Clark's impact: "He is a master of his craft. His staff is wonderful and kind, and I have nothing but good things to say about the overall experience. I couldn't be happier!"

#### **Confidence Begins Here**

For those looking for a trusted local wellness pro, the search ends here. Whether you're considering a full facelift, subtle refresh or body contouring, Dr. Steven Clark and his caring, expert team are ready to help you feel strong, confident and whole in your own skin.

Call 850.530.6064 or visit bluewaterplasticsurgery.com.



PLASTIC SURGERY

Steven J. Clark, MD, DMD, FACS

Michelle Sasala MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner/Aesthetic Injector



#### Surgical

- Breast Augmentation & Lift
- Tummy Tuck, Mommy Makeover
- Liposuction (Vaser, 360)
- Facelift, Necklift, Eyelid Lift
- Gynecomastia (Male Breast Reduction)
- Post Weight Loss

#### **Non-Surgical**

- Botox Bar
- Facial Fillers
- Profound (RF Microneedling)
- Laser Hair Removal
- OBAGI Skin Care
- Laser Pigmentation / Wrinkles
- UltraClear®

Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach (850) 530-6064



#### Musing

### **Easter on the Coast**



By Rick Moore

Jimmy was meticulous with every detail. He used a magnifying glass to make sure every part was glued together perfectly. He spent months building his miniature sailboat. To him, it was much more than a toy. The boat was a working replica of a schooner, complete with two masts, sails, and a rudder. It represented everything Jimmy had ever learned from building models. Other toy boats were made for bathtubs and swimming pools. His was made to sail in the waters of the Emerald Coast. The shape of the vessel resembled the great racing yachts of the early 1900s. The bottom of the hull was painted with a white waterproof sealant. Jimmy signed the stern with a fine tip brush making sure all knew who the beautiful sailboat belonged to.

The big day came to test the model boat on the water. Jim-



my tied a line to the bow just in case it was carried away by the waves. He definitely didn't want to lose it. The boat held up just great. The waterproofing of the hull worked to perfection. Each time Jimmy took his toy schooner out into the waves, he allowed it to go further and further out, sometimes reaching over 200 yards from the shore. Every once in a while he would allow children on the beach to hold the line, but that was only when the boat was close by.

On one occasion, Jimmy allowed the schooner to go so far from shore it was almost out of sight. A fisherman was casting his reel and got his line crossed with the line Jimmy used to secure the toy schooner. The fish-

erman did not want to take the time to untangle the lines, so he cut both of them in order to save his fishing tackle. By the time Jimmy realized what had happened, the toy vessel was totally out of sight. He swam as fast as he could to try and retrieve the boat, but the waves were so high he couldn't see it. The schooner was gone. He waited for hours on the beach hoping the tide would bring his boat in. He took a flashlight out in the evening, walking up and down the shore, but his boat was not to be found. For weeks, he searched along the coast asking if anyone had seen his boat. He feared it was on the bottom of the gulf never to be seen again.

Months later, on Easter Sunday, as Jimmy was walking home from church, he passed by the town square and noticed something in a store window. He couldn't believe his eyes. He ran into the store shouting, "You found it! You found my boat!" The store manager tried to calm Jimmy down. Jimmy picked up his boat and said "I'm so glad you found it, thank you so much!" The manger said, "I don't know what you are talking about, but that model you are

holding in your hands costs three hundred dollars." Jimmy said, "But it's mine; I made it." Jimmy even showed the manager where he had painted his name on the stern. The manager said he was sorry, but if Jimmy wanted to take it home he was going to have to pay for it. Jimmy knew that wasn't fair, but he loved that boat so much he paid the price. That boat was made by Jimmy, and the price was paid by Jimmy.

Jimmy's story is often told the week of Easter to explain why God gave His only begotten son to die for us. Like Jimmy's schooner, God made us. Like Jimmy's schooner, we became lost. Like Jimmy's schooner, God bought us back, paying the ultimate price. God loves us so much He made us, and then He paid for us. Happy Easter!

Rick Moore is Communication Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.









By Pastor Doug Stauffer

### A Living Reality, Not Just a Historical Event

On Resurrection Day (a.k.a. Easter), we don't just remember an event from 2,000 years ago—we celebrate a victorious Saviour with a life-changing truth that continues transforming hearts and lives today! Jesus Christ's resurrection is the cornerstone of faith, distinguishing biblical Christianity from all others. Every religious leader who has ever lived remains in the grave, but Jesus Christ rose from the grave and lives today!

Because He lives, believers can live victoriously! The resurrection is not merely a historical fact—it is the power of God that empowers one to live triumphantly over sin, trials, and death itself. Paul declared: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

# A Pastor's Ponderings: **Resurrection Power – Living in Victory Every Day**

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

### Victory Over Sin, Death and the Grave

When Jesus rose from the dead, it marked the most significant event in human history! Satan believed he had won. The Pharisees thought they had silenced the one they most feared. The Roman guards assumed their duty was fulfilled. But early that Sunday morning, the stone was rolled away, and Jesus emerged victorious! The Bible tells us: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:9).

Death couldn't hold Him. The grave couldn't keep Him. Sin couldn't defeat Him. And because He won, we win! Before the resurrection, sin carried a penalty, and that penalty was death. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

Of course, people still die after the resurrection, but the soul's destination is no longer a mystery. The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees that all who place their faith in Him will have eternal life in heaven, while those who reject Him will face an eternity without escape.

Jesus Himself declared: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Physical death is inevitable, but the resurrection ensures that for believers, death is not the end—it is the beginning of eternity in the presence of God. For the believer, death is merely a transition into eternal life with Christ. The resurrection proves that Jesus has conquered the grave, securing heaven for those who trust in Him.

### The Resurrection Gives Us Power for Daily Victory

Some view the resurrection as a past event, with no discernible effect on their lives today. But the same power that raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in every believer! "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

That means we don't have to live in defeat!

When temptation comes, we can resist it through Christ (1 Corinthians 10:13).

When we stumble, we can rise again in His grace (*Proverbs* 24:16).

When we feel weak, His Spirit gives us strength to overcome (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The resurrection is not just a past event, it is our present pow-

### The Resurrection Gives Us Hope in Troubled Times

We live in a world filled with wars, disease, financial struggles, and uncertainty. But Jesus told us: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Because of the resurrection, we have a living hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

No matter what happens in this world, our hope is not in politics, the economy or anything temporary. Our hope is in the risen Christ!

### Conclusion: Are You Living in Resurrection Power?

Matthew 28:6 says: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

### Are you experiencing resurrection power?

If you are a believer, are you embracing the victory that Christ has already won for you?

If you do not know Christ, the empty tomb calls you to salvation!

Because He is risen, we can live in victory every single day. Let's stop living as if we serve a dead Saviour and start walking in the power of the risen Lord!

He is risen! Amen!

Dr. Doug Stauffer is pastor of Faith Independent Baptist Church. He was saved July 6, 1980, in Niceville, while stationed at the 33rd Tactical Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base and has now been in the ministry for over 35 years.





#### Join Us in Transforming Lives Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Embark on your FAITH journey with a dedicated body of believers focused on spiritual growth and compassion.

At FAITH, we welcome everyone to join our mission to spread the Gospel.

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

#### **Service Times**

Sunday School: 10:00 AM • Morning Service: 11:00 AM • Evening Service: 6:00 PM Wednesday Service: 7:00 PM

#### Watch or Listen Live with Pastor Doug Stauffer

Services broadcast live on several platforms, including Youtube, Facebook, SermonAudio and our Website.



#### "Church Like it Used to Be"

1309 Valparaiso Blvd., Niceville, FL 32578 | (850) 678-4387 | www.FaithNiceville.com





By Sean Dietrich

"What is Easter?" the boy asked his grandfather.

The old man and boy sat on the front porch. That's where people used to sit in the olden days. They used to build porches on the fronts of houses so you could wave at your neighbors. Now they build "decks" on the back so you can wave at your above-ground pool.

"Easter is a day of rebirth," said Granddaddy.

The two cohorts were still wearing their Sunday best. The boy: His necktie and khakis. The grandfather: His button down, crisply pressed, with only a few tobacco-spit stains on the collar.

"What's rebirth?" the boy said.

"Well, you remember when you was born, don't you?"

"No."

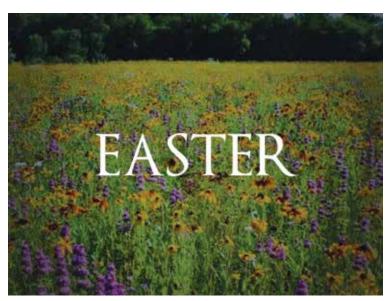
"Well, trust me you were born, or else you wouldn't be here." Granddaddy took a sip of his Doctor Pepper. "And today it all happens again."

"What happens again?"

"You get born."

"I get born twice?" the boy said.

### Sean of the South: What is Easter?



He nodded. "Look at the trees and the flowers, see how they're all blooming? You see those azaleas across the street."

"Which ones are the azaleas?"

"The pink ones that Mrs. Wannamaker will slit your throat you if you touch."

"I see them."

"And the trees, look at them. They're turning green. The birds are singing. That's what resurrection means."

"It means birds?"

"No. Resurrection means, when something comes back to life. And it's a miracle, every time something gets reborn. Because a new beginning is a miracle."

"Is that why we look for eggs on Easter?"

"No. Hell. I don't know why we look for eggs."

He took another sip. "Look,"

he went on, "you know all those crosses people wear around

their necks?"
"Yes."

"Well, I think we're wearing the wrong thing around our necks. We shouldn't be wearing the cross. The cross is death. It's a tool of execution. It's like wearing an electric chair around your neck. Or a hangman's noose."

"Granny wears a cross around her neck."

"Your Granny was raised Pentecostal."

"What's that mean?"

"It means don't go to her church if you're afraid of reptiles."

He unbuttoned his top button. "The point is," he went on, "maybe we should be wearing the empty tomb around our necks. Because that's where it all starts." "Where what starts?"

"That's where your life begins. You will come to a point in your life when you have nothing. You will reach a moment in your life when everything falls apart. You will find yourself in a tomb, of sorts. You will be as good as dead."

"Just like Jesus?"

"Just like Him. And I wish I could save you from that fate, but I can't. Because on that day, there will be nothing left for you, boy. Your life will be a wreck. You will be at your bitter end.

"And in that moment, you will have only two choices: You can either lie down and die, or you can look up.

"What happens if I look up?"
"Rebirth."

"Have you ever been reborn?"

"Many times."

"How did it happen?"

"It first happened to me when I was in Italy, fighting. And there were men with guns all around us. And my young soldiers were all going to die."

"And what'd you do?"

"We all looked up, and we asked God to help us. My men started praying. Out loud. We started talking to God. And that's all it takes. You just have to talk.

"Ain't no magic words, no secret handshake, no special membership rules. Don't ever let anyone tell you it's more complicated than that. You just talk to God. And He'll hear you. And He heard us that day in Italy."

"And what happened next?"

"I'm sitting right here drinking a Doctor Pepper, ain't I?"

Granddaddy always had a way of explaining things so I could understand them.

### Sliding Glass Doors Hard to Open? Dont Replace It, We Can Fix It!



Fast and Affordable Repairs FREE ESTIMATES! Fully Insured

- Roller Replacement
- Track Maintenance
- Locks & Handles
- Highest Quality Parts

850-987-5433

www.BeachsideSlide.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC.

CAN DO IT
LAWN SERVICE & HANDYMAN

Landscaping • Lawn Maintenance • Fence Building
Fence Repair • House Painting • Flower Beds
Mulching • Miscellaneous House Repairs
Licensed and insured

**CALL MIKE FOR AN ESTIMATE** 

850-496-3229

Email msvenghaus@gmail.com



Piano • Voice • Guitar • Bass • Drums Ukulele • Song Writing and More

Call today for your appointment (850) 231-3199
237 Dawson Road, Santa Rosa Beach

Visit www.Studio237Music.com



### The Health Benefits of Playing a Musical Instrument

offers more than just an avenue for creativity or entertainment, it can also contribute significantly to mental, emotional, and physical health. Whether you're strumming a guitar, playing the piano, drumming or writing a song, the act of making music can have profound positive effects on the body and mind.

#### **Mental Health Benefits**

One of the most well-known benefits of playing an instrument is its positive impact on mental health. Music has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety levels. When you focus on playing an instrument, your mind is often occupied with the intricate details of rhythm, melody, and technique, which can serve as a form of mindfulness. This focus helps to calm one's nerves, reducing cortisol levels, a stress hormone. Playing music activates areas of the brain linked to emotions, enhancing mood, and a sense of accomplishment.

Playing an instrument also improves thinking abilities. Research suggests that musicians have better memory, attention,

Playing a musical instrument and problem-solving skills than non-musicians. The process of learning and playing music exercises the brain in ways that improve concentration and mental agility. For example, reading music requires deciphering symbols, which improves your ability to interpret complex information. Additionally, playing in time with a rhythm improves coordination between the mind and body, a skill transferable to other activities.

#### **Emotional Well-being** and Social Benefits

Music has a profound ability to express and regulate emotions. Many musicians find that playing an instrument serves as an emotional outlet, to release pent-up feelings or to process complex emotions. This emotional expression can increase feelings of happiness.

The rewards of playing music with others help develop longterm friendships and a sense of belonging. Group performances, such as orchestras, bands or song writing, encourage collaboration and teamwork. Those who attend music concerts or a



live local band performance can foster a similar sense of group support.

#### **Physical Health Benefits**

Playing a musical instrument can also provide physical health benefits, especially for those who regularly practice. Instruments such as the piano or guitar require dexterity and hand-eye coordination, which strengthens fine motor skills. The repetitive nature of practicing a piece of music also promotes muscle memory and improves hand and finger strength. For wind and brass instrument players, blowing into instruments strengthens the lungs and diaphragm, improving respiratory function.

Playing an instrument can improve posture and balance. Musicians, especially those who perform standing or playing larger instruments like the guitar, bass, violin, or trumpet need to maintain an upright position for extended periods. This helps to strengthen core muscles and improve overall body posture. Playing an instrument can even burn calories, though not in the same way as exercise, performing actively on an instrument engages the body and uses energy, promoting better physical health.

Playing a percussion instrument like a drum set, as young as 6 and up to 60, provides count ability, muscle coordination, communication from head to hands and feet, tempo management, beat creation and a balanced consistent movement of music rhythms.

#### **Cognitive Development** in Children

For children, learning to play an instrument provides a wide range of cognitive and developmental advantages. Studies show that young musicians tend to perform better academically, particularly in areas such as mathematics, language, and reading comprehension. The skills developed through music such as pattern recognition, critical thinking, and memorization help children in other subjects. Learning an instrument at a young age helps children develop discipline, patience, and time management skills.

#### **Conclusion**

The health benefits of playing a musical instrument are vast and varied, offering advantages for mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Whether it's reducing stress, improving cognitive function, or fostering social connections, playing an instrument contributes to a healthier, more balanced life. If you haven't yet picked up an instrument, now is the perfect time to start. Your mind, body, and soul will thank you.

Contact Studio 237 Music Lessons to continue or get started. Call (850) 231-3199 or email studio237music@gmail.com or visit our website at www.Studio237Music.com.

















THURSDAY NIGHT CONCERTS **APRIL 10 - JUNE 12** 

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

April 10 | The Fabulous Thunderbirds

April 17 | Journeyman: An Eric Clapton Tribute

April 24 | Yacht Rock Revue

May 1 | Black Jacket Symphony: Journey's Escape

May 8 | Dear Amy: Amy Winehouse Tribute

May 15 | Kickstand Jenny

May 22 | Molly Ringwalds

May 29 | Petty Hearts

June 5 | A1A: Jimmy Buffet Tribute

June 12 | Adrenalize: Music of Def Leppard



#### Purchase Tickets at MKAF.org/Events

PRESENTING SEASON SPONSOR





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



### Gerard Frank is 2025 ArtsQuest Featured Artist

The Cultural Arts Alliance (CAA) of Walton County will feature Gerard Frank for the 37th Annual ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival. Frank's custom artwork—One Man Show—will be showcased on all ArtsQuest marketing materials. The festival will take place May 3-4, 2025, at Grand Boulevard Town Center's North Park.

Frank, a professional artist for 26 years, holds the distinction of being the first living artist included in the permanent collection of the Anna Lamar Switzer Center for the Visual Arts. His work is also featured in The Lofts Gallery in Pensacola and a prestigious Central Park West lobby in New York City. His collectors span the U.S., from Miami to NYC's SoHo district to Long Beach, CA, and internationally in Germany. In addition to his fine art career, Frank has dedicated more than two decades to tattoo artistry, owning and operating his own shop while exhibiting in multiple galleries across the country.

A self-taught painter with a background in commer-

cial screen printing, Frank has worked with clients such as Hewlett-Packard, Boeing and Lucent Technologies. His expertise in printing on diverse materials—including plastics, metals, wood and glass—helped shape his abstract style. Encouraged by his wife, Teri, he continues to explore creative boundaries, blending fine art and tattoo artistry.

"As humans we have a desire to belong to something. As artists, we exist in a paradox—trusting our process even when it separates us from the group," says Frank. "When people connect with your work as deeply as you connect with creating it, you've achieved a fundamental human desire: belonging. Being named the Featured Artist for ArtsQuest 2025 is an incredible honor, reinforcing my passion and obligation to keep creating."

"Gerard Frank's work embodies the bold creativity and dedication to craft that ArtsQuest celebrates," said Melissa Wheeler, Vice-President Marketing & Strategy of the Cultural Arts Alliance. "His



unique artistic journey and powerful storytelling through visual art make him an inspiring choice as our Featured Artist for 2025. We are thrilled to showcase his incredible talent and share his work with our community and visitors."

ArtsQuest will feature over 125 artists from across the U.S.,

exhibiting in a variety of mediums, including ceramsculpture, glass, oils, acrylics, mixed media, photography, metal and wood, jewelry, and works on paper. Artists will compete for awards and cash prizes totaling \$10,000, judged by a panel of distinguished experts.

Beyond the art, attendees can enjoy live demonstrations, a CAA member exhibit featuring artists

from The Foster Gallery, a Walton County student exhibit, a special showcase from the CAA's Prison Art program, an interactive public art installation, a silent auction, continuous live entertainment, and "ImagiNation: Where Kids Rule." A full cash bar will be available throughout the weekend in Grand Park.

ArtsQuest is part of Art Month Walton County, a collaboration of visual, performing and literary arts events presented in diverse formats and venues throughout Walton County in May. Art Month Walton also includes Dine + Dive - a fundraiser for the Underwater Museum of Art, Digital Graffiti at Alys Beach, the Longleaf Writers Conference, an Open Mic Night with Emerald Coast Storytellers, Sinfonia Goes Pop at Alys Beach, Legally Blonde - a production from Emerald Coast Theatre Company, Gallery events, concerts and more.

Volunteers are needed throughout ArtsQuest weekend to work on all aspects of the festival. Sign up at CulturalArtsAlliance.com/volunteer. Sponsorships are still available, and interested businesses can contact Gabby@culturalartsalliance.com.

A rain or shine event, the festival is open to the public and a \$5 admission donation is requested. Visit CulturalArtsAlliance.com.





### Our Hometown Hero: Shirley Simpson

A REFLECTION BY NATHANAEL FISHER

Shirley Simpson was a great friend and generous supporter of Emerald Coast Theatre Company. It is my joy to honor her with a small tribute to the incredible life she lived. I shared this reflection at her Celebration of Life recently, and wanted to share it again here for her loyal Emerald Coast Theatre Company fans and readers.

I have no doubt that on the night of February 8th, there was thunderous applause and a standing ovation from the angels and elders in heaven when the Angel Gabriel called Shirley Simpson to "places" in heaven and the curtain came down on earth, in peace, on a life well lived.

When Shirley's daughters honored me by asking me to present Act One, Scene One of her celebration of life, my heart and mind was flooded with scene by scene of wonderful memories. You see, Shirley and I had lunch together on Tuesdays, practically every Tuesday since 2018. I always found it a little amusing that there is a book that was adapted into a play called "Tuesdays with Morrie." I had my Tuesdays with Shirley, and even my wife and staff knew that on Tuesdays I had a very important appointment with a very special person.

During our lunches, three

themes rose to the surface as the most important to Shirley, and we connected on all of them. She loved and adored her husband and her girls, her faith was important to her, and, of course, we connect on our love for the life changing art, wonder and magic of theatre and the stage.

Our first lunches back in 2018 were filled with stories of her life with Chuck who had passed earlier that year. I walked with her through the pain and immense grief of losing a friend and partner of 65 years. That grief was conquered through the sharing of beautiful stories of Chuck. She shared how he would patiently wait for her to greet her fans after productions at New Stage Theatre in Jackson, Mississippi or her one woman shows. Chuck's support of her theatrical adventures was clearly one of the ways he loved her and she reveled in that love.

Shirley's faith and family were topics at lunch quite often. She shared some stories of working with the Billy Graham Organization. I would hear about the preparation for a sermon and the evaluation of how that sermon was presented and received. I was honored to hear stories of how proud she was of her girls: Taylor, Cathy, Christine and Caren - she was so proud of each of them and knew how much they loved her.

Shirley told me stories of her

dear sister Bonnie. As children, Shirley would say, "Let's Pike"... that's "play like" - (pretend play). "Pike," where she was clearly the director in the performances Bonnie and Shirley would do as children. I heard so many stories of stage, radio and TV during our lunches. Stories of being an Actress, Director, Product Spokesperson, Radio Host and more. We connected so well because she personally knew every challenge I faced in theatre. Often, I would remind her that, outside of my wife, she was the only other person in my life that could truly understand the joys and challenges I faced at the theatre. She understood the world of an actor, she had sat in the seat of a director, she and Chuck had been supporters of theatre. She knew this world so well.

Some of her favorite roles included Queen Eleanor in The Lion in Winter, Shirley in Shirley Valentine and Daisy in Driving Miss Daisy. I would hear amazing stories of the process of the actress preparing for these roles and some of the victories and challenges of performances.

Shirley mesmerized audiences with performances of her one woman shows: Katherine Hepburn, Shirley Valentine, Minnie Pearl and so many more. Her final public performance was on the ECTC stage as Minnie Pearl. After Chuck's passing she regained her footing on stage here with Katherine Hepburn. She was concerned about a staged reading as she was very proud of the memory she had and we convinced her that it would be fine, her audience would embrace the tool of the

Continued on next page







### 2025-2026 Academic Year Auditions



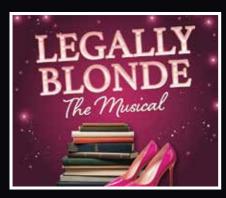
A+ School Since Inception In Partnership with the Okaloosa County School District **Incoming 3rd Grade Student Auditions:** April 26- 10am to 2pm April 27 - 2:30pm to 4:30pm

**Incoming 4th Grade Student Auditions:** April 26 - 2:30 pm to 4:30pm

> **NFBallet.org/Auditions** All auditions are by appointment only.



The Tortoise and The Hare: **Fast Friends, Slow Foes** MARCH 27 - 30



**Legally Blonde** The Musical MAY 2 - 18



theatre company

**More Info and Tickets:** www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org

#### Arts & Music

#### **SHIRLEY SIMPSON**

continued from previous page

script... and that they did. As she took the chair to read you could literally see the consummate professional transforming into character, every voice inflection, every look, every gesture told the story...you could not take your eyes off her. Shirley and I talked about it and she decided to tackle Shirley Valentine next. Again, a captivating performance, but this time the artist in Shirley was able to breathe into the confidence that was gained with the Katherine Hepburn performance. She came off stage with such joy and life. At the next lunch she told me that someone had stopped her in Publix and reprimanded her for not coming back out. The audience had been giving her a standing ovation and this



person was disappointed that she did not return to the stage for another bow. What they didn't know is that Shirley and I were too busy celebrating her performance backstage! It's like new life had been given to her, and she had such joy in performing again.

One lunch Shirley chuckled as I sat down and let me know that the night before, a waiter at Vintj Food and Wine had asked her if her son was joining her today. She said, "I don't have a son." The waiter replied, "What about that bald guy you always have lunch with?!"

I could go on and on about Shirley's wit, creativity, passion for life and more. How our lunches were a welcome break that we both looked forward to. How theatre brought two

people together and set the stage for a beautiful friendship. How her passion for life and theatre encouraged and inspired me every time I had the pleasure of being around her. But...I know she would also say, "Nathanael, a good play has great edits!" So, I'll end by sharing this. At the last few lunches we had together, Shirley would recognize that our time together might be limited and I would tell her I didn't want to talk about it. She would respond, "Nathanael, I've had a

good run. Look at my life, I've had a great run of it."

Yes, Shirley, you have had a great run. I and those that got to be a part in your narrative, that had the honor of being a character in the play of your life, are

better for it. You were a gift; an elegant, charming, quick witted gift, that we will always treasure. So, without the expectation of another bow Shirley, I give you an eternal standing ovation in my heart.

#### **NFB Auditions!**

The Northwest Florida Ballet (NFB) Académie is now taking audition appointment reservations for the 2025-2026 academic year. Auditions for incoming third-grade students will be on April 26 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and April 27 from 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Incoming fourth-grade students will audition on April 26 from 2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Appointment reservations are required and must be made

by April 24 at 2 p.m.

Celebrating more than 20 years of excellence, the NFB Académie is a free, integrated arts and academic program for third through eighth-grade boys and girls who demonstrate the potential to excel in dance. The NFB Académie is a nationally acclaimed program recognized as an A+ school since its inception. Register or learn more at NF-Ballet.org/Auditions.

### **Local Coupons**

### LJ SCHOONERS

**DOCKSIDE RESTAURANT AND OYSTER BAR** 

### FREE APPETIZER OR DESSERT

WITH AN ENTREE PURCHASE VALUE UP TO \$11.95. LIMIT ONE COUPON PER VISIT, PER CUSTOMER. RESTRICTIONS APPLY.

Offer expires 4/30/25
290 Yacht Club Dr., Niceville • 850-897-6400
www.bluewaterbaymarina.com

# VKI JAPANESE STEAKHOUSE 10% OFF

(DINING ROOM ONLY, NOT TAKEOUT)

Offer expires 4/30/25 4552 US Hwy. 98W, Santa Rosa Beach 850-267-2555

### ROYALL TREATMENT ROOM

20% OFF

Offer expires 4/30/25 4590 Highway 20, Niceville | 850-585-3134 royalltreatmentroom.glossgenius.com

## SUNSET LIQUORS / PARADISE LIQUORS

\$5 OFF

**PURCHASE OF \$25 OR MORE** 

(NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER PROMOTIONS)

Offer expires 4/30/25 114 Amberjack Drive • Fort Walton Beach 850-226-7084 | www.fubarfwb.com

# POP'S AUTOMOTIVE SHOP

### FREE TIRE ROTATION

with Oil Change

Offer expires 4/30/25 199 Earl Goodwin Road • Freeport 850-585-0712

### BLUEWATER PLASTIC SURGERY

PROFOUND (RF MICRO-NEEDLING, FOR SKIN TIGHTENING AND CELLULITE) \$500 OFF PROCEDURE WITH 50 UNITS OF COMPLIMENTARY BOTOX

Offer expires 4/30/25
Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach 850-530-6064
www.bluewaterplasticsurgery.com

### **OVERHEAD DOOR**

\$100 OFF A NEW WI-FI DOOR OPERATOR AND FREE DECORATIVE DOOR HARDWARE

WITH EACH DOOR PURCHASE. (NO OTHER DISCOUNTS APPLY.) FINANCING AS LOW AS \$79/MO. W.A.C.

Offer expires 4/30/25 850-269-3246 destinoverheaddoor.com

### BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC

\$25 OFF SLIDING DOOR TRACK REPAIR
WITH ROLLER REPLACEMENT

FREE ESTIMATES

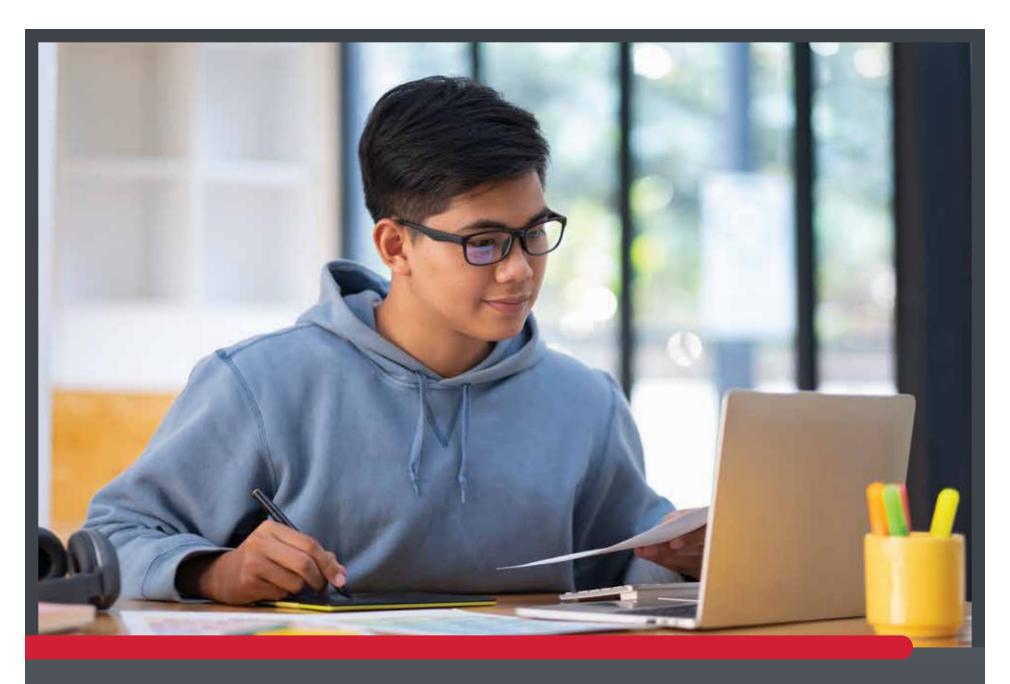
Offer expires 4/30/25 BeachsideSlide.com 850-98-SLIDE (850-987-5433)

## BLUEWATER PLASTIC SURGERY

10% OFF

GIFT CERTFICATE \$500 & UP (EXCLUDES SURGICAL PROCEDURES)

Offer expires 4/30/25
Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach 850-530-6064
www.bluewaterplasticsurgery.com





# REGISTER NOW!

SUMMER & FALL 2025 SEMESTERS OPEN ENROLLMENT: APRIL 14

NWFSC.EDU • 850.502.2895

Northwest Florida State College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. Degree-granting institutions also may offer credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of Northwest Florida State College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org).