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Panhandle Wildlife Rescue Opens **New Rehabilitation Hospital**

Panhandle Wildlife Rescue (PWR) has officially opened its new, full-scale wildlife rehabilitation center and hospital in Freeport. Serving 11 counties from Navarre to Tallahassee, PWR plays a vital role in the region by providing life-saving care and rehabilitation for native wildlife throughout Northwest Florida.

The new facility will allow PWR to expand its mission of rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing sick, injured and orphaned wildlife, admitting between 1,000 and 2,000 patients annually. With a focus on medical care, orphan rearing and intensive rehabilitation, PWR gives Florida's wild animals a second chance at survival in one of the fastest-developing and ecologically rich regions in the country.

"The opening of this facility, thanks to a transformative donation from Ryan Jumonville and Family, marks a major step forward in our commitment to the wildlife of the Emerald Coast," said Shelby



Robinson, founder and executive director of Panhandle Wildlife Rescue.

home to the most biodiverse terrestrial ecosystem in the contiguous United States. The Florida Panhandle is From the upland pine forests

to the pelagic depths of the Gulf, PWR treats hundreds of species every year, striving to mitigate the growing impact of human development on native wildlife.

One of its current patients is a handsome bald eagle rescued from the side of a highway in Bay County, likely clipped by a car while feeding. Wildlife Harbor (WH), which helps with many calls in Bay County, rescued him late one night. He was stabilized at WH overnight, then transferred to PWR the following morning for a thorough medical examination that revealed he had multiple metacarpal fractures on his left wing. These types of fractures are often difficult to stabilize due to the size of the hollow bones present and are also often injured during recovery due to their distal location. After PWR staff gathered radiographs and bloodwork to

> **WILDLIFE** continued on page 2

Chasing Perfection: Inside the World of the **Blue Angels**

By WILL ESTELL

Soaring by on a high-speed pass, barely one hundred feet above the runway—at a speed I'm told at the time is in excess of 700 mph—I can literally smell the fuel and feel the jet wash, before I hear the powerful roar of the F/A -18 Super Hornet as it soars by then climbs steeply just ahead of us, disappearing into the clouds, before diving back down in a corkscrew then leveling out about a mile away. All of this happens in about 20 seconds before another pilot with cojones of steel, and the skills to match, flies by completely inverted, slightly further away, but still close enough to feel the change in the atmosphere from where I am standing on the tarmac.

What I am witnessing up close and personal today is the same magical breath of patriotism that fans see at airshows all over this great

> **BLUE ANGELS** continued on page 3



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Community

WILDLIFE

continued from page 1

check for the possibility of lead poisoning, PWR veterinarian, Dr. Phil Blumer, opted to surgically place a pin in the largest affected bone, a procedure that took just under an hour. Since the surgery, the eagle has been having daily physical therapy, laser treatment and has been kept in an enclosure that prevents excessive movement. During his last doctor's visit, he has shown great signs of progress, but still exhibits a limited range of motion and will require weeks more of physical therapy before he can be placed in a flight cage for conditioning. Wildlife rehabilitation takes teamwork, from the public to specialists with advanced equipment, to other organizations and volunteers. PWR is currently fundraising to finish its 100-foot flight cage, not only for this patient, but also for the hundreds of other raptors that come through the doors each year.

Sometimes, injured adult patients are not the most difficult intakes, such as the eagle pictured. Although injuries come with intense treatment plans, surgical procedures and long timelines for recovery, orphaned raptors often require longer care plans that come with life lessons and an enormous appetite. PWR currently has five owl and six hawk fledglings in care. In these cases, they always try to encourage re-nesting if it's a safe option. But, sometimes mom or the baby is injured, the nests are over a body of water,

predators are stalking the young on the ground, they are sick or injured so mom kicked them out of the nest, or finders just don't want them renested back on their property. Although they successfully re-nest, approximately 70% of downed raptor nestlings and fledglings, it still leaves the clinic full with the remaining 30%. Raptor moms are very attentive and protective, and when mom is present, nearly 100% of renestings are successful, even if they aren't returned to the native nest. These cases are often difficult to navigate, as PWR must take into consideration many variables to determine when these patients truly need human intervention.

Several of PWR's patients have siblings who were predated upon, fell into artificial bodies of water and nearly drowned, were left in the middle of a highway with no nest in sight, or their mom has no interest in caring for them once returned. If these patients are unable to be renested, they are often in PWR's care for 4-6 months, where they are taught how to self-feed, how to fly, how to hunt live prey, and everything in between (while ensuring they retain a healthy fear of humans).

Techniques vary among species, so each patient will have the greatest success of sustaining itself when eventually released back into the wild. Bloodwork is done to track health throughout their stay, and weekly medical checkups to monitor progress. PWR encourages the public to take a photo and pin the location of a young raptor so it can

send staff to canvass the area. It's so important to return them to the family unit if at all possible. Then, even when they can successfully fly and hunt prey and it's time to let them return to freedom, there are external factors that can't be controlled. such as secondary rodenticide poisoning. Each time a handraised raptor is released, the team worries they'll come back through their doors after eating a poisoned rodent. Secondary rodenticide toxicity comprises about 25% of admitted adult raptor species, and it's preventable! Most don't think of the effects up the food chain when poisoning rats and mice in their home, but it causes death and suffering in the local raptor population, and in many instances, the effects can't be reversed. So, before you think about using rodenticides, please consider a friendlier option for native wildlife. PWR is also trying to fundraise additional raptor mews for patients like these, since its caseload is so high this year. If you'd like to donate or sponsor an enclosure, please reach out to PWR

Some things to know about Panhandle Wildlife Rescue:

PWR works very closely with Wildlife Harbour in Panama City Beach. Combined, PWR consists of three humans serving the same region and quantity of patients that was once serviced by eight employees. So, compassion and kindness go a long way, especially during baby season when they receive 100 or more calls per day. Wildlife Harbour founder, Cindy Levine, has been working with PWR staff for over three years and her skills and dedication to Florida's wildlife is incredible. With Cindy's willingness to go on rescues in Bay County while concurrently running her own rehabilitation center, it allows for patients to get into care quicker than waiting for our staff to respond on some occasions.

PWR needs volunteers! Rescue, nursery, release, medical, etc. If anyone is looking for an opportunity to work hands-on with wildlife, please reach out to jim@panhandlewildliferescue.

Meet the staff:

Shelby Robinson is CEO, with 15 years of experience in wildlife rehabilitation throughout the country. Shelby started working with wildlife during



Chief Medical Officer Phil Blumer DMV with Lucky the Eagle





graduate school in Seattle and hasn't stopped since. She has directed two larger facilities previously, then founded PWR with co-founders Jim Johnson and Raven Smith in March of 2024. Jim Johnson (co-founder) has been working with Shelby for five years and has mastered being the best raptor dad, hand-raising hundreds of orphaned raptors during his tenure. Jim is the lead rescue technician and has driven thousands of miles to offer rescue services to wildlife in need, spanning 14 different counties. Raven is a nursery specialist, giving unmatched care and love to orphaned native wildlife. Her compassion and care is second to none, and it is thanks to her that PWR exists today.

Although nearly 80% of forwarded calls come from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Commission, PWR is completely funded by supporter donations and currently receives no state, local or federal funding. The workload is tremendous, and they are on call 24/7/365. With the addition of the new facility and 10 acres, it gives them the opportunity to assist more patients in need, but also increase their resources, making it possible to provide the best care possible. They are fundraising to build more enclosures so they can increase their intakes and buy formulas, food, medical supplies, and support rescue team's efforts.

To date, PWR has assisted over 200 different species of patients, ranging from huge alligator snapping turtles to red-tailed hawks, to tiny pinky squirrels and all rabies vector species. PWR accepts all native Florida wildlife and works to help the public find resources for exotic pets and fowl. PWR also responds to any requested services for containing rabies vector species.

Big shout out goes to Emergency Veterinary Clinic in Niceville and Destin as they assist with patient intakes and allow the PWR team the use of their digital radiograph machine while PWR works to obtain funding for their own medical clinic. So, if anyone is interested in donating towards those efforts, it would be so greatly appreciated.

Finally, PWR's "Respect the Locals" campaign highlights the increasing frequency of human/wildlife interactions in the region. Through education and citizen science initiatives, the campaign empowers residents and visitors to coexist more peacefully with native Florida species. "Nothing feeds the soul more than watching a once-broken creature return to the wild," says Raven.

The 24-hour hotline is (850) 889-1104, and the address for the actual facility is 5951 Highway 20 in Freeport. An alternate facility for intakes is 256 Miley Road in Freeport.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, PWR receives no federal, state or local funding. All operations, including rescues, surgeries, critical care, and a 24/7 wildlife rescue hotline, are funded entirely by community donations. For more information, to donate, or to get involved, visit www.panhandlewildliferescue.com.





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BLUE ANGELS

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country each year. The only difference is, today I'm taking it all in from the Blue Angels communication cart, surrounded by a small team of just eight of the Blues support staff, along with my wingman for the day, Blue Angels Public Affairs Officer, Lt. Ben Bushong.

Since being established in 1946, the U.S. Navy Blue Angels hold the unique distinction of being the most well-known aerobatic team in the entire world. While they regularly wow crowds with breathtaking performances right here in our own backyard, their mission extends far beyond dazzling crowds at airshows, as they aim to inspire future generations of patriotic Americans, by demonstrating the unmatched aptitude, attitude and professionalism of the men and women serving in the U.S. armed forces.

These aero superstars do so much more than simply entertain with a breathtaking aerial showcase. Their performances represent thousands of hours of precision flight, discipline, unshakable resolve and the unwav-

ering spirit of naval aviation. For decades, they've captivated millions with gravity-defying maneuvers, embodying the excellence and teamwork that define the U.S. Navy Blue Angels-or as we affectionally refer to them along our beautiful Northwest Florida coastal communities, The Blues. I had the opportunity to spend a day inside the world of The Blues, guided by LT. Bushong, and gained some firsthand insight into their headquarters at NAS Pensacola. Including observing a morning flight meeting, pre-flight preparations, and the behind-the-scenes maintenance and logistics performed by their team of 158 active-duty Sailors and Marines, that keep this elite squadron at peak performance.

Here are some Q&As from my behind-the-scenes day with LT. Ben Bushong and the Blue Angels team, part of a multi-publication media experience with The Blues:

What is the age range of the pilots and does age play a part in the selection process?

The age of our pilots usually range from early 30s to late 40s. Age isn't necessarily a factor



when applying for the team. All pilots need to have a minimum number of flight hours and experience to be able to apply.

As popular as the Blue Angels are around the country, how do you and your team feel about the escalation of attention after last year's hit Amazon original, The Blue Angels?

The film definitely gives viewers an inside look into what it means to be a part of the U.S. Navy's flight demonstration squadron, and it does it for an entire show season, including the selection process and intense training that the pilots endure to get to where they are. As a team



we're happy about the depiction and think the movie can only help bring our fans closer and hopefully create more interest in our mission.

Do the pilots still get any sense of nervousness when they fly or is it such a welloiled repetitive motion, due to all the practice and shows, that it becomes like driving your vehicle from home to work and back?

Everything we do is based on safety and having absolute complete trust in one another. We absolutely all have to count on that up there and on the ground. So, during winter training, we incorporate the crawl, walk, run mentality to continue to work towards the tight formations. As a team, we are always chasing perfection, 100% of the time

What criteria would you say does play the largest part in the pilot and support team selection?

With all team members, trust and personality are two big factors when selecting new team members. If your current command is letting you apply for this team, then that means you have already checked all the boxes on paper for the prerequisites. But we are looking for people who

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374 Combat Missions, One Local Hero's Legacy: Wayne Warner's Story of Service and Survival

By Michelle Ruschman

When veteran, attorney and author Wayne Warner thinks about the beginning of his love for military service, he remembers that he was only age four as World War II was drawing to a close. He wore child-sized versions of military uniforms, and growing up in Lexington, Ky., his family served proudly. One uncle had fought in World

War II, with an aunt serving with the Women's Army Corps, his cousin had been wounded in Iwo Jima, and later, another uncle fought in Korea. Even in elementary school, Wayne loved military history. By junior high, he knew he wanted an education that would move him toward the military career he desired. His heart was set on being a pilot. But, at the time, West

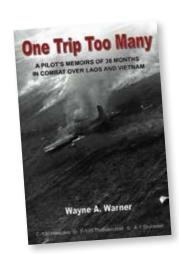
Point was the only option. In 1954, however, Congress decided they would create the United States Air Force Academy, and at 17, that's where Wayne began his years in college. His class was the first to spend all four years at the permanent site in Colorado Springs. At graduation, the commencement speaker was John F. Kennedy.

Wayne then went to Craig



Air Force Base in Selma, Ala., for pilot training. "The only airplanes that were available to us that were in Vietnam were Pacific Air Forces C-130s," said Wayne. "I knew that the supplies were getting into Vietnam by C-130 Hercules, so that's what I applied for. I reported into the 21st Troop Carrier Squadron at Naha, Okinawa, in February of 65. So, my first landing in Vietnam was in March of 1965."

For the next year and a half, Wayne flew C-130s and would serve the Air Force over the next four years until March 1969. In those four years, Wayne also flew the F-105 Thunderchief and the A-1 Skyraider, a plane that had rescued many of his friends from the jungle. In these three aircraft, Wayne flew 374 combat missions, which included 169 missions over North Vietnam and 84 blind bat night



missions. His C-130 crew would come to be known as the Kool-Aid Kids when their commander, a Lieutenant Colonel decided to fly with them, and while looking for coffee with a crew who didn't like coffee, accidentally drank the fruit juice from the thermos that was handed to him.

"I flew my 100th F-105 mission over North Vietnam on June 8th, 1968. I was slated to become an instructor, teaching foreign students how to deliver ordnance. I wanted to keep flying in Southeast Asia, though, so the Air Force granted my request to do search and rescue missions. That's when I went to Hurlburt to train on the A-1. In 1969, I reported to Thailand and flew 12 combat missions in that aircraft."

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110 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,481 SF \$700,000 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



621 CHAMOMILE COURT, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,761 SF \$924,935 | construction completed Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



156 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 3 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,290 SF \$679,900 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



311 SWEET BASIL LANE, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,927 SF \$974,900 | construction completed Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



161 CARAWAY DRIVE, NICEVILLE, FL 5 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 3,028 SF \$949,900 | construction completed Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



623 CHAMOMILE COURT, NICEVILLE, FL 4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,745 SF \$899,000 | construction completed Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



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Bay Buzz

Women of Honor Recognized

The Okaloosa Commission on the Status of Women honored 26 women during its annual "Women of Honor" ceremony in May. The "Women of Honor" was first established as "Wall of Honor" by the OC-CSW in 1997 as an idea of its members who thought it would be a nice way for someone to honor the women in their lives whose works might be unknown to most others. Each honoree's name is added to a plaque at UWF Emerald Coast's library, celebrating local women who made a significant impact in their communities.

The 2025 Women of Honor recipients include a remarkable group of leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, and volunteers who





have made lasting contributions across Okaloosa County and beyond.

Photo 1-First Row:

- Kathy Alexander, VP of RWOF, professional mathematician and civil servant at Eglin AFB
- Dana Allen, advocate for women in the workplace
- Tierra Barclay, Area Mgr., Sport Clips; national/state award-winning trainer and mentor
- Annette Breton, children's ministry leader and choir member, Wright Baptist Church
- Dr. Betsy Christianson, educator and former Aerospace Education Foundation Teacher of the Year
- Vanessa d'Aquin, Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Services Dir., Crossroads Center

Photo 1-Second Row:

- Elizabeth "Libby" Hill, Pres., Niceville Women's Republican Club; charter member, National League of Families (POW/MIA Southeast Asia)
- Kiiya Hillsman, single mother and role model of resilience
- Maria Howell, Pres., Emerald Coast Assn. of Realtors; Owner/Broker, Rev Realty
- Theri Isaacs, banking/ mortgage lender and Boys & Girls Club volunteer
- Narissa Jenkins, Founder/ CEO, Healing Hoof Steps, equine-assisted mental health provider
- Carol Kelley, mission volunteer, Women's Missionary Union and International English School

• Carrie Knife, chef/owner, Knife's Edge Café & Catering at Bob Hope Village

Photo 1-Third Row:

- Bonnie Nabors Pittock (posthumously, represented by son Jimmy Nabors), led Downtown FWB revitalization in the 1990s
- Dr. Gail Shorter-Judson, Dress for Success Emerald Coast volunteer
- Dina Smith, Board-Certified Psychometrist, 492nd SOF Preservation of Force & Family, Hurlburt Field
- Lisa Smith, owner, Creative Web Solutions; tech-savvy and community-minded
- Ann Walther Sprague, founder, Crestview Area Shelter for the Homeless; pianist and elder, Community of Christ
- Candace Tanner, founder, Downtown FWB Coffee Club
- Julie Gracela Webb, ABA therapist and founder of Advanced Sacred Hope Academy for children with autism

Photo 2–Front Row:

- Karen Englert, Senior Home Health Specialist, CenterWell; health-focused radio host
- Trisha Graham, founding member/past pres., Okaloosa FAWL; former chair, County Commission on Status of Wom-
- Helen Harris, Pres., ADSO; owner, HH Arts
- Sharon Herbison, longtime volunteer, Emerald Coast Mustang Club





Mattie Kelly Arts Center 100 College Blvd East, Niceville



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Happenings Around the Bay

2025

EVENTS

JULY

- 01 | Niceville Young Professionals Lunch Meeting 11:30 am | Niceville Valparaiso Chamber | Niceville
- Stars & Stripes Classic Golf Tournament 03 | 8 am | Eglin AFB Golf Course | Niceville Puzzle Swap 10 am | Valparaiso Library | Valparaiso
- E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center Summer 03-**Public Hours** 9 am | E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport
- 4th of July Parade 4 pm | Freeport

4th of July Sunset, Dinner, & Fireworks Cruise 6 pm | SunQuest Cruises | Miramar Beach

Sinfonia Gulf Coast Seaside Pops! 7 pm | Seaside

8:30 pm | Freeport Regional Sports Complex | Freeport

Boggy Bayou Fireworks

8:45 pm | Lion's Park, Landing, Kiwanis Park | Niceville

- Florida Concealed Carry Weapons Class 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso Live Music: Shenanigans
 - 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing Co. | Niceville
- 06 Live Music: Bluegrass Jam 12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing Co. | Niceville Women's Climbing Circle 5 pm | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
- Sticker Mosaics 10 am | Valparaiso Library | Valparaiso Chess Night 6 pm | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville
- Niceville Valparaiso Chamber Second Wednesday Breakfast 7:15 am | Niceville Community Center | Niceville
- 10 | Emerald Coast Science Center at the Library 2 pm | Valparaiso Library | Valparaiso
- E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center Summer 10-Public Hours 9 am | E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport
- Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee 7 am | Christian Life Center at FBC | FWB

- Coloring & Coffee 11 | 11 am | Valparaiso Library | Valparaiso Full Moon Restorative Experience 7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation | Destin
- Cookbook Club 12 11 am | Valparaiso Library | Valparaiso
- Youth Camp Training: NRA Basics of 14-Pistol Shooting 18 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
- The Traveling Painter 15 5:30 pm | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville
- Family Movie: Paddington in Peru 16 2 pm | Niceville Library | Niceville

Puzzle Swap

- 17 10 am | Niceville Library | Niceville Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours 5:30 pm | Big Gues Tractor & Equipment | Mary Esther
- E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center Summer 17-**Public Hours** 18 9 am | E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport
- Florida Concealed Carry Weapons Class 19 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso Community Health Fair 10 am - 4 pm | Am. Legion Post 296 | Destin
- Adult Paint Like an Artist hosted by The Traveling Painter 6 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing Co. | Niceville
- Youth Camp Training: NRA Basics of 21-Rifle Shooting 25 10 am | EC Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
- Tropical Design Class 9 am | Katie's House of Flowers & Gifts | Niceville Free Community Shred-it Event 10 am | Niceville Recreation Complex | Niceville
- Lunch N Learn Brand Smart: Tools, Trust, & Online Tactics 11:30 am | Greater FWB Chamber | FWB Sand Art 3 pm | Valparaiso Library | Valparaiso
- Pittman Magic, Juggling, & Comedy 11 am | Niceville Library | Niceville
- E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center Summer Public Hours 24-25

9 am | E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport

25 | Safe Within: Free Somatic Yoga for Women 5 pm | Yoga by You Studio | Niceville

Card Making Class

5 pm | Salt & Story | Niceville

5th Annual Niceville Sunset Stampede 5K 7:30 pm | Northwest Florida State College | Niceville

- Sunset Shrimp Boil 4 pm | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville
- Scavenger Hunt at the Park 10 am | Valparaiso Library | Valparaiso

ONGOING EVENTS

Summer Lawn Games in Grand Park 5 pm | Daily | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach 5 pm | Mon | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | FWB

Oils and Acrylics with Rosalyn O'Grady 10 am | Tues | Artful Things | Niceville

Watercolor Techniques with Theresia McInnis 1 pm | Tues | Artful Things | Niceville

Movies on the Beach 7:30 pm | Tues | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | FWB Bayou Pub Trivia Nights 7 pm | Wed | Bayou Pub | Niceville

Okaloosa Island Fireworks on the Beach 9 pm | Wed | The Boardwalk | FWB

Luau Beach Party

5:30 pm | Thurs | Al's Beach Club & Burger Bar | FWB

Sounds of the Summer! Live! 7:30 pm | Thurs | Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach

One Stroke Painting (LvI 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

FARMERS MARKETS

Niceville Community Saturdays | 9 am - 1 pm Twin Cities Pavilion | Niceville

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

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











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BAY BUZZ

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Photo 2-Back Row:

- Dr. Eleanor McCain, Medical Dir., Bridgeway Center Health Clinic, advocate for underserved patients
- Linda McCooey, CEO, Natural Fuel Solution; Honorary Regent, Choctawhatchee Bay DAR
- Brianna O'Brien, owner, Destin Blowout Bar; founder, The Ground Up Project (autism support)

Visit OCCSW.com or call 850-685-8027.

Walton County Tourism Offers Complimentary DayUse Admission to Topsail Hill Preserve and Grayton Beach State Parks

Walton County locals and visitors can once again enjoy complimentary day-use entry to Grayton Beach State Park and Topsail Hill Preserve State Park from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. Walton County Tourism is covering day-use fees to highlight the amenities and variety of eco-tourism experiences available in South Walton. This year marks the



11th year of admission coverage for Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and the 9th for Grayton Beach State Park.

"Our state parks are hidden gems in Walton County, and being able to showcase their majesty through this program is tremendous," said Matt Algarin, tourism director for Walton County. "We encourage our visitors and residents to explore our state parks and experience our community in a new way."

Free entry is available during regular hours, typically 8 a.m. to sunset. This year's program started on Memorial Day weekend and runs through Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 1.

For more information on Topsail Hill Preserve State Park visit: https://www.visitsouth-walton.com/listing/topsail-hill-preserve-state-park.

For more information on Grayton Beach State Park visit:

https://www.visitsouthwalton.com/listing/grayton-beach-state-park.

Impact100 Global Conference 2025 Calls for Community Support

The 2025 Impact100 Global Conference will take place October 26-28 at the stunning Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. Hosted by Impact100 Global in collaboration with five local chapters—Impact100 NWF, Mobile, Pensacola Bay Area, Baldwin County, and Gulf Coast—this biennial event celebrates collective giving and powerfully reflects the strength and unity of the Impact100 community.

Impact100 is a global movement of local philanthropists who unite to find and fund local nonprofits addressing their community's most pressing problems. The model is simple but powerful: At least 100 women come together and donate \$1,000 each, pooling their resources to fund grants of \$100,000 or more that will support nonprofits in their local community.

Since its founding in 2001, Impact100 has expanded to more than 75 chapters across four countries, delivering nearly \$160 million in grants, with continued growth each year. In 2024 alone, the five host chapters awarded \$2.3 million in high-impact grants to local nonprofits along the Gulf Coast.

This year's conference theme, "Tides of Impact100: Renew, Recharge, and Rise," sets the tone for three days of insight, inspiration, and impact. Attendees will enjoy engaging sessions led by dynamic speakers, including two-time Olympic gold medalist Ruthie Bolton, retired Major General Jeanne Leavitt, and Impact100 Founder Wendy Steele. The conference offers inspirational programming, hands-on leadership development, and meaningful connection opportunities- all designed to amplify the power of collective philanthropy. More than 250 changemakers are expected to attend, traveling from across the United States and as far away as Australia.

"Attendees from Impact100 communities around the globe will come together at the Impact100 Global Conference eager to learn, connect, and be inspired," says Wendy Steele, Founder of Impact100. "The beautiful Sandestin setting will be a draw not only for those nearby, but also for those traveling from the far corners of our philanthropic movement."

To ensure the success of this landmark event, Impact100

Global is seeking sponsors from the local community and beyond. Sponsorship opportunities are available at various levels, offering businesses and individuals the chance to gain exceptional visibility among a global network of philanthropists while aligning with a mission that empowers women to transform lives and communities.

This inspiring event is open to the public. Registration is now open and discounted room rates are available for attendees until September 26th, 2025. For more information on sponsorship opportunities or to register for the conference, please visit www.impact100global.com.

DeFuniak Springs Approves Scenic Walton's Linear Park Concept

A vision for a new green space in West DeFuniak Springs is one step closer to reality. On Feb. 10, the DeFuniak Springs City Council unanimously approved Scenic Walton's conceptual design for a linear park connecting Baldwin Avenue and the Eagle Springs Recreation Center and Golf Course.

Key features of the proposed design include:

- A multi-use path for walking and biking
- Lush, sustainable landscaping

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The Underrated Power of Sleep



By Dr. Karen DeVore

If there's one thing I wish more people understood about their health, it's this: you cannot out-supplement or out-caffeinate your way through poor sleep. Sleep is not a luxury or a badge of productivity to skip—it's foundational to healing, balance and long-term wellness. At the Tortoise Clinic, where we approach health through both integrative and holistic lenses, sleep is often the thread that ties it all together.

We live in a culture that applauds hustle, thrives on stimulation and often views rest as a weakness. Yet, as a practitioner, I've seen time and again that when sleep suffers, everything else starts to unravel—hormones become imbalanced, digestion slows, inflammation increases, cravings intensify and mental clarity disappears.

Why Sleep Is Your Body's Reset Button

During sleep, your body performs its most critical behind-the-scenes work. Cells repair. Muscles recover. Hormones reset. The brain processes and detoxifies. In fact, deep sleep is when your body releases growth hormone, which helps repair tissues and regulate metabolism. Your liver is busy detoxing. Your immune system recalibrates. And your nervous system has a rare moment to truly rest.

When sleep is disrupted or insufficient, the effects can be wide-ranging and sneaky. You might wake up exhausted despite getting "enough" hours. You might feel wired at night and sluggish in the morning. You might have trouble losing weight, staying focused, or regulating mood. And here's the kicker: traditional labs may show everything as "normal."

That's where a holistic approach makes all the difference.

The Integrative Approach to Sleep

In integrative medicine, we don't just ask how many hours are you sleeping? We ask:

- How do you feel when you wake up?
- Do you have trouble falling asleep—or staying asleep?
- Do you feel wired at night and wide awake at 2 a.m.?
- Are you struggling with anxiety, hormone shifts or night sweats?
- Are you using screens late at night? Eating late? Skipping morning sunlight?

We look at the entire picture—nervous system function, cortisol rhythms, melatonin production, hormone balance, stress exposure, nutrition, lifestyle and more.

What many people don't realize is that sleep disturbances are often not about the sleep itself—they're symptoms of deeper imbalances. At the Tortoise Clinic, we blend Western diagnostics and Eastern wisdom to get to the root. That might include looking at adrenal fatigue, estrogen/progesterone shifts, thyroid dysfunction, or gut inflammation—all of which can disrupt your rest.

Beyond the Sleep Aids

It's tempting to reach for sleep aids or melatonin when nights get restless. And while they can offer short-term relief, they rarely address the why.

We prefer to ask: What is your body trying to tell you?

Sometimes it's a stress response that needs rewiring. Other times it's low progesterone, blood sugar instability or even chronic inflammation. Instead of masking those signals, our job is to decode them—and guide your body back into balance.

That might mean incorporating acupuncture to calm the nervous system, adaptogenic herbs to support stress resilience, magnesium to relax tight muscles or simple lifestyle shifts like screenfree evenings and earlier meals.

Introducing: The Sleep Assessment

To better understand the sleep patterns and hormonal rhythms of our patients, I'm thrilled to share that we've launched a new, non-invasive sleep assessment at the Tortoise Clinic. This easy, athome saliva test measures your melatonin and cortisol levels at key times throughout the night, along with progesterone, giving us a clearer picture of what's happening behind the scenes.

Unlike standard tests that offer a snapshot in time, this assessment helps us understand how your sleep hormones fluctuate overnight, guiding more precise and personalized care—without the need for blood draws or guesswork.

If you're tired of feeling tired—or if sleep has quietly slipped out of your routine and left chaos in its place—know this: rest is not a weakness. It's your body's greatest tool for repair.

And you deserve more than

temporary fixes. You deserve answers, insight and support that meets you where you are.

At the Tortoise Clinic, we believe healing happens one steady, intentional step at a time—and sometimes, the first step is simply learning how to rest.

WOMEN'S WELLNESS REIMAGINED

What if your story mattered as much as your labs?

What if "normal" isn't optimal for you?

What if your fatigue, bloating, or anxiety isn't just stress - but a sign your body needs support?



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Bowlegs 70! Meet the New Captain Billy and Krewe

By Christopher Manson

The 70th Annual Billy Bowlegs Coronation Pageant was held Saturday, June 14, at Niceville's Mattie Kelly Arts Center. The free public event unveiled the tightly-guarded identity of Captain Billy 70, Rique Gwin, along with his Queen, his First Mate and Mistress, his 10-couple Honor Guard, and the theme for the new Bowlegs year. The first half of the event bid a hearty farewell to Captain Billy 69 Michael Castleberry and the Bottoms Up Krewe.

Keeping the new Captain Billy's identity a secret involves a lot of planning carried out through anonymous emails starting in the eight or so months leading up to the Coronation Pageant.

The criteria for selecting Bowlegs and the rest of the key players/pirates is very specific, but boils down to candidates' experience in the Krewe. "The previous Captains get together and decide who should lead the crew," says Gwin/Billy.

"Captain Billy picks everyone else in their Top 26. The First Mate and Mistress have been our friends for years. When I was First Mate,

the new Queen was on the honor guard. It was a natural selection that just made sense. It's a huge undertaking. They really have to want to be involved."

In addition, rising high school seniors are invited to take part as Princesses and Privateers. And younger children are



Queen of Bowlegs 70 Debbie Fisher, Captain Billy 70 Rique Gwin, First Mistress Mollie Grindland, First Mate Mark Grindland, Kelly Gwinband and J. Mark Fisher.

encouraged to serve as Children of the Court. "This year, we have 11 Children of the Court ranging in ages from one to nine years old." Gwin's two grown children served as Princesses in previous years while attending high school.

Gwin has been involved with



The Krewe of Bowlegs Children of the Court.

the Krewe for 14 years. "One of our friends from church invited us to attend some social events, and the Bowlegs people were so friendly and supportive." The Gwins are originally from Alabama—Rique is a Birmingham transplant, and his wife Kelly was born in Fort Rucker. They are both retired Air Force. Gwin was First Mate during the Covid outbreak, which, if you count that, would make this year 71. So, we're not counting it.

Captain Billy 70 will be planning out the year's numerous events—including travel and costumes—with the Queen, Debbie Fisher, and her husband, J. Mark Fisher; and the First Mate and Mistress.

The Billy Bowlegs Pirate Festival originated in 1954. Through the years, the Krewe has swash buckled at the center of it all—civic-minded, volunteer-driven, and devoted to fun and service. "The original thing for the crew 70 years ago was to attract tourism, which is still one of our main goals," says Gwin. "We travel as far north as Minnesota and as far south as Sarastota, building relationships with other Krewes. They do variations similar to our festival,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KREWE OF BOWLEGS

Queen of Bowlegs 70

Debbie Fisher and Captain Billy 70

Rique Gwin.

some as long as two weeks and some a couple of hours. Our goal is ambassadorship for the city of Fort Walton Beach.

"Every year, costumes are custom made, funded by the Krewe out of our own pockets. This year D and D Creations, one of the Mardi Gras houses in New Orleans, made them. The colors have a lot of significance—since I'm an aviator, I picked blue and silver as our colors, for the sky and lightning storm effect. Our new logo will reflect that symbolism as well."

The theme for Year 70 is Doolittle's Raiders, in honor of the courageous men who participated in America's 1942 bombing mission against Tokyo. The Raiders have strong ties to our local military community.

"I absolutely love this Krewe, the area and the patriotic spirit we have here," says Gwin. "I'll do anything I can to improve the relationship between the Krewe and the community. One of the major themes this year is honoring not only our history as a Krewe, but also the history of the community."

Set sail for more pirate fun at kreweofbowlegs.com.



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The New Bowlegs Krewe at a Glance:

Captain Billy 70 Rique Gwin

Captain's Co-pilot Kelly Gwin

Queen of BowlegsDebbie Fisher

Queen's Navigator – J. Mark Fisher

First Mate – Mark Grindland

First Mistress – Mollie Grindland

The Honor Guard – Schuyler and Taylor Black, Michael and Erin Goodosn, Joe and Morgan Zwickel, Scott Flint and Nancy Kline, Mike and Kelly Bedsole, Tyler and Casey Murray, Chris and Heather Thomas, William Goolsby and Elizabeth Sager, John and Keri Holguin, Matthew and Katie Jaquet.



EFCU Opens New Operations Center

By Laura Coale

Eglin Federal Credit Union (Eglin FCU) recently opened its state-of-the-art Operations Center, a milestone in the credit union's comprehensive growth and expansion project. The event was marked by a celebratory gathering attended by board members, volunteers, team members and partners who supported the successful completion of this project.

Eglin FCU's President/CEO, Cathie Staton, expressed her gratitude and excitement during the opening ceremony. "This Operations Center is a testament to our commitment to innovation and excellence," said Staton. "We believe that a well-designed space can inspire creativity and productivity, and we are thrilled to offer our employees a dynamic and inviting atmosphere that reflects our corporate values."

The new Operations Center, a four-story, 100,000-squarefoot building, includes an attached parking garage and is designed to accommodate up to 400 employees. It features



energy-efficient windows, geothermal wells, charging stations for employees' electric vehicles, and flexible interior workspaces designed for employee comfort and efficiency. The bright and open workspaces foster creativity, collaboration and communication, with various types of collaboration spaces, balconies and outdoor tables with shading.

The building also houses a state-of-the-art training center, an expanded call center with chat and text support, a growing Video Teller team and departments such as loan services, indirect lending, collections,

Information Technology, Information Systems, mortgage services, facilities management and operations training and projects. Additionally, the Operations Center can serve as a disaster recovery site if needed.

Staton highlighted the collaborative efforts that made this project possible, recognizing key contributors including the board of directors, volunteers, President Emeritus Jerry Williams, former COO Kenny Girot and several team members who were involved from the beginning such as SVP/CTO Tim Farnsworth, SVP/CIO Rocky



BUILDING PHOTO CREDIT: JOHN MAGNOSKI

Magee, SVP/COO Kim Nauta, and Facilities Manager/Security Officer Alan Campbell. Staton also acknowledged the La Macchia Group for its excellent work on the design and build of the Operations Center. "We embrace the credit union philosophy of people helping people, and we believe that when you lead with values and do the right things, good things happen,"

Staton added. "We are excited to continue to attract and retain new employees and members, while having room to grow and deliver five-star service."

EFCU's new Operations Center marks a major milestone in its growth. Learn more at lamacchiagroup.com and visit eglinfcu.org for updates, financial education or career opportunities

Palms Resort Brings Dinner, Drinks, Live Magic & Comedy to Destin!

An action-packed live show featuring World-Class Magic Comedy and Ventriloquism is now open with nightly shows at the newly renovated Palms Destin Resort Showroom.

Interactive magic takes place just inches away in an intimate showroom that offers excellent table seating. The performance features sophisticated magic & smart comedy targeting adults but is family-friendly and appropriate for all ages. The show is headlined by Bart Rockett who hosted his own nationally syndicated television show for three seasons, had a co-starring role on the former NBC Drama Parenthood and headlined his own 1.000-seat theater in the tourist mecca of Branson, Missouri for nine seasons. He has appeared in 85 countries around the globe and headlined for most every major cruise line.

Rockett, who started at the age of 10, trained under Jeff Dunham and is recognized for his excellent comedy ventrilo-

quism which is featured in the show. After growing up in the South, Rockett moved to Hollywood, California where his management team is located. He produced his teens to the finals of NBC's America's Got Talent and they have gone on to do major Hollywood projects over the years. Kadan, who starred in the movie Dark Skies with award winning actress Keri Russell and on CBS's rush hour combines forces with his Sister, Brooklyn to make guest appearances in Rockett's Destin show.

Brooklyn is well known for her viral Super Bowl commercial that currently has nearly 800 million views on You-Tube and most recently played Hollywood superstar Bradley Cooper's daughter in a project with Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

This talented family has been vacationing in Destin for many years and now that Rockett's kids are almost grown, he is excited to be back for a long-term residency in the place his Grandparents first introduced him to as a child. Rockett shared, "For me, coming back here feels like coming home. Some of my greatest childhood memories happened on these beaches and it's my desire to bring something unique to the area that is a fun experience for families to attend & make their own amazing memories."

Nightly shows happen at 7:30 p.m. with 5 p.m. early seatings offered on Sunday's and select dates. A variety of alcoholic & non-alcoholic beverages are available as well as a full menu of food and dessert offerings before or after the show. Parking is plentiful and free in The Palms Destin Resort multi-level parking garage, that is attached to the showroom.

Advance reservations are required and can be made at the official ticketing site: USA-TourTickets.LIVE.



4201 Indian Bayou Trail, Destin, FL

FREE PARKING



2025 Okaloosa County Mosquito Control Schedule

FROM NICK TOMECEK, OKALOOSA COUNTY PIO

Okaloosa County Mosquito Control and the Florida Department of Health urge the public to remain diligent in their personal mosquito protection efforts. These should include remembering to "SWAT."

- · Stay inside with screened doors and windows when mosquitoes are biting (dusk and dawn).
- When outside, wear clothing that covers skin.
- Apply mosquito repellant that includes DEET [N, N diethyl-m-toluamide] on your skin when you are outside
- Turn over standing water where mosquitoes lay eggs or rid your outdoor area of standing water in which mosquitoes can lay their eggs.

Remember to apply all mosquito repellants in accordance with the recommended frequency and methods suggested by the manufacturer.



Okaloosa County Mosquito Control suggests the following steps to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses:

- DRAIN standing water to stop mosquitoes from multiplying: Drain water from garbage cans, house gutters, buckets, pool covers, coolers, children's toys, flower pots or any other containers where sprinkler or rain water has collected.
- Discard tires*, drums, bottles, cans, pots and pans, broken appliances and other items that aren't being used.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and pets water bowls at least once or twice a week.
- Protect boats and vehicles from rain with tarps that don't accumulate water.
- · Maintain swimming pools in good condition and appropriately chlorinated. Empty plastic swimming pools when not in use.
 - * Waste tires can be dropped

off FREE to residents at the South County Okaloosa Transfer Station and the Baker Landfill. Free waste tire drop-off is limited to passenger car and light truck tires, with a cap of five tires per household per month. Businesses

are required to pay a small fee.

COVER skin with clothing or repellent:

Clothing: Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeves. This type of protection may be necessary for people who must work in areas where mosquitoes are present.

Repellent: Apply mosquito repellent to bare skin and clothing. Always use repellents according to the label. Repellents with DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR3535 are effective. Netting: Use mosquito netting to protect children younger than two months old.

COVER doors and windows with screens to keep mosquitoes out of your house. Repair broken screening on windows, doors, porches, and patios.

The County Mosquito Control Program sprays throughout the county, excluding state and federal lands. Treatments typically begin an hour before sunset or after sunrise, aligning with peak mosquito activity, though spraying may occasionally occur outside these times. By law, all spraying must be justified using surveillance data and approved methods. Schedules may shift due to weather or equipment is-

Beyond spraying, the county runs a robust larviciding program, treating around 2,000 sites that are regularly monitored. In addition, over 750 ponds and spots with standing water are stocked with gambusia fish, which feed on mosquito larvae and reproduce quickly.

Residents are encouraged to vaccinate their outdoor animals against mosquito-borne diseases. Horses need protection against Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) through vaccination. While West Nile and EEE can pop up year-round, they peak in August, September, and October. Horses require two vaccine shots, spaced three to six weeks

apart, followed by boosters every three to six months. Dog owners should also ensure their pets are treated for heartworms, as some mosquitoes in Okaloosa County can transmit this disease too.

The schedule for the Okaloosa County Bay area

- Mondays: Valparaiso
- Tuesdays: Bluewater Bay
- Wednesdays: Rocky Bayou
- Thursdays: Niceville

For the full mosquito spray schedule, preventative tips and other related information, visit https://www.myokaloosa.com/ pw/environmental/mosquito-control.

To view the interactive spray schedule map showing the general treatment areas organized by days of the week, visit https:// experience.arcgis.com/experience/78a38f77f8d94511ad1e-2ab55027a1c3. The Mosquito Control Division of Public Works is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., (850) 651-7394 or (850) 689-5772.



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Community

BAY BUZZ

continued from page 8

- A playground for family activities
- Connections to the planned pedestrian bridge for walkability

"This project embodies our mission to enhance beauty, connectivity, and quality of life," said Scenic Walton Executive Director Leigh Moore. Special thanks were extended to former Councilman Anthony Vallee for his early support. The project now moves into the funding phase.

Niceville Biology Instructor Wins Statewide Charter School Award



Sean Gordon, a biology instructor Collegiate High School in Niceville, has been named a 2025 Charter School

Champion of the Year by the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools (FCPCS). Gordon is one of only nine educators across Florida to earn this distinction for the 2024–25 school year.

"Champion" teachers are recognized for inspiring high achievement and serving as role models within their charter schools. "Each of the winners helps deliver quality education to Florida's charter school students," said FCPCS President Robert Haag. "They are important contributors to Florida's hugely successful charter school movement."

New Leadership and Store Hours at CALM in Niceville



Crisis Aid for Littles and Moms (CALM) in Niceville welcomes Krista as its new house director. CALM provides tran-

sitional housing and life skills training for mothers and children in need. For assistance, contact Krista at (850) 264-6191, director@nicevillecalm. com or visit www.nicevillecalm.

CALM's Furniture Resale Store, located at 201 Redwood Ave., is now open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Shoppers can find stylish, gently used furniture and décor, with all proceeds supporting CALM's mission. Donations are welcome; call or text (850) 461-5315. Follow along on Facebook @calmfurnitureresale.

Nominations Open for 2025 Okaloosa Women's Hall of Fame

The Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women (OCCSW) is now accepting nominations for the 2025 Women's Hall of Fame. Nominations are due online by Thursday, July 10 at www.occsw.com.

Honorees will be recognized during a ceremony on Monday, Aug. 25, at 6 p.m. at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center. Nominees must be current or former Okaloosa residents who have made significant contributions to the county through leadership, service, and community impact.

Photos of past inductees are displayed at government buildings across the county. For questions, contact Jeanne Rief at (850) 685-8027.

Heritage Museum Receives Donation from Rotary Club

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida recently received a generous donation from the Niceville-Valparaiso Rotary Club in support of its annual Saturday in the Park spring event. The museum, located in Valparaiso, is a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the rich history of the Florida Panhandle. Pictured at the check presentation are museum trustees Marie Hallion, Barbara Palmgren, and Ken Walsh, along with Rotarian Bill Higgenbotham. The museum continues to serve as a vital educational and cultural hub for residents and visitors alike.

International Fashion Brand EKKO Opens at Destin Commons

Sustainable fashion brand EKKO celebrated the grand opening of its first U.S. retail store at Destin Commons, 4100 Legendary Drive, on June 6. The 3,000-square-foot space features EKKO's signature men's and women's apparel, crafted with ethical sourcing and global style in mind.

Founded in Sri Lanka by Lalantha Watudura, EKKO has received numerous international accolades. The Destin ribbon-cutting was hosted in partnership with the Destin and Walton Area Chambers of Commerce. Customers can also shop online at www.ekko.style.

LadyWorld Festival Returns to Seascape Resort

LadyWorld, the immersive entertainment retreat by The LadyGang podcast, returns to Seascape Resort Sept. 26–28, 2025. This three-day event blends podcasting, music, and comedy with wellness activities, pop culture panels, and signature cocktails from 21Seeds Infused Tequila. Newly announced headliners include comedian Hannah Berner and the Girls Gotta Eat podcast duo, Ashley Hesseltine and Rayna Greenberg. Other performers include Kaitlyn Bristowe, Stassi Schroeder, Rachel Lindsay, and Justin Sylvester.

Attendees can choose from several pass levels and accommodation options. For tickets, visit www.ladyworld.co. VIP perks include reserved seating, exclusive merch, and access to a private planning group.

Learn to Make Mozzarella in DeFuniak Springs

Want to make your own fresh mozzarella? UF/IFAS Extension Walton County is hosting a cheese-making workshop on Wednesday, July 16, from 5-8 p.m. at 732 N. 9th St., DeFuniak Springs.

For \$30, participants will receive recipes, a cheese-making kit, and samples to enjoy. Pre-registration is required by July 14, and no walk-ins will be accepted due to limited space.

Register online at: https:// WaltonCheeseMakingJuly25. eventbrite.com. For more information, call (850) 892-8172.



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Community

BLUE ANGELS

continued from page 3

would make great ambassadors for the Navy and Marine Corps, and someone that you would potentially spend 300 days on the road with in a given season. Our Maintainers and Crew Chiefs perform all the preflight inspections on every aircraft, so the pilots can strap in and go! It takes complete trust in a person, to be able to strap in and fly without performing your own preflight inspection of the aircraft. We are a successful team. because everybody has complete trust that the person next to you is doing their job effectively and efficiently.

With such vicious schedules between practices, social and event obligations, and traveling 300 days per year, how much sleep does the average pilot get?

Wait...we're supposed to be sleeping too? [laughs] Thursday morning we fly to our show site. The first flight at every city is our "circles" flight, where we fly over the airfield to find all the checkpoints for the show. Followed by a practice. Thursdays are typically the longest, because it's a three-flight day: Transit, Checkpoint Flight and Practice. Friday we perform community outreach, visiting local schools and hospitals, then perform a full practice. Satur-

day and Sunday are show days, then we transit back to Pensacola after the show. Monday our team gets our day off, then it's back to Tuesday and Wednesday practices here in Pensacola. Actually, not getting enough sleep is never really too much of a factor. We always perform in the afternoons, so there's typically not many early mornings on the road.

Any other closing insight you and the team would like readers to know about the mission you all are fulfilling?

The Blue Angels are direct representatives of the 800,000 men and women serving in the Navy and Marine Corps. All of us are from the fleet and will return to the fleet after our time here. By design, our Navy and Marine Corps is expeditionary in nature, meaning all our operations are happening overseas and out of sight. The Blue Angels were designed to showcase the teamwork and professionalism of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to the American public, and like we always say, "We're glad to be here!"

Will Estell is a seasoned writer, editor, and media entrepreneur with over 700 published articles spanning regional and national publications. His work covers coastal tourism, real estate, dining, automotive reviews, and celebrity interviews, earning him a strong



reputation in Northwest Florida media. Currently the Chief Creative Officer of Estell Hussey Media, LLC, Will has co-founded 12 magazine titles and served as editor-in-chief for several others. Originally from Booneville, Miss., Will is a father of three and lives in Destin and Navarre with his wife, ABC 3 news anchor Laura Hussey-Estell.

WAYNE WARNER

continued from page 4

Among the many awards and distinctions, Wayne was awarded the Silver Star when his efforts delayed a North Vietnamese takeover of a special forces camp in South Vietnam. Thanks to his flight, the assault was destroyed, and everyone was rescued from the camp.

In March of 1969, Wayne experienced two catastrophic engine failures, the first resulting in a bailout and subsequent pickup by a Jolly Green helicopter, and the second being the last time he'd fly for the Air Force.



"I had engine and instrument failure on takeoff and crashed and burned. I was trapped in the cockpit with a full load of personnel ordinance and AVgas. I watched the legs and sleeves burn off my flight suit, but I couldn't undo my harness. Fortunately, a Jolly Green (helicopter) was taking off and saw the problem I was having. He hovered over me so his rotor wash could blow the flames down. I managed to finally kick myself out of the cockpit, but I was still tangled in my harness. It so happened that there was a PJ (para jumper) who was out jogging, and another pilot who saw me. So, they ran to cut me off the side of the airplane. They loaded me on the Jolly Green that would fly me to the front door of the dispensary to get medical attention. My first flight to Vietnam was in March of '65, and this flight was in March of '69."

After being medically retired from the Air Force in September of 1969, Wayne earned his law degree. With fond memories of childhood vacations in Fort Walton Beach and then spending his honeymoon there with his wife, Vickie, they were excited for Wayne to eventually get hired at Eglin Air Force Base as a civilian attorney acquiring weapon systems. He worked for Eglin for 28 years.

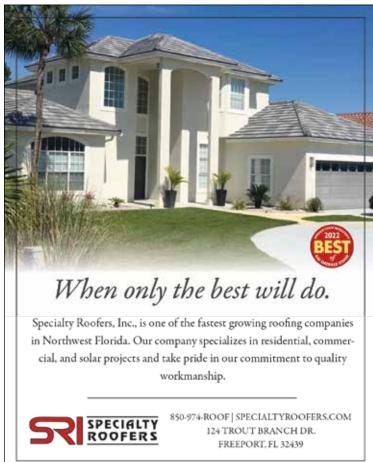
Wayne has also written a book, One Trip Too Many: A Pilot's Memoirs of 38 Months in Combat over Laos and Vietnam, not only as a legacy piece for his family and fellow veter-

ans, but to record what it was like firsthand to serve in Vietnam. It can be found at Amazon.com.

All these years later, Wayne continues to love the military and the camaraderie that it inspired among those he had the privilege to serve with. To those who are currently on active duty, Wayne offers these words of encouragement: "Believe in what you're doing and keep the faith of your comrades. Your military service is a benefit to everyone."

If you would like to reach out to Wayne directly, he can be contacted at wwarner83@ gmail.com.







Preventing the Summer Slide: Favorite Summer Learning Must-Haves to Prevent Brain Drain

Without school routines, kids can experience a "summer slide" where they forget some of what they've learned — especially in math. The good news? Math learning during summer doesn't have to feel like schoolwork.

These travel-friendly brain games are fun, compact and packed with plenty of critical thinking and math practice. Whether you're road-tripping, waiting for a flight or enjoying a lazy afternoon, these games will keep kids engaged and learning.

5 Brain-Boosting Games to Keep Kids Sharp During Summer

If you're looking for easy ways to incorporate some math practice this summer, these five brain-boosting games are just the thing.

They're screen-free, fun and designed to help kids build problem-solving, strategy, logic and number sense skills — all while keeping those summer smiles going strong.

Möbi

Recommended Age: 8+

Skills: Mental math, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division



Möbi is a fast-paced, tile-based math game that's a bit like Scrabble — but with numbers! Kids race to create math equations using addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. It's great for building number sense and quick-thinking skills.

Bonus: It comes in a cute whale-shaped pouch — perfect for tossing into a beach bag or backpack.

Kanoodle

Recommended Age: 7+

Skills: Spatial reasoning, logic, problem-solving



Got a puzzle lover in the house? Kanoodle is their perfect match. With over 200 brain-bending challenges, kids use colorful pieces to build everything from flat designs to 3D pyramids. It's pocket-sized, portable, and guaranteed to keep little minds engaged anywhere — from car rides to quiet time under a shady tree.

Bonus: There are several versions to keep it fresh, including Kanoodle Genius and Kanoodle Extreme.

Stellö

Recommended Age: 5+

Skills: Pattern recognition, strategic thinking



Stellö — a colorful pattern-building game that sharpens logic and spatial reasoning. Players match tiles based on shapes and colors, kind of like dominoes with a creative twist. It's perfect for developing critical thinking — and it's just as fun for grown-ups, too!

Bonus: Stellö can be played anywhere as it comes with a bag for easy travel.

Proof!

Recommended Age: 9+

Skills: Mental math, operations, speed

Ready, set, solve! Proof! is a lightning-fast card game where players race to solve math equa-



tions using addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and square roots. It's like a math scavenger hunt that builds mental math fluency — perfect for competitive kids who love a challenge.

Math Dice

Recommended Age: 6+

Skills: Mental math, operations, flexible thinking



Roll the dice and let the brain games begin! In Math Dice, players roll a pair of target dice, then combine the results of three scoring dice using addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and powers to hit the target number before the other players. It's part math, part strategy, and 100% engaging.

Bonus: It packs up small for on-the-go learning — perfect for a road trip or a day at the pool. Math Dice Jr. is also available for younger learners using only addition and subtraction.

Preventing the Summer Slide

Research shows that consistent mental stimulation over the summer helps prevent the "summer slide," especially in math. These games don't just reinforce school skills — they encourage kids to problem-solve, reason logically, and think creatively. Even 10 - 15 minutes a day can make a big difference.

On-the-Go Learning Tip: Pack a small "brain games" bag for the car or your summer travels, including dry-erase markers, dice, a mini notebook, and one or two of these games. Your kids might even start choosing math over screens — voluntarily!

And for even more enrichment, consider adding a structured learning program to the mix. Mathnasium Niceville's Summer Program offers engaging, flexible and distraction-free learning to help students get ahead for the upcoming school year.

Come see us at Mathnasium Niceville or visit https://www.mathnasium.com/math-centers/niceville to see how we can help your child succeed. To schedule a free assessment, call (850) 987-6284 or email niceville@mathnasium.com.

Disclaimer: Mathnasium does not endorse or sponsor any products or retailers listed in this summer math games guide.







Your child can avoid the math learning loss that typically happens over the break by attending summer sessions at Mathnasium. And the benefits don't stop there!

- Faster progress is possible without the distraction of other academic commitments
- We're vacation-friendly, with live face-to-face instruction, both in-center and online
- Kids can start the new school year with confidence



Mathnasium of Niceville (850) 987-MATH (6284) 1538 John Sims Pkwy E, Niceville, FL 32547

Local Diving, 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 enjoy 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

JoJo's Coffee and Goodness

An iconic favorite of locals, owner and operator of Jojo's Coffee and Goodness Angela freshly roasted coffee-just what you're craving for Spring! Hours 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Tues-

day-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.

Mondays: Beach Madness 4-7 p.m.; Hotdog Specials; Extended Happy Hour 3-7 p.m.

Tuesdays: Tacos & \$5 House Margaritas

Wednesdays: Sailboat Races 6 p.m.; Kids Eat Free with Adult Purchase

Thursdays: Open Mic and Karaoke Nights 6-10 p.m.; Throwdown SUP Races: 6 p.m.

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

Sunday, July 27: Sunset Shrimp Boil 4-7 p.m. Live music 4-8 p.m. Shrimp, Sausage, Corn on the Cob, Potatoes, Bread

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

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



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.

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"JoJo" Stevenson invites you to enter her cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere for a daily dose of "goodness." Stop in for mouth-watering cinnamon rolls; scones: cranberry orange, chocolate caramel and cheddar thyme; strawberry coffee cake; cranberry orange muffins; red velvet cookies; brownies with espresso ganache or caramelitas. Try a breakfast special with a piece of quiche or kolache-hash brown casserole. Breakfast burritos are rolled and ready daily! Choose from andouille, bacon, chorizo or veggie. Or tantalize your taste buds with a 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





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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/2l \$40

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bread stick \$10.50 Slice + drink + wings + bread stick \$14.99

Slice \$5.99

Slice + drink \$8.99

Slice + drink + salad +

2 slices + drink \$13.99

Open Monday – Thursday 11am-8pm and Friday -

Saturday 11am-9pm

Bay Life 4th of July 2025 Celebrations

Celebrate America's 249th birthday with a full lineup of family-friendly events, parades and fireworks happening across Niceville, Valparaiso, Freeport, Destin, Okaloosa Island and South Walton. Don't miss a moment of the patriotic fun!

Niceville & Valparaiso -**Boggy Bayou Fireworks**

When: Friday, July 4 | 8:45

Where: Lion's Park, Niceville Landing, Kiwanis Park, Niceville

Hosted at Lion's Park, this allday celebration features live music, food trucks, family activities, and a fireworks finale over the bayou. Great viewing locations include Lion's Park, Kiwanis Park, Niceville Landing, Shipyard Point Park, and Lincoln Park in Valparaiso. Arrive early, bring lawn chairs or blankets, and enjoy the festivities!

Freeport - Independence Day Parades & Fireworks Hammock Bay Walk & Bike

Parade

When: Friday, July 4 | 9:30

Bay Where: Hammock Town Center, 74 Great Hammock Bend

Kids and families can decorate bikes, strollers, or walk in this festive morning parade. Spectators are welcome to line the central greenway. Prizes awarded for best decorations.

Freeport City Parade

When: Friday, July 4 | 4 p.m. Where: Begins at Freeport Learning Center, 360 Kylea Laird Drive

The city's annual parade features floats, classic cars, and community groups. State Road



20 closes at 3:45 p.m., so plan ahead to find a great spot along the route.

Fireworks Finale

When: Friday, July 4 | 8:30

Where: Freeport Regional Sports Complex, 563 Hammock Trail East

Wrap up the evening with a fireworks show under the stars. Bring chairs or blankets and enjoy food vendors on-site for a relaxed family evening.

Pre 4th of July Celebration

When: Wednesday, July 2 9 p.m.

Where: The Boardwalk,

1450 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, Okaloosa Island

Starting the celebration early kicking off the 4th of July fun with a spectacular fireworks show!

Fireworks Over the Gulf

When: Friday, July 4 | 9 p.m.

Where: View from The Boardwalk deck or beach

Enjoy a stunning fireworks show launched from the pier. Bring a beach chair or blanket and watch the night sky light up over the Gulf.

Destin **Commons - Star-Spangled Food** Truck Festival

When: Thursday, July 3 | 5-9:30

Where: Destin Commons, 4100 Legendary Drive

Kick off the holiday early with more than 25 food trucks, live music, face painting, and entertainment for all ages. The fireworks show begins at 9 p.m. with great viewing throughout the open-air shopping center.

HarborWalk Village - -**Concert & Celebration**

When: Friday, July 4 | 6–9

Where: HarborWalk Village, 10 Harbor Blvd, Destin

Enjoy live country music, dancing, and a vintage flyover. The night concludes with fireworks over the Destin Harbor at 9 p.m., followed by a fire-spinning performance. Best viewed along the waterfront promenade.

The Village of Baytowne Wharf - Red, White & **Bavtowne**

When: Friday, July 4 | 7–9:15 p.m. (Fireworks at 9:15 p.m.)

Where: Baytowne Wharf, Sandestin

Celebrate with live music from the Tanner Gray Band on the Events Plaza Stage, plus family activities including face painting, crafts, and balloon sculpting. A fireworks show over the lagoon caps off the night.

Seaside - Independence Day Celebration

When: Friday, July 4 | Festivities begin at 9 a.m. | Fireworks at 8:30 p.m.

Where: Seaside Amphithe-

Start your day with a festive block party featuring family games, a REP Theatre performance, a musical by ECTC, bike decorating, and a hot dog eating contest. Return in the evening for a 7 p.m. pops concert by Sinfonia Gulf Coast, followed by fireworks over the Gulf at 8:30

Celebrate safely, arrive early, and enjoy the red, white, and blue all around the Bay!

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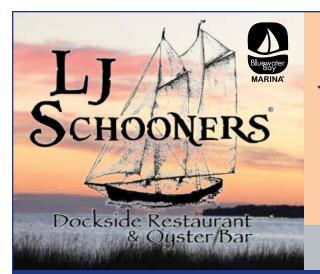
High Surf and/or Strong Currents

MEDIUM HAZARD Moderate Surf and/or Currents

LOW HAZARD

Calm Conditions, Exercise Caution

STINGING MARINE LIFE Man O' War, Jellyfish, Stingrays



Sunset Shrimp Boil

4-7PM: July 27, Aug. 31, Sept. 28, Oct. 26

July 27 Live Music: Parker & Ivoree Willingham 4-8pm Shrimp, Sausage, Corn on the Cob, Potatoes, Bread (Market price per plate) **Featuring Shrimp from Byrd's Seafood Market** 440 John Sims Pkwy., Niceville

> **Beach Madness Monday 3-7pm** Taco & Margarita Tuesday 3pm Wednesday Sailboat Races 6pm Thursday Karaoke/Open Mic 6-10pm **Thursday Thrown Down SUP Race 6pm** Sunday Brunch 9am-1pm





···· More Fun ····

July 4: Rewind 74 6-10pm July 5: Ronni Kay & the Musical Gentlemen 6-10pm July 6: Dismystic 4-8pm

July 11: LA Strangers 6-10pm

July 12: Sara Nade Band 6-10pm

July 13: Brianna Steele 4-8pm July 15: The Traveling Painter 5:30pm

July 18: Below Alabama 6-10pm
July 19: LUAU/Tacky Tourist Party with Rockers 4 Life 6-10pm

July 25: Jody Lucas 6-9pm July 26: Niceville Valparaiso Rotary Club SUP Poker Run 10am, The Remedy 6-10pm

July 27: Shrimp Boil 4-7pm, Parker & Ivoree

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



It's Turtle Time!

By Heather Bennett Eye

It's that special time of year again on the Emerald Coast. Sea turtle nesting season has officially begun! So what does that mean? From now until Halloween, our beaches become a vital nesting ground for several species of sea turtles, many of which are threatened or endangered. Whether you're a local or just visiting, your actions can make a big difference during this critical period, and this means keeping the beaches clean, dark and flat.

Each summer, female sea turtles return to our shores, often the very beach where they were born, to lay their eggs. In Walton County, nesting typically occurs in the dry sand above the high tide line, closer to the dunes. The South Walton Turtle Watch volunteers survey the beaches daily, looking for turtle tracks to identify and mark nests, protecting them from accidental damage by people, pets, or vehicles. They monitor the nests throughout the incubation period.

After about 50 to 60 days, hatchlings begin to emerge, usually under the cover of darkness. These tiny turtles instinctively look for the brightest horizon, which under natural conditions is the reflection of the moonlight on the ocean. From there, they begin their treacherous journey to the water, dodging predators and battling the surf.

To give these hatchlings the best possible chance of survival, we encourage everyone to help



keep our beaches clean, dark, and flat:

Clean: Remove all trash, leftover food, beach toys, and especially beach furniture at the end of each day. Items left behind can become barriers or traps for hatchlings trying to reach the water.

Dark: Turn off any arti-

ficial lights that face the beach at night. Bright lights from homes, businesses, and flashlights can disorient hatchlings, leading them away from the ocean. If lighting is necessary, use turtle-safe options like red or amber LED bulbs.

Flat: Before leaving the beach, fill in

all holes and knock down sandcastles. Deep holes and uneven sand can trap baby turtles or redirect them off course.

Please make sure to respect nest markers and avoid walking through dune areas. If you see a hatchling struggling, don't touch it. Instead, contact the South Walton Turtle Watch Hotline at (850) 865-4503, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at (888) 404-3922 or the Walton County Sheriff's Office at (850) 892-8111.

Sea turtles have been making this journey for millions of years, but their survival now depends more than ever on human awareness and cooperation. By keeping our beaches clean, dark, and flat, you're playing a vital role in protecting one of nature's most awe-inspiring creatures. Please help educate others. Many people aren't aware of how simple actions like turning off a porch light can save dozens of lives. Let's work together to ensure these incredible animals have a safe start to life. The sea turtles are counting

Romeo Joins Rescued Manatees Lil Joe and Inigo

Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park has welcomed a special new resident: Romeo, the oldest known manatee at over 70 years old, is now calling Manatee Cove home.

Romeo's arrival is part of a statewide conservation effort led by the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. After receiving over a year of critical care at Zoo Tampa's Manatee Critical Care Center, Romeo was deemed non-releasable due to his long history in managed

care. Gulfarium was chosen for his permanent placement thanks to its specialized facilities and experienced animal care team. His placement at our Gulfarium enables acute care centers in other areas, central Florida, for example, to remain available for manatees in need of urgent rescue and rehabilitation.

Continued on next page



Off the Hook

CBA's "State of the Basin": **How Oyster Gardening Is Reviving Choctawhatchee Bay**

By Allison McDowell, CBA

Along the shores of Choctawhatchee Bay, a quiet but powerful movement is taking place – one oyster at a time. Families, retirees, and students are rolling up their sleeves to take part in a unique conservation effort led by the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA). Their mission? To rebuild the bay's critical oyster reefs through an innovative and community-driven initiative: the Oyster Gardening program.

Now entering its 2025 season, this hands-on program invites local volunteers to help restore the bay's ecosystem by growing young oysters at their homes or designated dock lo-



cations. It's a project where science meets stewardship, turning everyday citizens into environmental champions.

A Simple Solution with a Big Impact

Each oyster grown through the program can filter up to 50 gallons of water daily, making them natural purifiers for Choctawhatchee Bay. Beyond water quality, these tiny powerhouses also create habitat for fish and crabs and help stabilize shorelines.

The program has supported habitat restoration efforts at

multiple sites around the bay, an impressive achievement that's benefiting marine life and bolstering the overall health of the ecosystem. It's a grassroots effort with ripple effects far beyond the shoreline.

Science Comes to Life

One of the most inspiring aspects of the Oyster Gardening

program is its educational value. Whether it's a retiree tracking oyster growth or a middle schooler observing changes in the water, participants are engaged in real-world marine science. The program transforms conservation into a fun, local, and impactful experience, nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards in the process.

Get Involved

With the 2025 season underway, CBA is calling on new volunteers to help make waves. No experience is needed, just a love for the water and a willingness to learn.

For more information or to get involved, visit www.basinal-liance.org or email reynol59@nwfsc.edu.



ROMEO

continued from previous page

"Helping to create space at critical care centers while giving permanent homes to conditionally non-releasable manatees is a vital part of the MRP's work, and we're honored to play a role in that mission," said Patrick Berry, CEO of Gulfarium. "Our dedicated animal care team is excited to provide Romeo with the support and enrichment he deserves."

Romeo now joins rescued manatees Lil Joe and Inigo in the 300,000-gallon Manatee Cove habitat, where he can thrive in a safe, enriching environment. Opened earlier this year, Manatee Cove features underwater and above-ground viewing areas, allowing guests to connect with these gentle giants while learning about manatee conservation.

Florida's manatees face ongoing threats from boat strikes, red tide, habitat loss and more. Romeo's story highlights the importance of coordinated care and public education in protecting this beloved species.

Visit Romeo daily at the Gulfarium. Learn more at www.gulfarium.com.









Bringing a Swift Creek Dream Kitchen to Life with Apex Customized Detail

By Chuck Hall

Apex Design Center showcases, yet again, their exemplary work in redesigning and remodeling kitchens with this incredible custom kitchen renovation in Swift Creek.

The company's semi-custom solutions blend personalization, functionality and aesthetics while emphasizing Apex's core commitment to ensuring that each client's home reflects their personal preferences and lifestyle as well as their functional needs.

This Swift Creek kitchen remodel highlights the seamless integration of the homeowner's new appliances with custom built-ins to maximize space, storage and overall functionality. The Apex team expertly crafted made-to-measure cabinetry and built-ins that flawlessly fit around the range, oven and wine cooler. The remodel also features a

semi-custom-made wine rack, as well as countertops and back-splashes that create perfect harmony within the space.

Apex worked closely with the homeowner in choosing the right colors for their kitchen. The result is a polished, cohesive and uncluttered aesthetic that indulges their love of wine and delivers smart efficiency.

Throughout the remodel, Apex's team prioritized the homeowner's personal style, selecting materials and finishes based on their reference photos and requests.

From first contact to thoughtful planning and final installation, Apex always strives to provide a smooth and enjoyable remodeling journey. With a licensed and insured team, Apex clients can feel confident knowing their home is in the hands of skilled professionals committed to precision and care. Kitchen remodeling is one of the Niceville-based company's most requested services. Whether it's a modern and open-concept space or a cozy and traditional kitchen with rich finishes, Apex will bring your vision to life!

Some of Apex's most popular kitchen remodel features include:

- Custom built-ins that integrate specific appliances or awkward spaces.
- Made-to-measure cabinetry that maximizes storage and also matches each client's unique style.
- Optimized layouts for efficient workflow and functionality.
- Elegant countertops, backsplashes, and hardware that deliver a harmonious and polished aesthetic.
- Integrated lighting for warmth and clarity.

Apex's custom cabinetry ser-

vices are designed to fully utilize every square inch of kitchen space, with the smart addition of hidden pull-outs, built-in spice racks, cutting boards, trash bins, vertical storage options and more. The company offers thoughtful solutions to any problem — whether it's fitting around unusual appliances, creating specialized drawers for utensils or crafting cabinetry that complements existing architecture.

Homeowners can rest assured that they'll have a kitchen that is both practical and inviting. Apex's semi-custom design and remodel services take storage and functionality to the next level while keeping aesthetics front and center.

Tying it all together is the client's personal style. The Apex team works side by side with their clients to align every choice — materials, hardware, paint

colors and lighting — with their lifestyle and preferred aesthetic.

Do you need help building your dream kitchen? Explore Apex Design Center's full suite of design and remodeling services. Whatever the size of your project — whether you want to replace countertops, cabinets or undertake a full kitchen remodel — the Apex team is committed to helping homeowners create a space that is organized, welcoming and uniquely theirs.

Start your remodeling journey today with a FREE home consultation! Contact Apex at 850-424-6062 or manager@ apexhomedesign.com. You can also visit the showroom, located at 4641 E HWY 20, Niceville. Apex Design Center services Niceville, Destin, Fort Walton Beach and nearby areas.

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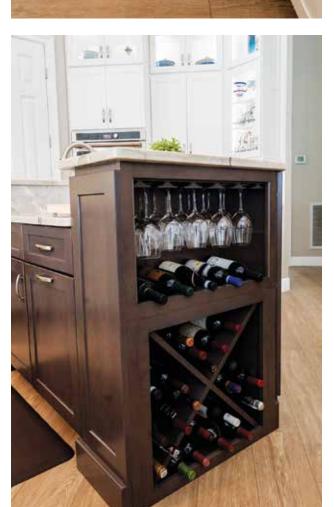
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Golf Series: The Emerald Coast Golf Tour Rolls On!

By Barbara Palmgren

Summer is here and golfers are teeing up their shots and hoping for a hole-in-one, a low round, a 50-ft. putt and/or all

the bragging rights that can be to the PGA tour, you begin with shared on the 19th hole. If you are a low handicap golfer and dreaming of making it to the Korn Ferry Tour and ultimately

winning on tours such as the Emerald Coast Golf Tour.

For most of these tournaments, the three-day event begins with a Pro-Am tournament on the first day followed by tournament play for the next two days. June 4-6, 2025, found golf hopefuls at Shalimar Pointe Golf Course. On July 15-17, they will enter another tournament at Kelly Plantation followed by competition in August at Aroostook Golf Course in Montgomery, Ala., and Quail Hollow Golf Club in McComb, Miss.

The Emerald Coast Golf Tour is owned and directed by Geno Celano from Destin who organized these tournaments over 30 years ago. A professional golfer, Geno knew that competition like this needs to be offered in the Panhandle area and nearby states.

The winning team during the first day of the Pro-Am competition was the team of Jacob hill, Chris Iron, John Sykes and Joe Frye. They posted a -6 score to leave with bragging rights. In this event with a four-person team, where the top two scores for each team were entered for scoring.

The next two days, the game



got even more serious at this challenging golf course. Players from as far as Canada and Tennessee were focused on winning first place and a large pay-out. At the end of a very warm twoday grind, the top three players emerged victorious:

- 1st Place: Mitchell Bowen from Tennessee with a score of 999(+4)
- 2nd Place: Gary Glassman from Alabama with a score of 221 (+5)
- 3rd Place: Marco Trstenjak from Winnipeg Canada with a score of 225 (+9)

Congratulations, gentlemen! Hunting low scores is a lure that continues to draw players to competition with other golfers and the golf course itself.

DePaul, Drake, Georgia Tech, LSU Headline **Emerald Coast Classic**

The 2025 Emerald Coast Classic basketball tournament, presented by Global Sports, will be played Thanksgiving weekend Nov. 28-29 at Raider Arena on the campus of Northwest Florida State College.

DePaul will face Georgia Tech in a semifinal round game at 6 p.m. central time on Friday, Nov. 28, while Drake will play LSU at 8:30 p.m. The third-place game will be played at 3 p.m. on Saturday Nov. 29 with the championship game scheduled for 6 p.m. that Saturday.

Both of the semifinal round games as well as the championship game will be televised on CBS Sports Network.

LSU will be making its second appearance in the Emerald Coast Classic, claiming the 2021 title after beating Wake Forest, 75-61, in the championship. Matt McMahon enters his fourth year as head coach welcoming an incoming transfer class that is ranked No. 16 by 247sports.

Drake is coming off a school-record 31-4 mark, sweeping the Missouri Valley Conference regular season and tournament titles along with a trip to the second round of the 2025 NCAA Tournament. Eric Henderson was named the school's 31st head coach March 28.

Georgia Tech, under third-year coach Damon

LARGEST SELECTION OF STREET LEGAL CARTS

Stoudamire, posted a 17-17 record last season, advancing to the National Invitational Tournament.

In his inaugural year as head coach Chris Holtmann guided DePaul to the first round of the 2025 College Basketball Crown, marking the school's first appearance in the postseason tournament since the 2018-19 season. Holtmann led Ohio State to the 2023 Emerald Coast Classic championship.

Global Sports has produced 57 multi-team college basketball tournaments since 2007. Tickets will go on sale for the tournament later this summer. For more information visit, www.emeraldcoastclassic.com.







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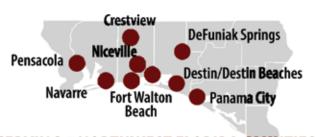
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Wellness

A Position of Strength: Why Health and Fitness Are the Ultimate Signs of Strength in Leadership



By Kassia Garfield

today's fast-paced, high-pressure world, leadership is often associated with intellect, strategy and vision. But one of the most underappreciated – yet incredibly powerful - ways a leader can demonstrate strength is by promoting health and embodying fitness. Being physically and mentally healthy doesn't just benefit the individual; it sets the tone for an entire organization or team. When leaders prioritize wellness, they send a clear, lasting message: strength starts from within. Prioritizing wellness is not just sending out emails about health, stretching during the workday or trying to start step count competitions. It is allowing your staff to be healthy DURING the day. This means 2-3 hours a week of time during the day to walk, work

out or go to a fitness class. This is putting the money where the priority is. As a company, showing and demonstrating health, is just as important as allowing staff to be healthy.

Health is the Foundation of Performance.

Leadership requires stamina – not just mental, but physical. Long hours, tough decisions and high-stakes situations demand resilience, and that resilience is rooted in physical well-being. A healthy leader can show up consistently, think clearly under pressure and maintain energy throughout the day. It's not about having a six-pack or running marathons (though that's impressive); it's about having the capacity to lead with clarity, focus and presence.

When leaders take care of their bodies – through regular exercise, proper nutrition, and rest – they perform better. They're more alert in meetings, more composed during crises and more able to handle the emotional weight of leadership. That kind of endurance communicates true strength, not just in words, but in action. This is setting the example, but if a more focused and healthier

work force increases productivity, job satisfaction and workforce retention, creating the time during the day for your employees really shows that dedication and investment in their health just as much as your own.

Actions Speak Louder than Words.

People follow what leaders do, not just what they say. If you want a culture of well-being, you must live it. Leaders who prioritize their health inspire others to do the same. It's easy to tell a team to manage stress less or to take care of themselves, but when employees see their leader hitting the gym, taking walking meetings or setting boundaries for work-life balance, it becomes part of the culture.

Healthy leaders also tend to create healthier workplaces. They encourage work environments that don't glorify burnout. They model balance and productivity, showing that it's possible to succeed without sacrificing personal well-being. This, in turn, increases team morale, engagement and retention

Fitness Fuels Discipline and Confidence.

One of the core traits of ef-

fective leadership is discipline. Fitness builds that. Whether it's committing to a daily workout, waking up early to train or pushing through discomfort during a tough session, those habits translate directly into professional leadership. They demonstrate commitment, follow-through, and perseverance – qualities any great leader needs.

Plus, there's a psychological edge to being in shape. A fit leader often walks into the room with more confidence, not just because of how they look, but because they know they've earned that strength. That quiet confidence is contagious. It radiates competence, self-control and presence — qualities that followers respect and gravitate toward.

Strong Position: Strong Leaders are Healthy Leaders.

Leadership isn't just about making the right calls — it's about inspiring others to bring their best selves to the table. A

healthy leader sets the example, creating a ripple effect that influences team culture, energy and productivity. Fitness is more than a personal goal; it's a leadership tool. And leadership can look different in the work place than just being a CEO, a manager or a supervisor. Leadership is helping your friend, training a new employee, understanding what a coworker needs without asking for it. So, even if you are not in a formal position of leadership, that doesn't mean people do not see the strength in people around them. One never knows who they might inspire. In a world that needs more strength, clarity and resilience, the healthiest leaders will always stand out. They don't just talk about strength – they live it.

At MaxStrength Fitness we cater to busy professionals. In just 20 minutes, twice a week, we can jump start your transformation and help start healthy goals today. Give us a call at 850-373-4450 for a free consultation and demo workout.







PTSD and the Healing Brain:

Understanding Trauma and Emerging Treatments



By Melanie Yost

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a brain health diagnosis that develops after someone experiences or witnesses a traumatic event involving a threat to the personal safety of self or others. While it's often associated with military combat and first responder situations. PTSD can affect anyone—survivors of abuse, accidents, natural disasters, medical trauma or violence. It's not about weakness: it's about how the brain and body respond to overwhelming stress.

PTSD symptoms fall into four main categories: intrusive mem-

ories (like flashbacks or nightmares), avoidance of reminders, negative changes in thinking or mood, and hyperarousal (feeling constantly on edge or easily startled). For a diagnosis, these symptoms must last more than a month and cause significant distress or impairment. Many people with PTSD also experience depression, anxiety or substance use as they try to manage overwhelming feelings.

Anyone can develop PTSD, but certain factors increase risk. These include a history of trauma, lack of social support, chronic stress, or previous brain health conditions. First responders, veterans, abuse survivors, and even children or caregivers can experience PTSD. Not everyone who faces trauma develops PTSD, but for those who do, the impact can be life-altering without support.

So, what happens in the brain? Trauma disrupts normal brain function. The amygdala (fear center) becomes overactive, while the prefrontal cortex (thinking and regulation) becomes underactive. The hippocampus, which helps differentiate past from present, often shrinks. These changes make it difficult for the brain to accurately process danger, contributing to flashbacks, emotional dysregulation (inability to effectively manage emotions), and hypervigilance. Chronic inflammation and disrupted communication between brain regions also contribute to symptoms.

Traditional treatments for PTSD include trauma-focused therapy (like EMDR or cognitive processing therapy) and medications such as antidepressants. While these help many people, others struggle to find relief. Fortunately, innovative treatments like ketamine therapy and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) are offering new hope.

Ketamine therapy works differently than traditional antidepressants. Originally developed as an anesthetic, ketamine is

now recognized for its rapid-acting antidepressant and anti-trauma effects. It works by blocking NMDA receptors in the brain, which increases glutamate and boosts brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF). This neuroplasticityjumpstarts helping the brain form new connections and "rewire" from trauma. Many patients experience fast relief from symptoms like depression, intrusive thoughts and suicidal ideation after just a few sessions.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) is another promising treatment. During HBOT, patients breathe 100% oxygen in a pressurized chamber, increasing oxygen delivery to the brain and body. This reduces neuroinflammation, promotes healing, and improves blood flow to damaged areas of the brain. Research, especially with veterans, shows HBOT can improve mood, reduce anxiety, enhance sleep and restore cognitive function in PTSD patients.

While neither ketamine nor HBOT is a cure-all, they are powerful tools that can help trauma survivors find relief when traditional methods fall short. As our understanding of PTSD grows, so does our ability to support healing—not just through talk therapy or medication, but by addressing the physical, neurological, and emotional roots of trauma. With compassionate care and innovative therapies, recovery is not only possible—it's within reach. If you or someone you love is exploring options for healing, we invite you to reach out and learn more about how we can help.

Melanie Yost is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and owner of Be Well Solutions and Complete Ketamine Solutions in Destin. She has been in the healthcare field for more than 35 years and can be reached at (850) 786-2051.



DEPRESSION/ ANXIETY

PTSD

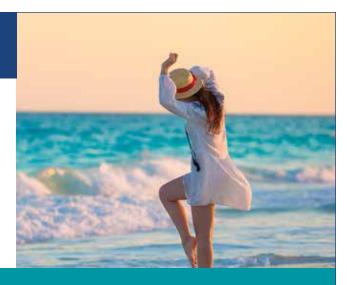
CHRONIC INFLAMMATION

THERE IS HOPE...

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By Stephenie Craig

Are you overscheduled? Perhaps you're rushing, exhausted and regretting your full calendar. Maybe commitments are positive like kid activities, time with friends, volunteer work, a celebration. However, when those events become the reality of your week and month, you want more time to just be with people, to be with yourself, to slow down and be present in the

Your Whole-Hearted Yes

Saying too many yeses is tempting with many options and cultural encouragement to be involved or be left behind. Saying yes feels good and comes from a genuine place, but excessive yeses create feelings of regret and resentment regarding your time. Excessive yeses are a result of poor boundaries, guilt, fear of disappointing others, fear of being judged by others, obligation, proving your worth, fear of missing out, trying to earn approval, and attempting to keep yourself and others from experiencing uncomfortable feelings.

While saying no is healthy, it can be scary and hard. Saying no can upset people, result in missing out and creates uncomfortable feelings. However, learning to say no opens the pathway to your whole-hearted yes. Your whole-hearted yeses are com-

mitments in alignment with your deep values and purpose. You can find your whole-hearted yeses by imagining you are at your life's end reflecting back on how you spent your time. What yeses feel worthwhile? What yeses might you regret? Will you feel good about doing 10 things with exhaustion and obligation? Will you feel better about doing three things with presence, connection and meaning?

Saying no and embracing your whole-hearted yeses allows you to release overwhelming stress. Your no's allow you to embrace simple joys and be present in your life. Saying no creates space to notice the vibrant color of the sky, the squirrel in the yard, the unfiltered laugh of a child, the snuggle of a pet, the flirty smile of your significant other. Your no's create space to appreciate rest, creativity, nature, unrushed conversation and your spiritual life. No makes way for the beauty of your deep and profound yes. So, how do you begin the journey to your whole-hearted yes?

Five Ways to Find Your Whole-Hearted Yes

1. Evaluate your schedule. Look at your week/month. Notice how you feel. Are you exhausted? Do you have a sense

of dread about commitments? Are you wishing for quality time for things that matter most to you? If yes, acknowledge it's time for a change.

2. Begin cutting long-term commitments. Think through how many commitments you'd like to have on any week/weekend to feel balanced. Discuss with your family. Determine which current commitments are keepers based on your values and desired number of healthy commitments. Decide which

commitments go. Perhaps each child has a limit on extra-curricular activities. Maybe you don't renew your membership on a board or social group. Maybe you volunteer for one very important cause instead of five moderately important causes. This won't be easy and you will likely find sacrifice is required to create more margin.

3. Start saying no to short-term commitments. If you have decided you want no more than two weeknight commitments and two weekend commitments, once you've used up your whole-hearted yeses, no is the answer to other opportunities. Or swap one opportunity for another so you are holding your boundary on commitments.

4. Process your uncomfortable feelings. You might feel guilt, fear of missing out, fear of upsetting others. These feelings are normal and you can feel them and remember your whole-hearted yes to fewer high priority commitments is worth much more in the world

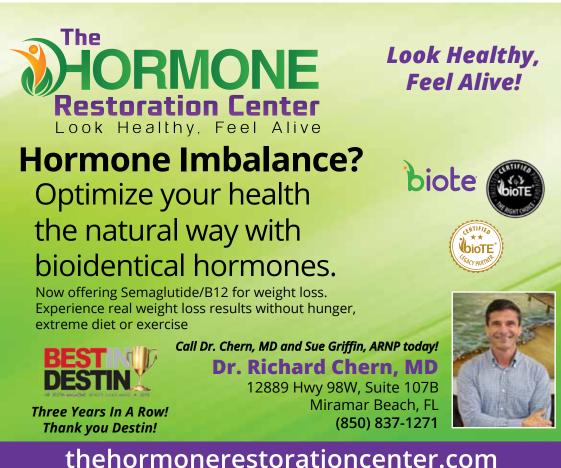
than your exhausted, resentful half-hearted, over-committed yes. Also, remember you are the only person who can set boundaries for yourself in the pursuit

of joy and purpose.

5. Unapologetically communicate your whole-hearted yeses and your healthy no's to others. People who don't respect your healthy no's are not respecting your boundaries. You have no reason to be ashamed of wanting to give whole-hearted yeses. People in your life can learn to hear, "Thank you so much for the invitation. I appreciate your thoughtfulness. I won't be able to join the event due to other commitments."

Embracing your no and your whole-hearted yes can feel difficult at first. However, over time, it brings joy and flourishing to your life and relationships. Connect with us for counseling and coaching support along your journey at Journeybravely.com.











By Kay Leaman, HealthyDay HealthyLife

I have to admit upfront that I found myself wading through science when I jumped down the rabbit hole. Electromagnetic Fields are a part of modern life. But, that doesn't mean we should accept their potential risks without question. By understanding them and how they affect our bodies, we can take steps to minimize our exposure thus improving our health.

EM spectrum, EM waves, EM induction, EM energy, EM radiation (EMR), EM field, EM pulse and EM force are all parts of this field of study. We will be focusing on EM Spectrum (Classified electromagnetic waves on the basic of frequency or wave length). There are seven bands: Gamma Rays discovered in 1896, X-Rays discovered in 1895, Ultra Violet Rays discovered in 1801, Visible Rays (visible by people and contains seven colors), Infra-Red Waves produced by hot bodies or by excitation of atoms and molecules, Micro-Waves are oscillating electrons in a cavity or by special vacuum tubes and Radio-Waves which are the longest to all waves produced by oscillating charge in the circuit.

Fun Facts:

EMR can travel through empty space.

Not all forms of EMR are harmful.

EMR, other than visible light, can be used to view an object. For example, bees use ultraviolet waves to help them see patterns on flowers.

We use EMF waves for seeing, talking (light) on phones and watching tv (radio waves), cooking (micro waves), staying warm (infrared) and getting sunlight (ultraviolet). Our lives are improved through new technology and health care. All EMFs transfer energy. When the energy is absorbed by matter, it is convert-

The Impact of EMF Radiation

ed into heat which causes the particles to vibrate more rapidly. This is important, because all life, including humans, have different vibration levels, and when we interact with these invisible waves, there can be changes.

High energy radiation includes x-rays, gamma rays and some higher energy ultraviolet (UV) rays. This is called ionizing radiation, meaning this energy can affect cells on the atomic level by removing an electron from an atom, or ionizing it. Ionizing radiation can damage the body's DNA and cells which may contribute to genetic mutations such as cancer.

Low energy frequency (ELF) radiation is non-ionizing radiation. It can move atoms around in the body or make them vibrate. But, most researchers agree that it's not enough to damage our DNA or cells. These frequencies include phones, smart meters, tablets, laptops and computers. It also includes radios, TV signals, radar, satellite stations and MRI machines. Note that non-ionizing EMFs in the radio frequency range, noted as Group B's, have the possibility to become a human carcinogen. This group includes cell phones, smart devices, tablets, etc.

When reading the above paragraph, you'll note the conflict in statements. That is because the danger is in the length of time the device is in close proximity to the body. People wear their phones, lap their laptops or hold their tablets, etc. Research has links to glioma, a malignant type of brain cancer, increased risk of acute myeloid leukemia (AML) in adults and a 1.5 - 5% of childhood leukemia can be attributed to ELF EMFs.

In our homes we have televisions, wifi, routers, devices such as Apple TV, appliances, lighting, etc. Did you know that even when our lamps are off they still emit ELFs, that can be measured by a meter?

So, what can we do about it? Workstations: Use wired internet connections vs. bluetooth. Keep routers and other EMF sources as far away as possible. Opt for incandescent or LED lights vs. fluorescent lighting which can emit harmful frequency waves.

Auto EMFs, a driving concern: Turn off bluetooth and WIFI when it's not needed. You

can also disable this feature from your car's settings. Avoid using in-car entertainment systems for long periods of time. If you drive an electric car, consider getting a seat cover that blocks the EMFs coming from the battery you are sitting on.

Smart use of smart phones

and tablets: Use the speakerphone or wired headsets to keep the phone away from your head. Use a bag or purse instead of pockets to carry your phone. Switch your device to airplane mode when not in use, especially when you sleep. Cut down exposure by downloading content such as books, music and videos while on airplane mode.

Be aware of EMF sources in our environment and understand the symptoms of EMF sensitivity.

Make simple adjustments by

Continued on page 30

Bluewater

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Local Entrepreneur Brings D1 Training to Niceville

Former Coach and Father of Three Opens State-of-the-Art Fitness Facility for Youth and Adult Athletes

D1 Training, a leading fitness enrichment concept utilizing the five core tenets of athletic-based training, has opened a new location in Niceville at 4544 Hwy. 20 E. on 12 May 2025. The new group fitness facility employs a sports-science backed training regimen led by certified trainers to help people of all ages achieve their sport and fitness

Steven Killebrew will join

a roster of impressive existing franchisees, including professional athletes such as Kylie Fitts and Jordan Gay. Additional franchise partners include notable figures such as Super Bowl MVP Von Miller, Tim Tebow and Michael Oher.

Killebrew, a University of Florida graduate, began his career at Elgin Air Force base before spending two years in Africa as a missionary with Youth For Christ. After returning, he became a math teacher and soccer coach at Niceville High School, blending his passion for education with athletics. Later, he moved into franchising, joining his wife and the rest of the Costa Family in McDonald's, where he honed his business skills. When considering his next venture, Killebrew wanted to align his career with his lifelong passion for sports and youth

development. Seeing how dedicated his three active children are in athletics, Killebrew was especially drawn to D1

Training's commitment to helping young athletes reach their potential, making it the perfect next chapter.

"When I started thinking about what was next, I knew I wanted to own a business where people could come together to support their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being," said Killebrew. "With D1, athletes not only have the opportunity to train toward their athletic goals, but they also build the confidence needed to succeed in all aspects of life beyond sports." D1 Niceville opened in May with close to 200 members of adults and youth. "I love the sense of community and team that has already developed in the adult and youth classes," said Killebrew. Speaking of his staff, he stated "People are ultimately what make the D1 experience come to life. I am so grateful for the level of knowledge and talent here on the D1 Niceville team led by General



Manager Dennis Ealy and Head Coach Cotten who will positively impact every adult and youth athlete that comes through the doors."

D1 Training offers four age-based programs including Rookie (ages 7-11), Developmental (ages 12-14), Prep (ages 15-18) and D1 Adult. Each fitness program is based on the five athletic-based tenets: dvnamic warm-up, performance, strength program, core and conditioning and cool down. Outside of group workouts, D1 Training offers team training, semi-private and one-onone training with world-class coaches. The goal is simple: to continue to train athletes who are dedicated to their sport or fitness goals, regardless of age or athletic background.

"Steven is the ideal candidate to bring the D1 Training experience to Niceville," said the brand's Chief Operating Officer, Dan Murphy. "We're thrilled to welcome him to the D1 family and are confident in his ability to show the Niceville area what they've been missing out on. D1 is a one-of-akind fitness experience that's built around the individual and meant to help people meet their athletic goals. Our strong network of franchisees embodies our core values to bring the D1 Training vision to life, and we know Steven will do just that in Niceville and its surrounding communities."

Strategically expanding across the nation through franchising, D1 Training has more than 100 performance centers open with over 250 additional locations in various stages of development.

For more information, visit https://www.dltraining.com/ niceville/ or call (850) 605-8431.









Hurricane Season Is Here—Are You Prepared?

Essential Tips for Homeowners

By Byron Toups

As hurricane season approaches, it's more important than ever to ensure your family and home are ready for whatever Mother Nature may bring. Storms can be unpredictable, but with the right preparation and knowledge, you can minimize risks and protect what matters most. Here's a comprehensive guide to help you get started.

1. Plan Ahead: Your Family's Safety Comes First

- Create an Emergency Plan. Start by sitting down with your family to discuss what to do in case of a hurricane. Make sure everyone knows the emergency contacts, including fire, police, family, neighbors, friends, tree services, utility companies, and your insurance agent.
- Develop a Communication Strategy. Choose someone outside the danger zone as your central contact. Use text messages during the storm, as they often work even when calls don't. If all else fails, communicate through social media.
- Decide on Meeting Locations. Pick safe spots both inside and outside your neighborhood where you can meet if you get separated or if an evacuation order is issued.
- Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit. Stock up on essentials like water, non-perishable food, medications, flashlights, batteries, and first aid supplies. Plan for at least three days' worth of supplies.
- Practice Your Plan. Run through your emergency plan with your family so everyone knows what to do and where to

2. Stay Informed: Knowledge Is Power

- Set Up Multiple Alert Systems. Don't rely on just one source for weather updates. Purchase a NOAA weather radio (preferably with a hand crank), enable wireless emergency alerts on your cell phone, and follow reliable weather apps or websites.
- Monitor Updates Regularly. Keep an eye on forecasts from the National Hurricane Center and your local National Weather Service office. Follow them on social media for real-time updates.



• Know Your Location. Familiarize yourself with your county and location on a map. This will help you understand evacuation routes and local warnings.

3. Review Insurance and Document Belongings.

- Check Your Insurance Coverage. Review your homeowner's insurance policy to understand what is and isn't covered. Keep your insurance agent's contact information in your phone and in a safe, accessible place offsite.
- Create a Home Inventory. Use your cell phone to video each room of your house, including the contents of cabinets and closets. Make a detailed list of your belongings and store the video and list in the cloud for safekeeping.
- Why It Matters. A thorough home inventory can speed up the claims process and ensure you receive fair compensation if your home is damaged.

4. Inspect and Repair Your Roof.

- Hire a Licensed Professional. Have your roof inspected by a trusted and licensed roofing company. They will check for damaged or loose shingles, tiles, or panels, as well as issues with vents, skylights, and chimneys.
- Look for Warning Signs. Pay attention to curling, loose, missing, or torn shingles; cracked or unattached tiles; dents, loose screws, or rust on metal panels; and leaks around vents, skylights, and chimneys.
- Address Problems Promptly. Repairing minor issues now can prevent major damage

during a storm.

5. Secure Soffits

- Use Stainless Steel Screws. Attach soffit material securely to the fascia and channels using stainless steel screws.
- Apply Sealant. Use polyurethane sealant over the screws and allow it to dry for 72 hours. This extra step helps protect your home from wind and water damage.

Why Choose a Fortified Roof? The Gold Standard in Storm Protection

RoofPro Roofing is proud to be the area's only provider of Fortified Roofing—a system designed to meet the strictest standards for wind and storm resistance.

Fortified roofs are built with enhanced features such as sealed roof decks, ring-shank nails and impact-resistant shingles, providing superior protection during hurricanes and severe weather.

The Science Behind Fortified Roofs: Proven Results

Recent research highlights the effectiveness of Fortified construction:

A groundbreaking study by the Center for Risk and Insurance Research (CRIR) at the University of Alabama examined over 40,000 properties affected by Hurricane Sally. The findings are clear: homes built to the IBHS FORTIFIED standard were 70% less likely to have an insurance claim compared to traditional construction.

Peer-reviewed and real-world

tested, the study confirmed that FORTIFIED homes suffered significantly less damage and required fewer insurance claims. When a claim was filed on a FORTIFIED home, the average damage was 22% less severe than on a standard home.

The financial impact is equally impressive. The report estimates that if every affected home had been built to the FORTIFIED Roof standard, total damage would have been reduced by more than \$147 million—saving homeowners \$42 million and insurers \$105.6 million in losses.

Even more compelling: Homes with a FORTIFIED Roof designation outperformed homes roofed to building codes with very similar requirements by nearly 40%. This demon-

strates the importance of the program's rigorous documentation and review process, ensuring that every Fortified Roof meets the highest standards.

Take Action Today: Protect Your Home and Family.

Don't wait until the storm is on the horizon. By planning ahead, staying informed, and investing in a Fortified Roof from RoofPro Roofing, you can enjoy peace of mind knowing your home is built to withstand even the toughest storms.

Ready to protect your home? Contact RoofPro Roofing today for a free estimate and learn more about Fortified Roofing solutions! Your family's safety and your home's resilience are worth it. Call 850-332-3330.







By Carolyn Newcomer KETCHEL

Okaloosa County, in partnership with Waste Managementthe largest recycler in North America—is committed to recycling. Items like cardboard, cereal boxes and plastic bottles placed in your bin begin a recycling journey, transforming into new products such as clothing, shipping boxes, and playground equipment.

What else can recycled materials be turned into? A variety of new paper products such as carboard boxes, napkins and printer paper, pellets for packing, new cans for soda, fabrics and even carpet. Did you know that the carpet at VPS Airport is recycled fishing line? Check out blue carpet the next time you are in the Airport!

When visiting the local recy-



cling facility on Ready Avenue in Fort Walton Beach recently, it was interesting that so much of the process is automated and uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to sort products. Thousands of tons of products are processed each day. To watch a quick video of the machines in action, type https://bit.ly/RecycleRightinOkaloosa into your search

Recycling

browser. It's amazing!

The drivers pick up your recyclables and take them to the plant to sort. The material is loaded into a drum feeder for the first stage of sorting. Optical Sensors use AI Technology that takes over to sort glass, aluminum, paper and plastics. After the materials are collected, sorted and baled, they are sold to manufacturers to be used again. This is crucial to advancing a circular economy where products can be used again and again. Waste Management is committed to insuring a more sustainable tomorrow.

Here are four simple tips to help you recycle correctly:

- · Recycle clean bottles, cans, paper, plastic containers (#1, #2, #5) and cardboard.
- Flatten all cardboard and paper board for recycling.

• Keep batteries, propane tanks, liquids and food out of your recycling.

• Do not bag your recyclables. Plastic trash bags are a big issue at the plant. Please do not place plastic trash bags in your recycling nor use plastic bags to contain your recyclable materi-

The most important takeaway from this newsletter is this: please do not put anything into plastic trash bags or take-home grocery bags. Recyclables stuck inside plastic bags are at risk for never making it through the recycling process.

Things that should not go into your curbside recycling bin are:

- Flexible packaging like chip bags and juice or soup pouches
- · Cups with plastic or waxed coatings – even the plastic lids should be trashed

- Polystyrene foam "to-go" containers and cups
- Tanglers or twists like old rope, cord, or water hoses can wrap around equipment, endanger workers and shut down entire recycling centers.
- Clothing, textiles, shower curtains, mini-pools, fencing and furniture
- Medical waste, car parts, scrap metal, tires, oil filters, propane cylinders and the like pose a safety hazard and should never go in curbside recycling or waste

Remember, recycling works when we work together as a community!

Carolyn Ketchel is Okaloosa County Commissioner, District 2, Vice-Chairman 2024-2025. Contact her at CKetchel@myokaloosa.com or 850-651-7105.

Tips to Safely Co-Exist With Alligators

er across the state and alligator mating season approaches, Flor-

As the weather gets warm- ida's state reptile, the American alligator, can become more active and visible.

The American alligator is a conservation success story in Florida. Florida has a healthy

and stable alligator population, which is estimated at 1.3 million alligators of every size. Alligators are found in all 67 counties, inhabiting all wetlands where there's adequate food and shel-

> Serious injuries caused by alligators are rare in Florida. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) works to keep Floridians and visitors informed and recommends the following precautionary measures near alligators, including in or near the water, to reduce the chances of conflict:

> Keep a safe distance if you see an alligator. If someone is concerned about an alligator, they should call FWC's toll-free Nuisance Alligator Hotline at 866-FWC-GATOR (866-392-4286), and we will dispatch a contracted nuisance alligator trapper to resolve the situation.

Keep pets on a leash and away from the water's edge. Pets



often resemble alligators' natural

Swim only in designated swimming areas during daylight hours and without your pet. Alligators are most active between dusk and dawn.

Never feed an alligator. It's illegal and dangerous. When fed, alligators can lose their natural wariness and instead learn to associate people with the availability of food. This can lead to an alligator becoming a nuisance and needing to be removed from the wild.

Access safety information resources in both English and Spanish by visiting MyFWC. com/Alligatorand clicking on "Living with Alligators."



IMPACT OF EMF

continued from page 27

implementing practical tips like turning off WIFI at night, use wired devices when available and keep all electronics out of the bedroom.

Focus on making your home a sanctuary to rest and rejuvenate, free from EMF intrusion.

Stay educated and up to date with the latest research and safety practices.

The more we know the better equipped we are to take charge of what we eat, drink and expose ourselves to. Here's to Health! succeed.hdhl@gmail.com

www.golfemeraldcoast.com | www.eaglespringsgolf.com

Environment

Animals at the Beach

By Helen Petre

The beach is a hard place to live. It is constantly bombarded by wind and waves. There is no place to hide except in the sand because there are no plants and there is little to eat. Yet, organisms are successful at living there. Coquina and sand fleas, or mole crabs, are common in the swash zone on Walton County beaches, as shown in the Florida Fish and Wildlife photo. Coquina are clams, and a significant food source for sandpipers and plovers. Sand fleas are crustaceans, like crabs and lobsters. They do not bite. They eat decaying matter and are excellent bait for pompano. Coquina and mole crabs are indicators of healthy beaches.

Ghost crabs (Ocypode quadrata) dig burrows four feet deep in order to reach the water table and keep their gills wet. Their white color blends in with the white quartz sand, and they are amazingly fast. Ghost crabs come out at night to eat dead things the tide has washed in. They also eat sea turtle eggs. They would drown in the surf.

Pinfish, (Lagodon rhomboides) are the most common bait fish caught in seines or dip nets in sea grass beds along the coast. E.O. Wilson lost the vision in his right eye at the age of seven when a pinfish he caught jumped up and hit him in the eye.

Blue crabs turn red when cooked. Besides humans, crabs are food for sharks, rays, and large fish. They eat small fish, like pinfish, and other crustaceans, like mole crabs, and clams, like coquina. They even eat detritus, plants, and animal waste.

All these animals can be easily seen on the beach or in the surf.

The beach is a great place to visit, but to many animals, it is home.

Helen Petre is a retired USDA biologist and college biology professor. She spends her time volunteering, teaching and writing science articles to share her interests with future generations.







Pinfish. Wikipedia.



Blue crab (Callinectes sapidus) is a native swimming crab, unlike the ghost crab, which lives on the sand and would drown in the surf.



Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Ghost crab.



Florida Fish and Wildlife photo

of Donax variables (coquina) and

Female crab with wide apron like the dome of the United States Capitol.



Male crab with skinny, pointy apron, like the Washington Monument.

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.



Call today to schedule a personal FREE consultation

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A Pastor's Pondering:

A Heritage Worth Preserving (July 4, 2025)



By Pastor Doug Stauffer

As our nation prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday next year (1776-2026), every American should take a moment to reflect on the spiritual foundation laid by our forefathers. Their timeless words echo the eternal truths found in the Bible. These were not idle musings; they were convictions shaped by a profound reverence for God and His Holy Word.

Patrick Henry once declared, "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians." This truth resonates directly with Scripture: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12). The health of

America has always depended upon the spiritual heartbeat of the faithful. The Bible declares, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). When Christ is central in any society, righteousness exalts that nation.

Washington af-George firmed, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." Without the guidance (the light) of Scripture, a nation loses its direction and forfeits its God-given blessings. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). Washington understood that leadership without God's guidance is like a ship without a rudder. The Bible provides the moral clarity and divine direction that every leader and citizen needs. America's problem today is clear: God and the Bible have been pushed out of public discourse, and efforts intensify to silence those who still unapologetically proclaim His truth.

John Adams, our second president, wrote, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." Morality without the Word of God is like building on shifting sand. The Bible says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). Laws alone cannot restrain a corrupt heart. Only hearts transformed by God's truth will consistently uphold liberty.

Noah Webster, known as the father of American education, once said, "The Bible is the chief moral cause of all that is good, and the best book for regulating the concerns of men." The Bible declares, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Webster believed the Bible was not merely informative but truly transformative. Education without the Word of God lacks the power to shape intellect and form godly character. The founders recognized these truths. And let us be reminded: Education without salvation ensures eternal damnation. Knowledge alone cannot redeem a soul—only Christ can do that. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

America's founding was not perfect because flawed men built it, but most of the founders



were grounded in a perfect Savior. They acknowledged divine providence and sought wisdom from above. As we approach our nation's 250th anniversary, let us recommit ourselves to the faith that shaped our past and must guide our future—if it is to be bright and blessed.

Let us never forget the words of our first President: "The foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality." Washington's thoughts were undoubtedly rooted in Scripture. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

May we do what the righteous can do—pray, proclaim, and persevere. These United States are worth the sacrifice and commitment. Our heritage is not only American; it is also spiritual, and America is worth saving

with the help of Almighty God.

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





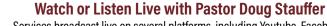
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Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

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Sean of the South



By Sean Dietrich

"Why do we celebrate the Fourth of July?" my 6-year-old niece asked me.

We were by the swimming pool. It was the perfect afternoon. The sky was Technicolor blue. The smell of Kingsford smoke was in the air. In the distance some hapless teen with a mullet haircut was attempting to shoot a bottle rocket from a well-known orifice of his body.

At first, I wasn't sure how to answer my niece's question. At least not in a way she would understand.

After all, this particular American holiday is a grandiose thing. How do you describe to a 6-year-old the significance of Old Glory, Purple Mountains Majesty and the inexpressible splendor of Dale Earnhardt Sr.?

"Well, sweetie," I said. "That's a good question..."

But then I sort of drew a blank. Why DO we celebrate the Fourth?

I suddenly realized I know less about this American holiday than I thought I did. In fact, one could say that I don't know Shinola about the Fourth of July.

And apparently I'm not alone. Because I conducted an informal study wherein I asked students in Mrs. Anderson's Sunday school class why we celebrate this uniquely American holiday.

Here are some answers I re-

John, 11, said, "It was the French or something."

Eilene, 9, "That's when we won the war against Mexico. No wait. I mean China."

Benji, 9, "Because that's when we do the fireworks."

Ashley, 12, "We celebrate this holiday because in 1812, we signed a Treaty of Paris, and it just became a thing."

And my favorite answer of all comes from Landon, age 8, who answered with the utmost sincerity when he said: "It's when Diana Ross made our flag."

So all this got me thinking. Exactly how much do my fellow adults know about the Fourth of July? I posed the same question to grown-ups.

Pamela, 32, "Well, the Fourth of July is our nation's literal birthday, when all those guys signed the Consitution."

Anders, 63, said, "It's America's birthday. Everyone knows that. The Pilgrims and all that."

Emily, 21, "It's the anniversary of our nation, when the big war finally ended in Germany."

Robert, 39, "I can't remember which battle we won. The Revolution, maybe? All I know is that our nation is going to be 230 years old."

So we had some work to do.

Because the Fourth of July is not the date of a famous battle. Neither does it mark the beginning of the Revolutionary War, nor the ending. The Revolutionary War started on April 19, 1775 and ended September 3, 1783.

Neither is the Fourth of July the date of the writing of the Declaration of Independence, which was written between June 11 and June 28, 1776. The Declaration wasn't signed on July 4, either. It was signed on August 2.

Similarly, the Fourth has nothing to do with the Constitution, which was penned September 17, 1787. And no, July Fourth is not George Washington's birthday. It is, however, the



birthday of President Calvin Coolidge. Also, Geraldo Rivera.

The reason we celebrate this date is straightforward and simple.

On July 4, 1776, the 56 members of the Second Continental Congress officially adopted a document that confessed high treason against Great Britain.

It was a document the 13 colonies had been pleading for. A document that would change global history.

It was a humble manuscript, engrossed on animal skin, which took Thomas Jefferson 17 arduous days to draft. A declaration.

A document whose second paragraph reads, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..."

But the reason I personally celebrate this holiday is deeper than a sheet of parchment. I don't celebrate because we are the most powerful nation, or the most economically prosperous, or the country with the highest

funded military.

I celebrate the Fourth of July for one simple reason:

Because I love you. Plain and simple.

You see, being an American means that we live in a place where you and I are equals. Not metaphorically, not philosophically, but literally. It says so on

our founding document.

You matter as much as I do. This is true not only because it was written in the most beautiful English prose, by a deft hand. It's true because it's true.

So, I celebrate because, no matter who you are, no matter what you believe, no matter where you come from, no matter which language you speak, or who you marry, or what kind of wild stuff you post on social media, you're my brother. You're my sister. And I love you dearly.

And even though we don't always get along, even though we aggravate each other, you and I are on the same side. Our ancestors died proving it. And Thomas Jefferson put it in writing.

So, happy 249th birthday, America. And may God bless Diana Ross.









Upbeat Ideas for Music Learning this Summer

Summer break offers students a well-deserved rest from the demands of school, but for music students, it can also mean a loss of progress without consistent practice and instruction. Retaining musical skills over the summer requires thoughtful engagement, consistency, and creativity. Here are effective ways to help students maintain and even enhance their musical abilities during the summer months.

1. Establish a Flexible Practice Routine

While daily practice is ideal, it's important to keep it manageable and fun during the summer. A flexible schedule, perhaps 15 to 30 minutes, 3 days a week, can prevent skill regression without overwhelming the student. Encourage students to pick their own practice times and mix in pieces they enjoy. This approach builds autonomy and keeps their love for music alive.

2. Set Short-Term Goals

Setting small, achievable goals can give students a sense of direction. These might include learning a new song, mastering a tricky passage, or improving note reading. Short-term goals make summer practice feel purposeful and rewarding. Parents and teachers can help students outline these goals at the beginning of the break.



3. Explore New Music and Styles

Summer is a great time for musical exploration. The "Parents" website has great ideas to have music fun with your children: www.parents. com/preschool-music-activities-2764608. Students can be encouraged to learn songs from different genres or cultures, or to try writing their own songs. Or pull out that vintage record player and play some old LPs on it that you find at the thrift or online store.

4. Use Technology and Apps

There are numerous fun and interactive music apps and online tools designed to reinforce learning. From rhythm games to ear-training exercises, these tools can supplement regular practice and improve core skills. Websites such as www.classicsforkids.com/music-games, www.pbskids.org/games/music, www.insidetheorchestra. org/musical-games/#strings, and www.kids.carnegiehall.org/quizzes provide engaging interactive music games.

5. Participate in summer music events

Attending a music camp or live performance can be a transformative experience. Many of the local restaurants and family venues have live music daily during the summer with fun, memorable songs. Children glean lots of musical creativity by watching professional performers up close. These experiences can motivate students and encourage them when they return to lessons with renewed energy, creativity, and perspective.

6. Perform Informally

Encouraging students to perform for family, friends, or at community events can keep them engaged. These low-pressure performances help develop confidence and give students a reason to keep practicing. Recording performances and sharing them can also serve as both a motivational tool and a keep-sake of their progress.

7. Involve Family and Friends

Support from family can make a big difference. Parents don't need to be musicians themselves, they can show interest by asking questions, listening to practice sessions, or helping set up a practice schedule. Peer practice or jam sessions with friends can also keep the experience social and enjoyable. Or try writing a song together.

Maintaining musical progress over the summer doesn't have to require intense discipline. By keeping practice enjoyable and integrating music into daily life, students can return to their regular lessons refreshed and possibly more advanced than when they left. With the right approach, summer break can be a bridge to greater musical growth.

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Northwest Florida Ballet Academy Registration Now Open!

Register now for the School 2025/26 season. Classes begin Aug. 4 and run through May for K-12 students, with adult classes offered year-round. Pre-School Ballet is also provided weekly for 45 minutes, Aug.-Dec and Jan.-May. All classes are taught by experienced dancers and teachers who make dance exciting and engaging. A student concert is held each May at the Mattie Kelly Arts Center. Ask about 2025 summer Pre-School Ballet classes, a camp for students K-2, and adult classes. To learn more or register online, visit NFBallet. org/Classes.dates, financial education or career opportunities.

OAA Celebrates Student Creativity at 16th Annual Poster Contest

The Okaloosa Arts Alliance (OAA) recently hosted its 16th Annual Okaloosa County School Poster Contest, themed "Arts in Outer Space," featuring 138 imaginative entries from students across the county. A

public reception was held on May 4 at the Emerald Coast Science Center to showcase the artwork and honor the winners.

Special thanks to the Science Center for hosting, Melissa Forte Litscher of NextHome Cornerstone Realty for sponsoring, and Eglin Federal Credit Union for providing gift cards. HH Arts, the Arts & Design Society, and the Science Center also donated art supplies and tickets for top winners and Viewer's Choice recipients.

Participating schools included Rocky Bayou Christian, Crestview High, Kenwood Elementary, Montessori Learning Center, Village Christian Academy, Risen Star Academy, St. Mary Catholic, Meigs Middle, and Ruckel Middle School.

Winners: Elementary (K-4th)

- 1st: Christine Blatz, 1st grade – Montessori Learning Center
- 2nd: Rachel Ard, Kindergarten Montessori Learning Center
- 3rd: Alexa Gonzalez, 4th grade Kenwood Elementary

Art News

Middle School (5th-8th)

- 1st: Aria Berry, 8th grade Rocky Bayou Christian School
- 2nd: Ahymn Kim, 6th grade Ruckel Middle School
- 3rd: Trinity Ricciardi, 6th grade – Rocky Bayou Christian School

High School (9th-12th)

- 1st: Jingxuan Lee Song, 10th grade – Crestview High School
- 2nd: Ryan Jaime, 11th grade Crestview High School
- 3rd: Kennedy Glenn, 12th grade Crestview High School

To view winning entries and photos, visit: okaloosaarts.org.

The OAA serves as Okaloosa County's official arts agency, promoting the arts through advocacy, education and community engagement.

Artists Invited to Apply for 30th Annual Festival of the Arts!

The Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation (MKAF) is now accepting artist applications for the 30th Annual Festival of the Arts, set for October 25–26, 2025, at the Dugas Pavilion in Destin.

This juried show features over 100 artists and awards more than \$12,000 in prizes! Mediums include painting, sculpture, photography, jewelry, and more. Artists benefit from amenities like free breakfast, booth sitters, and an awards dinner.

Applications, including four images, are due by June 30, 2025. Fees are \$30 to apply and \$350–\$700 for booth space. Proceeds support MKAF's arts outreach programs. Details at mkaf.org or call (850) 650-2226.

Big Orange House Designs Creates July Art & Events Schedule

Kids & Teens:

- Create Art Camp (Ages 6–12) Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. | \$50
- Preschool Art Camp Wednesdays, July 2, 16, 30 | 9–10:30 a.m. | \$35
- Teen Watercolor with Ashlen – July 1 & 16 | 12–2 p.m.

Pottery & Glass:

- Two-Week Pottery Class July 2 & 9 | 10 a.m.–1 p.m. | \$100
 - Glass Art Flags (Drop-In) -July 5 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m. | \$45
- Glass Art Open Studio July 12 & 19 | 10 a.m.–2 p.m. | \$25+

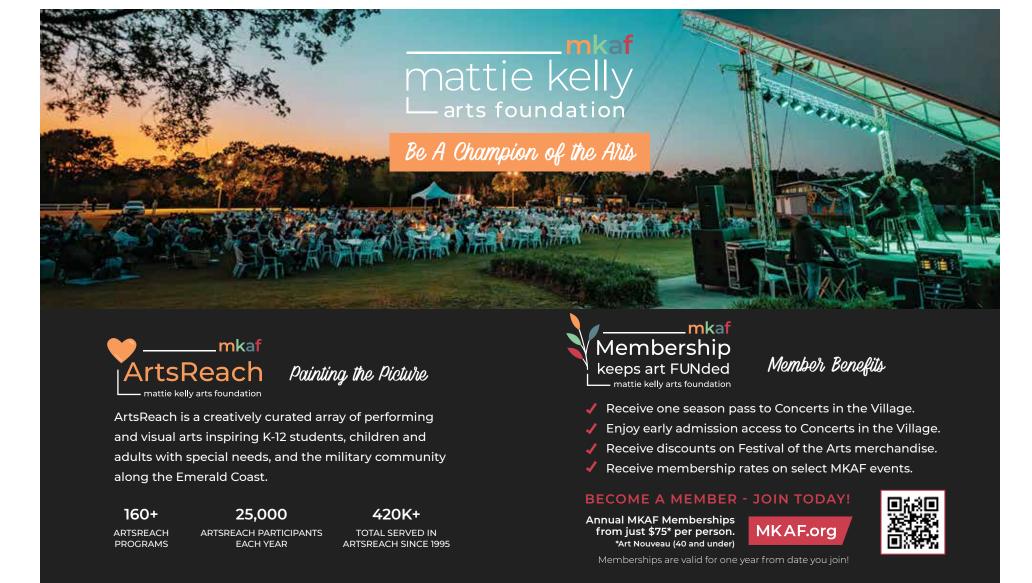
Specialty Workshops:

- Leather & Pearls Open Studio – July 5 | 11 a.m.–2 p.m. & July 19, 12–2 p.m. | \$25+
- Permanent Jewelry July 12 | 12–2 p.m. | \$50+
- Summer Mini Cake Decorating July 12 | 9:30–11 a.m. | \$25

Community Events:

- Cars & Coffee July 5, 7:30–9:30 a.m. | FREE Coffee for Drivers!
- John Birch Meeting / Common Sense Florida – July 10 | 6 p.m. | FREE

Sign up at bigorangehousedesigns.com.





Local Artist Clint Eagar Signs Global Deal With Oscar-Winning Film "Flow"

Clint Eagar, the internationally acclaimed artist and designer known for his emotionally charged, visually intricate works, recently inked a global licensing deal with *FLOW*, the Oscar and Golden Globe-winning animated film, a work which pushes at the boundaries of independent cinema.

The new partnership gives Eagar, a Walton-county based artist, creative control to produce original artwork and a creative line of consumer products and gifts based on the characters, themes, and aesthetic of *FLOW*. The collaboration will result in a worldwide collection of *FLOW*-inspired fine art, décor, and lifestyle merchandise, set to reach international markets by the end of 2025.

"This is more than a licensing deal," said Eagar. "It's a shared vision of how visual storytelling can move across mediums, connect with people emotionally, and leave a lasting impact."

Created in Latvia, "FLOW" is a dialogue-free animated feature

that follows a grey cat separated from its family by a devastating flood. The cat's journey unfolds through a beautifully rendered, wordless narrative that explores themes of survival, resilience, hope, and unlikely friendship with a cast of expressive animal companions. "FLOW" won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, outpacing other contenders, and was described as "a silent masterpiece that radiates humanity in a world without humans."

Clint Eagar is no stranger to global design. A creative force with over 30 years of experience, Eagar has developed licensed products for top brands under the license including Disney (The Lion King, Pocahontas), and Fiestaware. His ability to blend artistry with mass appeal makes him uniquely suited for this new chapter of "FLOW."

Over the course of his career, his work has spanned fine art, home décor, and consumer design—one of the reasons he's such a good fit for translating



this deeply emotional film into a physical world of merchandise. Eagar's own artwork, particularly his *Futurescape* series—which debuted at the Aqua Art Miami Show—is a perfect aesthetic match for *FLOW*'s silent storytelling and emotional arcs. His futuristic, human-animal hybrids, bold compositions, and richly symbolic textures complement the tone and visuals of the film.

Through this licensing collaboration, Clint Eagar will create a curated collection of original artworks and contribute to the design of select gift and home décor items inspired by the film's powerful visual storytelling. His work will celebrate FLOW's signature emotional depth, bringing the spirit of the film into beautifully crafted, globally resonant designs.

"The magic of *FLOW* is how it speaks directly to the heart—without a single word," said Eagar. "Translating that kind of emotional storytelling into visual art and design is an incredible creative opportunity."

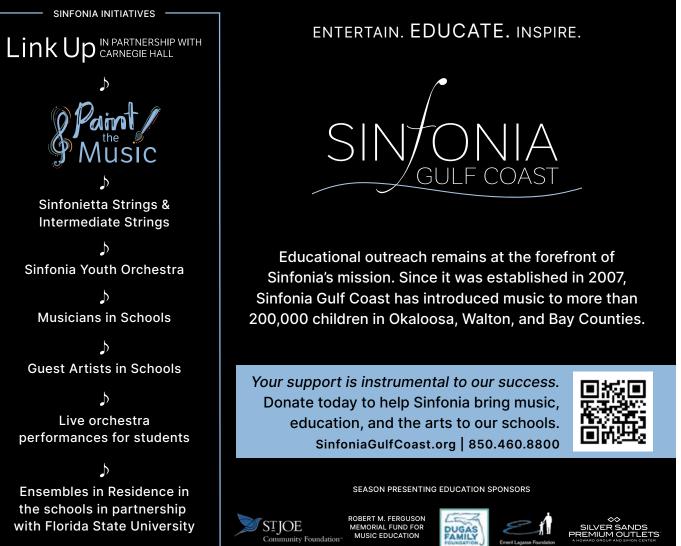
The collaboration between *FLOW* and Clint Eagar signals an evolution in how animated films can extend their emotional resonance beyond the screen. Rather than producing traditional artwork, Eagar is introducing mixed media techniques that mirror the film's visual atmosphere—layering texture, light, and form to recreate the immersive, cinematic quality of *FLOW* in physical space.

By fusing his fine art background with innovative materials and formats, Eagar aims to make the spirit of the film tangible and enduring, offering fans a way to experience the story long after the credits roll.

"This isn't just about merchandise—it's about preserving the emotional experience of the film," said a licensing executive close to the project. "Clint's vision brings a tactile, lasting quality that connects art collectors, fans, and new audiences in a fresh and meaningful way."

As both a fine artist and an experienced product designer, Clint Eagar's entry into the FLOW universe represents the kind of creative synergy that's special in this industry. This deal may be the first of its kind for the Latvian studio behind FLOW, but it signals the beginning of a much bigger movement: storytelling that doesn't just live on screen, but in our homes, hearts, and everyday spaces. From gallery walls to global shelves, Eagar is bringing the soul of FLOW to life—one brushstroke, one character, and one story at a time.







The Christian Capitalist Podcast:

Discussions of Hard Work and Generous Giving

By RICH SANDERS

The Christian Capitalist: The Gospel of Hard Work and Generous Giving offers a clear vision to people who work hard in all levels of the American economy: the more we make, the more we give. Founded on the concepts of the book, this movement is mobilizing Christians across the country to embrace business success and radical generosity as acts of worship.

The Christian Capitalist Podcast is based on discussions with people who embrace these concepts and encourage others to do the same. In the coming months, we will feature guests on the podcast from the Emerald Coast with inspiring stories of hard work and generous giving to the poor and needy in our community. With Christian Capitalists, "Locals Get It" refers both to readers and listeners hearing the message from our podcast guests and the poor and needy receiving the blessings that these hard-working people share with our community!

At its core, The Christian Capitalist movement is not about prosperity for its own sake, but about thanking God for the



blessings we receive by sharing them with our poor and needy neighbors. It teaches that we are created in God's image to work—diligently, ethically, and joyfully.

The message is particularly urgent today. Christianity is in decline in America, especially among younger generations, while interest in socialism has grown. At the same time, many wealthy Christians feel conflicted by the Bible's warnings about riches. The Christian Capitalist addresses these tensions head-on, offering a theology of wealth that is neither indulgent nor ashamed. Instead, it offers a call to action: work hard and give generously to the poor and needy in Jesus' name!

The Christian Capitalist Podcast amplifies voices living out this ethic in the real worldbusiness, family, and community leaders who demonstrate that success and generosity are not mutually exclusive. From a realtor who provides holiday gifts to families in shelters, to business owners mentoring others in faithful entrepreneurship, these stories reveal the transformative power of using wealth for good.

Importantly, guests of The Christian Capitalist Podcast don't promote a prosperity gospel, which promises wealth in exchange for faith. Instead, it promotes a "gospel of hard work and generous giving," rooted in Scripture and modeled after Jesus' commandment to love our neighbors.

As Paul wrote to Timothy two thousand years ago, the wealthy are not to be arrogant or trust in riches, "but to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share" (1Tim. 6:18).

That's the heart of The Christian Capitalist: a renewed Christian ethic of work and giving that brings glory to God and good to others. In a world in need of both economic wisdom and spiritual revival, this message is timely, transformative, and profoundly needed.

The Christian Capitalist Podcast is available through links on the website at christiancapitalist.

Rich Sanders is a pastor, small business owner, retired healthcare attorney and adjunct professor at Emory University, and former intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy, He and his wife, Rebekah, met at church in 1996, have been blessed with three children (James, William and Caroline) and live in Destin with their large golden retriever, Cowboy.



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Billion Dollar Investment:

One million square foot high-volume aviation gas turbine engine manufacturing facility to be constructed at Shoal River Industrial Park in Okaloosa County

The State of Florida and Williams International have announced a major capital investment expected to total more than \$1 billion in Okaloosa County—easily placing the project among the largest in the history of the Northwest Florida region. This announcement follows a comprehensive, multi-state search initiated by

aerospace and aviation manufacturer Williams International in 2023.

Williams International's planned high-volume aviation gas turbine engine manufacturing facility will be constructed in three phases within the Shoal River Industrial Park. Numerous state, regional and local partners worked together

to facilitate this major economic development success story for Northwest Florida.

In 2022, Gov. Ron DeSantis awarded \$3.2 million through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund to expand manufacturing in Okaloosa County. Florida-Commerce partnered with several state and local organizations including CareerSource Flori-

da, Florida's Great Northwest, Space Florida, Okaloosa County and Triumph Gulf Coast on this major economic development win for Florida.

"This billion-dollar investment is a major win for the Free State of Florida and for Floridians," said Gov. DeSantis. "Williams International's investment in the Florida Panhandle will create more than 330 jobs, and is a success story of the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund in Northwest Florida."

"Under Gov. DeSantis' leadership, Florida continues to attract advanced manufacturing throughout the state-strengthening Florida's economy and creating opportunities for job seekers and job creators," said Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly. "This is a win for Northwest Florida and was made possible through partnership with CareerSource Florida, Okaloosa County, One Okaloosa EDC, Space Florida and Triumph Gulf Coast-Williams International's investment in Florida will drive long-term economic growth and opportunity."

"We are very excited about starting our next phase of growth in Northwest Florida," said Gregg Williams, Chairman, President, and CEO of Williams International. "We are grateful to the Triumph board and for the strong, unified support from all of our Florida stakeholders that will enable us to create many high quality, high technology jobs producing the world's best gas turbine engines."

"This is an exciting win for Northwest Florida's growing aviation industry sector, said Triumph Gulf Coast Chair Jay Trumbull, Sr. "Triumph is proud to continue its commitment to developing high paying jobs in the region. We are especially pleased to see this major manufacturer choose the Shoal River Industrial Park as its new home!"

"Northwest Florida is proving itself to be a rising hub for aerospace activity and an essential part of Florida's expanding aerospace ecosystem. Williams International's expansion in this community is a stellar example of how new opportunities for innovation and investment are being built in every corner of the state—reinforcing all of Florida as the global and interplanetary



center for aerospace commerce," said Rob Long, president and CEO, Space Florida.

"This is a monumental project that will have a lasting impact on both Okaloosa County's economy and the entire region," said Commissioner Paul Mixon, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners. "We are fortunate to have been able to invest in the infrastructure at Shoal River Industrial Park to attract an aerospace industry leader like Williams International, and I am thankful to One Okaloosa EDC and Florida Commerce for their hard work and support in this effort."

"Today's announcement is a true testament to the importance of preparation, partnerships and persistence. Without key partners like Gov. DeSantis, FloridaCommerce, Triumph Gulf Coast, Florida's Great Northwest and many others who consistently supported Okaloosa County's vision for Shoal River Industrial Park, our community would not be celebrating this tremendous success today," said Nathan Sparks, Executive Director, One Okaloosa EDC.

The company's first 250,000 sq. ft. facility is slated to begin construction later this year, with completion scheduled for late 2026. Subsequent facilities will be constructed in 2028, with the final 500,000 sq. ft. planned for the 2035/2036 timeframe.

Headquartered in Pontiac, Mich., Williams International is the world leader in the design, manufacturing and support of aviation gas turbine engines. In addition to its world class reputation for customer support, Williams International is also well known for establishing highly integrated and automated manufacturing facilities in the world to support high-quality, high-volume production and on-schedule delivery of its rapidly growing family of commercial and military products. Visit www. Williams-Int.com.





FPL Announces Planned Upgrades for Walton County to Continue Building A Stronger, Smarter Grid

The company's smart grid technology prevented more than 800,000 outages during active 2024 hurricane season

We're upgrading your neighborhood! In 2025, FPL plans to make the following upgrades in Walton County as part of its ongoing commitment to reduce outages and restore power faster following major storms:

- 68 miles of power lines will undergo inspection or vegetation trimming, addressing one of the leading causes of power outages.
- 5,292 power poles in Walton County will be inspected, strengthening or replacing those that no longer meet FPL's indus-



try-leading standards.

• Five intelligent devices will be installed as part of smart grid technology upgrades on main, neighborhood and underground power lines. These automated smart switches help identify outages and reroute power to prevent more widespread interruptions.

• Across Northwest Florida: FPL continuously pioneers new technology and strengthens the energy grid to improve reliability for its customers and avoid outages during good weather

and bad, including:
• 32% fewer wooden t

- 32% fewer wooden transmission structures in Northwest Florida as part of FPL's efforts to harden the grid with steel and concrete structures.
 - 90 miles of neighborhood

power lines placed underground in Northwest Florida.

- 9,100 smart grid devices installed in Northwest Florida to improve outage detection and response.
- State-of-the-art technology is being used to detect, maintain, and limit the impact of trees and debris that come into contact with FPL equipment.

A word from Bernard Johnson, senior external affairs manager for FPL: Our dedicated team is committed to providing customers in Walton County with safe and reliable electric service, all while keeping bills as low as possible. Although no energy grid is storm-proof, these

upgrades have improved service reliability by more than 63% since 2018 in Northwest Florida, enhancing reliability day-today and during hurricanes and severe weather for our customers

For perspective: An annual report filed March 1 with the Florida Public Service Commission details how FPL delivered the best service reliability in company history last year. This includes the company's lowest average number of minutes an FPL customer experienced an outage, surpassing the previous company-best performance set in 2023.

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