



SEPTEMBER 2026
VOL. 7, NO. 12

BAY Life

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

Postal Customer Local

One Child, One Book, One Patient Dog: How Dog-Harmony Builds Confident Readers

BY BREANNA BECKER

There is a particular kind of courage required of a child who struggles to read. But what if the one listening never judged you? What if your reading partner simply rested a furry head nearby and listened?

For Nancy Bown, founder of Dog-Harmony, that simple relationship between a child and a dog has been part of a calling decades in the making. "I've always loved to read," Bown said, recalling that nearly 20 years ago she and her therapy dog were already visiting libraries and working with children. "It's so funny in life how things just all come together of what you're meant to do."

Today, Dog-Harmony carries that work into schools and libraries across Northwest Florida through evaluated therapy dog teams, literacy programming and humane education.

The need remains real. According to the Florida Department of Education, 61% of Florida students in grades 3 through 10 scored Level 3 or above in ELA/Reading at the end of the 2025-26 school year. Okaloosa County reached 65%, Walton County 70% and Bay County 61%. Encouraging numbers, but ones that still leave thousands of local children with ground to gain.



Nationally, only 31% of American fourth graders performed at or above NAEP

partment of Education, 61% of Florida students in grades 3 through 10 scored Level 3 or above in ELA/Reading at the end of the 2025-26 school year. Okaloosa County reached 65%, Walton County 70% and Bay County 61%. Encouraging numbers, but ones that still leave thousands of local children with ground to gain.

Proficient in reading in 2024.

Bown believes dogs can help change that story. "I know the good we're doing," she said. "I know we're reducing anxiety. I know that we increased our literacy rate by using those reading education assistance dogs."

In the first six months of 2026, Dog-Harmony's therapy teams provided 994 hours of service across three pillars: Youth Mental Health and Crisis Intervention, Lit-

eracy Advancement and Educational Enrichment, and Adult Wellness and Healthcare Support. Of those hours, 279 were devoted to literacy and educational enrichment in local schools and libraries. Together, those 994 hours represent nearly \$100,000 in community investment.

That breadth matters because Dog-Harmony can be easy to misunderstand.

Yes, there are wagging tails, wet noses and photographs that make people smile. But behind those moments is serious community work.

Evaluated therapy teams walk into schools where children are struggling to find confidence in their own voices. They support youth experiencing anxiety and crisis. They enter healthcare facilities where patients and front-line workers are carrying difficult days. Through literacy and humane education pro-

DOG-HARMONY

continued on page 2



Ham Radio Connects Generations, Builds Community

BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

Ham Radio is a hobby that is not only intergenerational for men and women, but can be started with varying ability and interest in amateur radio. DJ Stewart (call sign KI4ZER) is the president of Playground Amateur Radio Club (PARC) and North Okaloosa Amateur Radio Club (NOARC). He has great memories from starting with Ham radio from early childhood.

HAM RADIO

continued on page 2



Veteran
Owned.
Veteran
Discount.

House Washing
Concrete Cleaning
Paver Sealing/Cleaning
Pool Decks & Screen Cleaning

Commercial & Residential
Licensed & Insured

850-865-2140

sales@wahoolyclean.com
Niceville, FL



SATURDAY
Nov 7th, 2026
11am - 4pm
at Fudpucker's
www.PirateBrewFest.com

Community

HAM RADIO

continued from page 1

“My father and grandfather were both hams in Wisconsin. When we moved to St. Peter, my dad started the St. Peter’s Emergency Operations Center. They had no emergency resources at the time and were dependent on St. Louis, Missouri, which was 35 miles east. Since few resources were allocated to people outside the city, the response times were slow. The center became a very robust program as they helped people during times our community faced tornadoes, fires, floods, and even tremors. Watching my dad help our town through those efforts taught me a lot.

From there, we started working with local governments and local police. Other hams got involved, and that experience led to a love affair with electronic equipment and communications of all types.”

In the early 19th century, the term “Ham” radio distinguished amateurs from professional operators. It stemmed from “ham-fisted,” an old wired-telegraph slang term describing clumsy Morse code operators. It has evolved into a term signifying the fellowship of those interested in a communication style that endures through the digital age.

“Our clubs are where every walk of life comes together - men and women of varying occupations, veterans and civilians, sea-



soned operators and people who are brand new to amateur radio. What we have in common is our desire to understand this hobby. We help each other get to whatever level the individual wants to reach, whether it be in selecting or setting up equipment, figuring out the various signals, or getting ready for the next license.”

To fully experience amateur radio, operators can use a variety of handheld gear or desktop transceivers communicating by voice, Morse code, or digital data. However, acquiring a license is required. Individuals do this by passing a test for a fee, which legally earns the operator privileges to broadcast on the specific frequencies for that class. There are three issued licenses: Technician Class, General Class, and Amateur Extra Class. Each license dictates what frequencies a ham radio operator can legally transmit, and the range of frequencies that can be used. Each test to obtain these licenses becomes more difficult as you learn radio theory and regulations. In the United States, the FCC (Fed-



eral Communications Commission) manages and enforces these rules.

“Based on how much someone wants to get involved, I would encourage people to try different meetings at different clubs. This is an incredibly social hobby, and each club has unique areas of focus, whether it be more technical or community-oriented. Some people come seeking help with electrical projects, others want to get together to prepare for the next license, and others appreciate the sense of camaraderie until they decide to commit to the hobby. You’ll learn something no matter what you come for, and the club members are some of the greatest people I’ve met.”

Not only will you find a new hobby and friends through amateur radio, but you’ll also have an opportunity to serve the community and take part in community events. Club members have served as points of contact at 5K events and other races, escorted parades, and helped supplement communication. Members will also be at these upcoming events:



**Saturday, October 10
from 8 am to 12 pm**

Trade show: Amateur Radio Club Hamfest at the Crestview Community Center at 1446 Commerce Dr in Crestview

**Saturday, November 21
from 8 am to 1 pm**

Amateur radio electronics flea market: SwampFest at the roller derby hangar, Hangar 41, at 41 Wyndham Ave SE in Ft Walton Beach

In addition to these events, there are opportunities to practice picking up radio signals using personal equipment well before emergencies occur. During The Fox Hunt, a mini transmitter is hidden in a defined area, and operators work their way to it using their mobile radios. From a local to a nationwide event, Field Day, twice a year in June and January, brings together amateur radio operators throughout the nation to see how many other hams they can find using a variety of frequencies.

To learn more about what Ham radio operators can do, visitors are welcome to club meet-

ings to meet area experts.

PARC meets the 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 17 1st St. in Ft. Walton Beach at 7:30 pm. W4ZBB.Org

NOARC meets the 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 4565 Live Oak Church Rd. in Crestview at 7:00 pm. W4AAZ.Org

You can also email parcfwb@gmail.com with any questions.

For those in Walton County, there is the **Walton County Amateur Radio Club**. The club meets the first Tuesday of every month at the Life Enrichment Senior Center in DeFuniak Springs at 7:00 pm. There is also a monthly club breakfast the Saturday before their club meeting at the Eagle Springs Golf Course at 8:00 am, also in DeFuniak Springs. For additional information, go to wf4x.wordpress.com.

Additional clubs in the area include the Panama City Amateur Radio Club and the Milton Amateur Radio Club.

Michelle Ruschman is a local artist, speaker, and writer. She can be reached at michelleruschman@gmail.com or michelleruschman.com.

DOG-HARMONY

continued from page 1

grams, children are also learning compassion, empathy and respect.

The dogs may make the work look effortless. It is anything but. **On Oct. 30, Dog-Har-**

mony’s 11th Annual Barktoberfest returns to Grand Park at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. The organization’s primary fundraiser will feature its beloved dog costume contest, music, light bites, libations and a canine-only trick-or-treat celebration.

Barktoberfest matters, but Dog-Harmony’s mission cannot be sustained by one night alone. When the costumes come off, another child still needs encouragement. Another therapy team still walks through the doors of a school, youth program or healthcare facility.

The work continues. So must the support.

Recurring gifts, sponsorships, volunteers and community advocates allow Dog-Harmony to keep showing up where the human-canine bond can do the most good. “When you sup-

port our mission, your generosity does not just stay within our walls, it ripples out across our entire community,” Bown said.

Perhaps nowhere is that ripple easier to imagine than beside a child with a book.

One child. One difficult word. And one patient dog who does not care how long it takes.

Then another word. Another page.

And, little by little, a child who begins to believe, I can do this.

To learn more about Dog-Harmony’s literacy and library programs, Barktoberfest, volunteer opportunities and ways to provide year-round support, visit Dog-Harmony’s website. www.dog-harmony.org.

**HELP DOGS HELP PEOPLE.
STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY.**

ABOUT US

Dog-Harmony brings therapy dog programs, children’s literacy support, humane education, and family assistance to Northwest Florida.

YOUR MONTHLY GIFT HELPS PROVIDE:

- Youth Mental Health and Crisis Intervention
- Literacy Advancement and Educational Enrichment
- Adult Wellness and Healthcare Support

Scan the QR code to give today.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

“When you support our mission your generosity does not just stay within our walls, it ripples out across our entire community.”



A Community Honors Its Veterans with More Than a Day of Fishing

Soldiers on the Water Returns Sept. 19

BY LORI MILLER

With deep military roots and generations of veterans living and working nearby, Niceville and Valparaiso have a special connection to the upcoming 13th Annual Soldiers on the Water. On Saturday, Sept. 19, combat-wounded veterans will board local charter boats for a day created entirely in their honor.

The Emerald Coast Association of REALTORS® (ECAR), in partnership with the ECAR Foundation, local charter boat captains, sponsors and volunteers, presents the event at no cost to participating veterans. The day combines world-class fishing with fellowship, recognition and the reassurance that their service and sacrifices have not been forgotten.

Since its beginning in 2013 with 35 military participants, Soldiers on the Water has grown to serve more than 100

combat-wounded veterans. Organizers hope to welcome approximately 125 participants this year.

“Soldiers on the Water is one of the most meaningful traditions our Association has the privilege of hosting,” said representatives of ECAR. “This event is about more than fishing—it’s about showing our appreciation, building connections, and giving combat-wounded veterans an opportunity to enjoy a day surrounded by people who are grateful for their service. We are incredibly thankful to the sponsors, charter captains, and volunteers whose generosity makes this event possible year after year.”

The event will take place behind Brotula’s Seafood House & Steamer at the Destin Fishing Fleet Marina. Veteran check-in and a light breakfast begin at 7 a.m., followed by an 8 a.m. boat departure. Participants



will spend the morning fishing the waters surrounding Destin aboard vessels provided by volunteer charter captains and boat owners.

After the excursion, everyone will return to shore for an afternoon meal, fellowship and an awards presentation recognizing accomplishments such as the day’s biggest catch and most fish caught. The full event is

scheduled from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Soldiers on the Water is dedicated exclusively to combat-wounded veterans. The relaxed outdoor setting gives participants an opportunity to spend time with fellow veterans, form new friendships and experience the camaraderie that develops naturally during a shared day on the water.

For veterans in Freeport and



surrounding communities, that fellowship can be particularly meaningful since many remain in the area after military service, continuing to work, raise families and serve their neighbors here.

A past participant, Grady B., described the event’s impact this way: “After the retreat was over and back home, I realized that

Continued on page 17



MCCASKILL & COMPANY

— Finest Jewelry & Watches —

13390 Hwy 98 W, Destin, FL | www.McCaskillandCompany.com | (850) 650-2262

 Community


BY DR. KAREN DEVORE

Mention acupuncture and most people still think of one thing: pain. Back pain. A stubborn shoulder. Sciatica. Headaches. An injury that just doesn't seem to completely resolve.

And for good reason. Acupuncture can be an extraordinarily useful tool for managing pain, muscle tension and many musculoskeletal complaints. But what often surprises patients is how much further its clinical ap-

plication can extend.

Acupuncture may support patients navigating stress, insomnia, headaches and migraines, digestive issues, fertility, inflammatory conditions and long COVID. With specialized training in neuroacupuncture, its applications can extend to neuropathy, vertigo, Parkinson's disease, stroke rehabilitation, PTSD, autism, ADHD, anxiety and other neurological and neuropsychiatric concerns.

For some patients, acupuncture addresses a specific problem. For others, it becomes part of how they support their health, function and quality of life over time.

Acupuncture Through a Contemporary Lens

Acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine have remarkably long histories of clinical use. What I find particularly interesting today is the convergence of that accumulated clinical tradition with our evolving scientific understanding of the nervous system, pain signaling, physiology and botanical medicine.

Modern research continues to investigate how acupuncture influences nervous-system signaling and pain processing, while pharmacological research examines the bioactive compounds found within medicinal plants.

We don't have to position traditional medicine in opposition to modern healthcare. Instead, we can ask thoughtful questions: What works? How does it work? For whom might it be useful? And where can it fit within a comprehensive health plan?

Acupuncture also doesn't have to be something you try only after everything else has failed. Nor does choosing acupuncture mean stepping away from conventional medicine. It can complement care from a primary care physician, neurologist, physical therapist, OB/GYN, psychiatrist or other specialist.

More than Needles

Acupuncture treatment is highly individualized. Two people with the same complaint may receive different treatment based on their health histories, symptoms and goals.

Care may also extend beyond

needles. Depending on the individual, traditional Chinese medicine can incorporate cupping, fire cupping, gua sha, food-based recommendations or customized Chinese herbal medicine.

Like many therapies, acupuncture is rarely best understood as a "one-and-done" treatment. Some people notice changes quickly, while others experience therapeutic benefit over a series of treatments. Frequency and duration depend on the individual, the complexity and chronicity of the concern, and how that person responds.

That individualized approach matters because the body doesn't organize itself into separate compartments. Sleep affects pain. Stress can affect digestion. Pain influences mood and sleep. Our nervous, hormonal, immune and musculoskeletal systems are deeply interconnected.

That interconnectedness is one reason acupuncture can fit naturally within a broader health plan.

A Specialized Approach to Neurological Care

One of the most fascinating developments within the field is neuroacupuncture.

Neuroacupuncture is not simply traditional acupuncture applied to someone with a neurological diagnosis. It requires advanced specialized education integrating acupuncture techniques with detailed study of neurological anatomy, function and rehabilitation.

This specialized approach may be incorporated into care for people navigating Parkinson's disease, neuropathy, vertigo, stroke recovery and other neurological conditions, as well as PTSD, autism, ADHD, anxiety and complex neuropsychiatric concerns.

Many of these patients already have neurologists, psychiatrists, therapists or rehabilitation specialists involved in their care. The goal is not to replace those relationships. A more useful question is whether adding another appropriate modality may help support function, symptom management and quality of life, particularly when recovery has

Continued on page 24

Beyond Pain Relief: A Broader Approach to Acupuncture



TORTOISE CLINIC

INTEGRATIVE HEALTH

**HOLISTIC HEALTH • ACUPUNCTURE
MASSAGE • APOTHECARY**

Now Offering

**PRIMARY CARE
PEPTIDE THERAPIES
SPECIALTY TESTING
IN-HOUSE LABS
IV INFUSIONS
HRT**

Scan the QR code
to learn more and
book today!



**NOW OPEN
7 DAYS A WEEK**
Including Weekends

8 AM - 5 PM

*Ask us how to get 50% off
your next IV!*



**2441 U.S. HWY 98, SANTA ROSA BEACH, FL 32459
TORTOISECLINIC.COM | 850.267.5611**



\$30 OFF

NEW PATIENT OFFER

Present this coupon and receive \$30 off any service at the Tortoise Clinic. One coupon per person.

Deer Moss Creek®

New homes in a vibrant community of Niceville, Florida



621 CHAMOMILE COURT
4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,900 SF
\$899,000 | construction completed
Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



729 REINDEER ROAD
4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 2,092 SF
\$586,000 | ready November 2026
Listed by Kelly Shephard 850.543.7353



221 FOXGLOVE RUN
4 Bedroom | 3.5/.5 Bath | 3,539 SF
\$1,219,990 | ready October 2026
Listed by Jodie Snell 850.621.6535



723 REINDEER ROAD
4 Bedroom | 3.5 Bath | 2,600 SF
\$695,000 | ready September 2026
Listed by Val Waters Auclair 850.855.6205



414 MARSH DEER RUN
4 Bedroom | 2.5 Bath | 2,026 SF
\$601,000 | ready October 2026
Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



251 FOXGLOVE RUN
4 Bedroom | 3 Bath | 3,994 SF
\$1,425,000 | ready December 2026
Listed by Crystal Tingle 850.218.4618



Contact Ruckel Properties for a full list of available lots.

PHASE 11 LOTS

SIZE: 0.16 - 0.26 ACRE

PRICE: \$100,000 – \$149,000

PHASE 7A ESTATE LOTS

SIZE: 0.49 – 0.64

PRICE: \$209,000 - \$269,000



Ruckel Properties, Inc.
REAL ESTATE & DEVELOPMENT

850.678.2223

RUCKELPROPERTIES.COM

Visit our model homes in Deer Moss Creek®

1413 CLARY SAGE LANE

Monday - Saturday 12 - 4 pm

Sunday 1 - 4 pm

301 GAZELLE COURT

Friday & Saturday 12 - 4 pm

Sunday 1 - 4 pm

Events Around the Bay

Public Fridays Begin Every Friday beginning Sept. 4, 2026 | 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport

For the first time in its history, the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center will open to the public every Friday year-round. Visitors can explore self-guided trails, meet more than 40 ambassador animals and enjoy hands-on activities.

Admission is \$15 for ages 13 and older and \$10 for ages 4–12. Children 3 and younger

are admitted free. Reservations are not required. Visit eowilson-center.org.

History Sandwiched-In Friday, Sept. 4, 2026 | Noon Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida 115 Westview Ave. | Val- paraiso

The Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida will host Dr. Elvira S. Chiccarelli, USAFR, for a presentation featuring her extensive collection of picture boards depicting the stories

of women who served in the military during World War II. Guests are welcome to bring lunch.

Admission is free, but reservations are requested. To RSVP, call 850-678-2615.

L.J. Schooners Cardboard Boat Race Sunday, Sept. 13, 2026 | 4 p.m. Bluewater Bay Marina | Niceville

Bluewater Bay Marina will host its 19th Annual Cardboard Boat Race, featuring single-person and two-person team divisions for individuals and businesses. Cash prizes will be awarded to first- and second-place finishers in each division, with additional honors for Best Design and the Titanic Award for Best Sinking. Businesses are encouraged to challenge their competitors to join the fun.

Early registration is \$25 for single-person entries and \$35 for two-person teams. L.J. Schooners will offer a hamburger, chicken sandwich and hot dog cookout from 4–7 p.m. For rules or registration information, call 850-897-2821 or visit bluewaterbaymarina.com.



Emerald Coast Community Singers: Celebration of American Music Sunday, Sept. 13, 2026 | 3 p.m. Christ the King Episcopal Church

Celebrate America's musical heritage while commemorating the 25th anniversary of 9/11 and the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The concert will feature works by Samuel Barber, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, William Dawson and Duke Ellington, along with traditional American and patriotic songs. Audience participation is encouraged.

Admission is free. Visit christthekingfl.org.

Oktoberfest at 3rd Planet Brewing Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026 | Noon–9 p.m. 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville

Celebrate Oktoberfest with

German-inspired food, locally brewed beer and live music. Knights of Columbus Council 13527 will serve freshly grilled bratwurst with sauerkraut and German potato salad, as well as hot dogs and soft drinks. More than 20 locally brewed beers will be available on tap, and authentic German music will be performed from 5–8 p.m.

The Council of Catholic Women will offer freshly baked desserts for donations. Proceeds from food sales benefit local charities supported by the Knights of Columbus.

Battle for the Buckle Wednesday–Sunday, Sept. 23–27, 2026 Harbor Docks | Destin

The 2nd Annual Westonwood Ranch Battle for the Buckle brings together anglers, business leaders and community supporters for four days of competitive fishing, camaraderie and giving back. Tournament highlights include a \$10,000 winner-take-all White Marlin prize and \$2,000 prizes for Catch and Release, Heaviest Tuna, Heaviest Wahoo, Heaviest Dolphin and the Junior Angler Youth Division. A \$1,500 Daily White Marlin Jackpot is also available.

Registration takes place Sept. 23, with 10% benefiting Westonwood Ranch. The boat entry fee is \$1,000. Boats should register by Sept. 23.

The tournament supports Westonwood Ranch and its mission to empower teens and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through life-skills education, workforce development and meaningful employment opportunities.

Register at westonwood.org/battleforthebucklefishingtournament. For additional info: Joe Donovan at 850-572-3695.

Mid-Bay Rotary's 32nd Annual Oktoberfest Friday–Saturday, Sept. 25–26, 2026 Merchants Walk | Bluewa- ter Bay

The Mid-Bay Rotary Club's 32nd Annual Oktoberfest will feature German food, beer, wine, live entertainment, vendors and family activities. Per-

BOOTH SPACE SELLING OUT FAST
 for the Largest and Best TWO-DAY Business Event in NorthWest Florida



27th ANNUAL EMERALD COAST HOME & BOAT SHOW

Saturday & Sunday • October 10th & 11th, 2026
at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

SPONSORED BY



AND THE FOLLOWING AWESOME BUSINESS OWNERS

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER OR FOR MORE INFO

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



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



NORTHWEST FLORIDA BALLET

Join us for the season...

EMERGING CHOREOGRAPHERS' PROJECT BLACKBOX
Sept. 11-12 | NFB Studios

THE NUTCRACKER
Nov. 20-22 | Mattie Kelly Arts Center

SWAN LAKE
March 6-7 | Mattie Kelly Arts Center



Season Producer/Dance Sponsor:
MATTIE KELLY ARTS CENTER

Signature Season Sponsors:
EMERALD COAST MAGAZINE
Seartell
Life MEDIA



Scan to Learn More or Purchase Season Subscriptions!

NFBallet.org

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE BAY

- 01
Niceville Young Professionals
11:30 am | Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber | Niceville
- 02
UNDERWATER: The Living Sea Experience
7 pm | Gulfarium | Okaloosa Island
- 04
Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee
7 am | Destin FWB Rigdon Center | FWB
- History Sandwiched In
12 pm | Heritage Museum of NWFL | Valparaiso
- 04, 11, 18, 25
Greater FWB Chamber First Friday Coffee
7 am | Destin FWB Rigdon Center | FWB
- History Sandwiched In
12 pm | Heritage Museum of NWFL | Valparaiso
- 04-06
Perfect Hues: Baytowne Wharf Art Fest!
5 pm | Baytowne Wharf | Miramar Beach
- 05
Concealed Carry Weapons Class
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
- Discover Science Saturday
10 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB
- 06
Women's Climbing Circle
5 pm | Rock Out Climbing Gym | Destin
- Labor Day Destin Dinner & Fireworks Cruise
6:30 pm | Baytowne Marina | Miramar Beach
- Boardwalk Labor Day Firework Show
9 pm | Boardwalk | Destin
- 07
End of Summer ECISS Shooting Competition
8 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
- 09
Second Wednesday Breakfast
7:15 am | Niceville Community Center | Niceville
- C.A.R.E.ing for Turtles
5 pm | Gulfarium | Okaloosa Island
- Solaris Dinner Cruise
5:30 pm | Baytowne Marina | Miramar Beach
- 10
Greater FWB Chamber Nothing But Networking with Sonny's BBQ
11:30 am | Trinity UMC | FWB

- 10-27
Come From Away
Times Vary | Emerald Coast Theatre Company | Miramar Beach
- 11-12
Emerging Choreographers' Project: Blackbox
7:30 pm | NFB Studios at Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- 12
Rotary Sandy Bags Cornhole Tourney!
9 am-2 pm | The Back Porch | Destin
- Cirque Du Canines
7 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Center | Niceville
- Bobbin Lace Day
1-4 pm | Heritage Museum of NWFL | Valparaiso
- 13
9th Annual Cardboard Boat Race & Cookout
4 pm | LJ Schooners & Bluewater Bay Marina | Niceville
- Emerald Coast Community Singers: Celebration of American Music
3 pm | Christ the King Episcopal Church | SRB
- 16
UNDERWATER: The Living Sea Experience
7 pm | Gulfarium | Okaloosa Island
- 17
70th Anniversary & Civic Hall of Fame Gala
5:30 pm | Okaloosa Gas District | Valparaiso
- Greater FWB Chamber Business After Hours
5:30 pm | Emerald Coast Healthcare Coalition | FWB
- 19
13th Annual Soldiers on the Water
7 am check-in; 8 am boat departure | Brotula's | Destin
- Concealed Carry Weapons Class
10 am | Emerald Coast Indoor Shooting & Sport | Valparaiso
- Oktoberfest (Knights of Columbus)
12 pm | 3rd Planet Brewing | Niceville
- Boys and Girls Club of the Emerald Coast's 6th Annual Burgers, Bourbon, and Beer Festival
1 pm | Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Cultural Village | Destin
- Croctoberfest 2026
6 pm | Gulfarium | Okaloosa Island



- 19 Continued
Oktoberfest
11 am | Fort Walton Elks Lodge | FWB
- 23
C.A.R.E.ing for Turtles
5 pm | Gulfarium | Okaloosa Island
- 23-27
Battle for the Buckle (Westonwood Ranch)
Times vary | Harbor Docks | Destin
- 25
Fore Her Golf Outing
8 am check-in; 9 am tee-off | The Links Golf Club at Sandestin | Miramar Beach
- 25-26
Oktoberfest (Mid-Bay Rotary)
Friday 5 - 10 pm | Saturday 11 am - 10 pm | Merchants Walk at Bluewater Bay
- 25-27
Destin Seafood Festival
Times vary | Destin Harbor | Destin
- 26
Mattie Kelly Family Bay Day
10 am | Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park | Niceville
- Emerald Coast Science Center's Day of Play with ACM and Nickelodeon
10:30 am | Emerald Coast Science Center | FWB

FARMERS MARKETS

- Niceville Community
Saturdays | 9 am - 1 pm
Twin Cities Pavilion | Niceville
- Hammock Bay
1st & 3rd Saturdays | 4 - 8 pm
The Windmills | Freeport
- Grand Boulevard
Saturdays | 9 am - 1 pm
Grand Boulevard | Miramar Beach

MONTHLY EVENTS

- Music Bingo Night
6 pm | Mon | Bayou Pub | Niceville
- Puzzle Swap @ the Library
10 am | Thurs | Niceville Library | Niceville
- Yoga at Turkey Creek
9 am | Sat | Turkey Creek Nature Trail | Niceville
- Brunch on the Bayou
9 am | Sun | LJ Schooners Restaurant | Niceville

 Community

EVENTS

continued from page 6

formers include the Edelweiss German Band, accordionist Walter Kasprzyk, the Emerald Coast Community Band and folk musicians Gary Schmitz, Ken Tate and Jody Lucas. Children can enjoy multiple bounce houses and balloons by Mickey Cameron.

The festival will also feature approximately 30 vendor booths and tours of North Bay Fire District fire trucks with firefighters and pararescue personnel. Bratwurst, sauerkraut, chicken, hot dogs, German pretzels, beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase.

Proceeds support local charitable programs, including student scholarships, Rotary Youth

Camp and Rotary Youth Leadership Awards.

Nighttime Neighbors

Saturday, Oct. 3, 2026 | 4-8 p.m.

E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center | Freeport

Explore the nocturnal side of the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center during Nighttime Neighbors. Hike to the bat house to watch the evening bat flight just after sunset, learn about nocturnal wildlife and enjoy activity stations along the trail.

Admission is \$15 for adults and \$10 for children. A \$5 Camp Longleaf add-on includes s'mores, cocoa, coffee and a bounce house. Bring a flashlight! Proceeds benefit the nonprofit E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center.

Cabaret at Seagar's: An Evening with New York Voices

Thursday, Oct. 8, 2026 | 5:30 p.m.

Seagar's Prime Steaks & Seafood

Sinfonia Gulf Coast presents an intimate evening with Grammy Award-winning vocal ensemble New York Voices as part of the group's farewell tour, The Four and Only. Peter Eldridge, Kim Nazarian, Darmon Meader and Lauren Kinhan will celebrate 40 years of vocal jazz with inventive arrangements and seamless harmonies spanning jazz, pop and Brazilian influences.

Tickets are \$375 per person and include valet parking, a sparkling-wine reception, a multicourse dinner with wine,



gratuity and the performance. Proceeds benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast's music education and community engagement programs.

27th Annual Emerald Coast Home & Boat Show

Saturday, Oct. 10, 2026 | 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 11, 2026 | 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

1250 Miracle Strip Pkwy.

SE | Fort Walton Beach

Explore more than 51,000 square feet of exhibits featuring over 100 indoor vendors, boats, home-improvement products, healthcare services, local businesses and pet-rescue organizations. Visitors can take advantage of special home-show pricing, end-of-season boat discounts and more than \$20,000 in door prizes and giveaways.

Admission is free. Life Media is proud to sponsor this two-day community event. Vendor and sponsor spaces are available. Contact Wes Fell at 850-353-2832 or wesfell@cox.net. Learn more at ParadisePromotionsFL.com.

Continued on page 10



DOGS, BANDS AND BEER FESTIVAL
OCT 10TH

SCAN ME

Mattie Kelly Amphitheatre in Niceville Fl
1pm-9pm
Headliners Atlanta Rhythm Section and Firefall

TICKETS WWW.MATTIEKELLYTICKETS.COM

Dogs, Bands & Beer Festival!

Two legendary classic rock bands. One unforgettable night under the stars.

Join the fun Saturday, October 10, at the beautiful Mattie Kelly Amphitheater for an outdoor concert featuring Atlanta Rhythm Section and Firefall.

Bring your dog and enjoy a full fall day of classic hits,

cool drinks, food trucks, fresh air, and live music. And yes—dogs are welcome!

Saturday, October 10
Gates open at 1 p.m.
Mattie Kelly Amphitheater at NWFSC, Niceville
Tickets and information:
www.mattiekellytickets.com

850-706-5206



THE MARKET SHOPS
Boutiques & Eatery

THE MARKET SHOPS 11TH ANNUAL BLOODY MARY FESTIVAL

BENEFITING  **Habitat for Humanity**
of Walton County, FL

SATURDAY
OCTOBER 10, 2026
11AM - 2PM

\$65 IN ADVANCE
\$75 AT THE DOOR

TO PURCHASE TICKETS, VISIT
THEMARKETSHOPS.COM

TICKET INCLUDES:

- UNLIMITED BLOODY MARYS
- CRAFT BEER
- BUBBLY BAR
- SPIKED SELTZERS
- LIVE MUSIC & DJ
- SEC FOOTBALL
- LOCAL EATS & SHOPPING
- PHOTO BOOTH
- CIGAR BAR
- CUSTOM TRUCKER HAT BAR

9375 EMERALD COAST PARKWAY, MIRAMAR BEACH, FLORIDA | Located off the Entrance to Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort | themarketshops.com



By KIMBERLY COLE

Trusts are often misunderstood as tools reserved for the very wealthy. In practice, they are simply legal structures designed to provide clarity, continuity, and protection for families of many different means. While trusts are sometimes associated with celebrities, business owners, or families with significant wealth, the reality is that many ordinary families use trusts to address everyday concerns and create a smoother transition during life’s most challenging moments.

Part of the misunderstanding comes from the way trusts are portrayed. Popular culture often treats trusts as secretive financial arrangements designed to preserve vast fortunes across gener-

ations. As a result, many people assume they are either too complicated or unnecessary for their circumstances. When someone hears the word “trust,” they may picture an estate worth millions of dollars rather than a family trying to make things easier for a surviving spouse or children.

In reality, a trust is simply a set of instructions. It allows a person to determine how assets will be managed during life, in the event of incapacity, and after death. At its core, a trust is less about wealth and more about organization. It provides a framework for decision-making when the person who created it is no longer able to manage affairs personally.

One of the most practical benefits of a trust is continuity. Life does not always unfold as expected. An illness, injury, or unexpected death can create uncertainty for family members who suddenly find themselves trying to manage finances, property, and important deci-

sions. A properly funded trust allows a successor trustee to step in and continue managing assets without many of the interruptions that might otherwise occur. Rather than scrambling to determine who has authority to act, the trust provides a roadmap.

Trusts are particularly useful in situations that many families encounter every day. A married couple may want to ensure that a surviving spouse can easily manage household assets if one spouse becomes incapacitated. Parents of young children may want a structured plan for managing assets until those children reach an appropriate age. A blended family may wish to balance the needs of a surviving spouse while preserving an inheritance for children from a prior relationship. Others simply want to make the administration of their estate more efficient and less burdensome for those they leave behind.

These are not concerns limit-

ed to the wealthy. They are concerns shared by families at many income levels.

Trusts also create clarity at a time when clarity is often needed most. One of the most difficult aspects of estate administration is uncertainty. Family members may not know who is responsible for managing assets, how decisions should be made, or what the deceased person intended. Questions that seem straightforward can quickly become sources of stress when no clear answers exist.

A trust helps reduce that uncertainty by identifying who will act, what authority they possess, and how assets should be handled. It provides direction when emotions are high and decisions feel overwhelming. While no legal document can eliminate every challenge, a trust can significantly reduce confusion and help families move forward with greater confidence.

Another misconception is that trusts exist solely to avoid

probate. While avoiding or simplifying probate is often one benefit of a trust, it is rarely the only reason families create them. In many cases, the greater value lies in the continuity and structure they provide. A trust can help ensure that financial affairs continue to be managed during incapacity, that assets are distributed according to clear instructions, and that loved ones have guidance during a difficult transition.

Perhaps most importantly, trusts allow people to make decisions proactively rather than leaving important questions unanswered. Without planning, families are often left trying to determine what someone would have wanted. With a trust, many of those decisions have already been made. The focus shifts from guessing intentions to carrying them out.

The purpose of a trust is not to create complexity. It is

Continued on page 15



Thoughtful estate planning and probate guidance for families on the Emerald Coast.



- Estate Planning & Wills
- Trust Formation & Administration
- Probate & Ancillary Administration
- Business & Corporate Matters
- Real Estate

Planning for Peace Starts Here

Life doesn’t always give us time to prepare—but a clear plan can make all the difference.

At The Cole Law Firm, we provide trusted legal guidance to individuals, families, property owners, community associations, and businesses throughout Northwest Florida. Our practice includes estate planning, probate and trust matters, guardianships, real estate, and community association and development matters. Whether you’re planning for the future, navigating the loss of a loved one, addressing a property matter, or seeking experienced legal guidance for your community or business, our goal is simple: provide clear answers, practical solutions, and personal service you can feel confident in.

Schedule a consultation today. 850-610-0185

Niceville, Florida | colelawfl.com | Serving Niceville, Destin, Freeport and the Emerald Coast



Bay Buzz

Celebrate 70 Years of Business and Community 70th Anniversary Gala & Civic Hall of Fame Induction

Thursday, Sept. 17, 2026 | 6–8:30 p.m.

The District, 511 Government Ave., Valparaiso

The Niceville Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce will celebrate its 70th anniversary while honoring a distinguished group of community leaders with induction into the Niceville Valparaiso Civic Hall of Fame. Two milestone events will come together for one unforgettable evening on Thursday, Sept. 17.

Now is the time to reserve a table or purchase individual tickets. A table of eight offers a memorable way to recognize employees, entertain clients or celebrate with friends. Business-

es may also share a table for an affordable opportunity to connect and expand their networks.

New this year, a commemorative 70th Anniversary Keepsake Program will showcase local history, Chamber milestones and the businesses that have helped shape the community. A limited number of Community Legacy Ads are available: Full page: \$300; Half page: \$150. Tables, tickets and advertising space are limited.

To reserve a table, purchase tickets or secure an ad, call 850-678-2323, email events@nicevillechamber.com or visit nicevillechamber.com.

Choctawhatchee Audubon: September Events

Thursday, September 3

Kick off the 2026–27 season with social time at 6:30 p.m.,

followed at 7 p.m. by Theresa Martin's presentation, Honeybees of Thailand.

Saturday, September 19

Veterans Park Bird Walk at 7:30 a.m. Meet on the north side of the Destin–Fort Walton Beach Convention Center parking lot. Bring water and binoculars; wear closed-toe shoes, long pants and a hat. Leader: Jim Anderton, 850-543-2221.

Saturday, September 26

Mattie Kelly Family Bay Day, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Visit our table for bird-themed games and family activities—or volunteer to help set up, staff the table or pack up.



EVENTS

continued from page 8

11th Annual Bloody Mary Festival

Saturday, Oct. 10, 2026 | 11 a.m.–2 p.m.

The Market Shops

Raise a glass to more than a decade of one of the Emerald Coast's favorite fall events. Guests ages 21 and older can enjoy unlimited tastes of creative Bloody Marys prepared by area restaurants, bars and caterers, along with local food samples, live music, champagne, craft beer, seltzers, a cigar bar, SEC football, a photo booth and exclusive shopping.

Attendees can vote for the People's Choice Award, while local celebrities and food critics select the overall and Best Accountment winners. Proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity–Walton County and its work to provide stable, affordable housing for local families.

Purchase tickets at themarketshops.com/bloody-mary-festival.

10th Annual Harvest Wine & Food Festival

Thursday–Sunday, Oct. 15–18, 2026

WaterColor and locations throughout South Walton

Sip, savor and celebrate during four unforgettable days of exceptional wine and cuisine at the Harvest Wine & Food Festival, produced by the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation.

The festivities begin Thursday with intimate Harvest Wine Dinners at restaurants and venues throughout South Walton. Friday's Harvest After Dark brings elevated wines, unexpected pairings and culinary creations to Cerulean Park. Saturday features the signature Grand Tasting, followed by a spirited Jazz Cocktail Brunch on Sunday.

Proceeds benefit the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation and its mission to help children in need throughout Northwest Florida. Visit dcwaf.org/harvest-festival for the complete schedule and ticket information.



Destin Songwriter Festival

Saturday–Sunday, Oct. 24–25, 2026

Destin

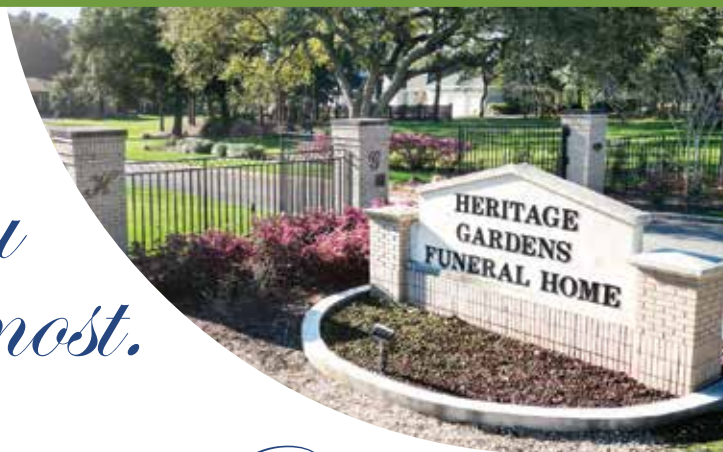
Music, memories and mission come together during the Destin Songwriter Festival, which continues its partnership with Operation Song for a second consecutive year.

Operation Song pairs veterans, active-duty service members and military families with professional songwriters who transform their stories into songs. This year, the organization aims to write 250 songs with 250 veterans in celebration of America's 250th birthday.

Ticket purchases, sponsorships and other festival support help raise awareness and funds for Operation Song and its work to help service members and their families heal, preserve their legacies and share their voices through music.

Purchase tickets or learn more at DestinSongwriterFestival.com.

*Here
when you
need us most.*



HERITAGE GARDENS
Funeral Home, Cemetery, & Crematory

LOCAL • COMPASSIONATE • AFFORDABLE

850-729-1955

Independently Owned

www.heritagegardensfuneralhome.com

2201 N. Partin Drive, Niceville, FL 32578



BAY Life

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

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

Publisher/Executive Editor

Lori Leath Miller
Lori@LifeMediaGrp.com

Director, Advertising Sales

Scott Miller
Scott@LifeMediaGrp.com

Art Director

Kim Harper

Writers

Breanna Becker
Kenneth Books
Will Estell
Barbara Palmgren
Michelle Ruschman
“Doc” Doug Stauffer

To Advertise

850.688.9886

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

© Copyright 2026 Bay Life



By TERESA HALVERSON,
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT/COMMUNITY
RELATIONS, THE MANOR AT
BLUE WATER BAY

Healing Goes Beyond
Physical Recovery

When seniors begin rehabilitation after an illness, injury, or hospitalization, the focus is often placed on rebuilding strength, improving mobility, and restoring independence. While these physical improvements are important, rehabilitation also plays a significant role in supporting emotional health.

For many older adults, health challenges can lead to feelings



of frustration, anxiety, loneliness, and a loss of confidence. Rehabilitation provides more than therapeutic exercises and treatment plans. It offers encouragement, structure, social interaction, and renewed hope.

Improving Quality of Life
Through Rehabilitation

The goal of rehabilitation is not simply to treat symptoms. It is to help seniors remain active, independent, and engaged in the activities they enjoy.

With the right combination of therapy, education, and support, older adults can successfully manage chronic health conditions while maintaining their independence and improving their overall quality of life.

At **The Manor at Blue Water Bay**, our rehabilitation team is committed to providing

compassionate, personalized care that helps seniors overcome challenges, achieve their goals, and continue living life to the fullest. At the Manor at Blue Water Bay, our comprehensive inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation programs are designed to help patients regain strength, restore independence, and improve their quality of life through personalized therapy and compassionate care.

Rebuilding Confidence
Through Rehabilitation

Physical, occupational, speech therapy and skilled nursing services help seniors regain abilities that may have been lost following surgery, illness, or injury. Each small achievement, whether walking farther, preparing a meal independently, or improving communication skills, helps restore confidence.

As progress is made, many seniors begin to feel more optimistic about their recovery and more comfortable participating in everyday activities. The goal is to return home stronger and healthier.

The Importance
of Social
Engagement

Rehabilitation programs provide valuable opportunities for social engagement. Through therapy sessions, group activities, educational programs, and interactions with healthcare professionals, seniors can develop meaningful relationships and strengthen their sense of connection and community. Isolation and loneliness can negatively affect both physical and emotional well-being.

- Regular social engagement can help:
- Reduce feelings of loneliness
- Improve mood and emotional well-being
- Increase motivation during recovery
- Strengthen cognitive function
- Encourage participation in healthy activities
- A Sense of Purpose Promotes Healing

Remaining active and involved helps seniors maintain a sense of purpose. Participating in therapy, setting personal goals, and celebrating milestones can provide motivation and a renewed sense of accomplishment.

Simple interactions, such as sharing a meal, participating in an activity, or attending a support group, can have a powerful impact on emotional health.

Recovery Is Stronger
Together

Successful rehabilitation involves more than physical healing. Emotional support, social connections, and compassionate care all contribute to a healthier and more fulfilling recovery.

When seniors feel supported, encouraged, and connected to others, they are often more engaged in their rehabilitation journey and better equipped to

maintain their independence and quality of life.

At The Manor at Blue Water Bay, we understand that healing involves caring for the whole person. Through rehabilitation services and meaningful social engagement, we strive to help every patient achieve both physical recovery and emotional well-being. Call us today for a tour and information on how we can help you and/or your loved one on the road to recovery.

Email: wecare@manoratbwb.com



HONORING THOSE
Who Serve

★ ★ ★

COMPASSIONATE CARE.
PROVEN RESULTS.
A STRONGER TOMORROW.

★

POST-HOSPITAL INPATIENT CARE ★ OUTPATIENT SERVICES

Helping You Recover. Helping You Thrive.



REHABILITATION
Regain strength,
independence and
confidence.

★



THERAPY SERVICES
Physical, Occupational
and Speech Therapy
tailored to you.

★



RESPIRATORY CARE
Specialized respiratory
therapy for better
breathing and recovery.

★



COMPASSIONATE CARE
Experienced professionals
dedicated to your
well-being.

★



PROUDLY SERVING
Our veterans,
our community and
their families.

★



NOW OFFERING
IN-HOUSE
CONSULTATIONS

Convenient. Collaborative. Comprehensive.



PHYSIATRIST
(Physical Medicine
& Rehabilitation)



NEUROLOGY



NEPHROLOGY



CARDIOLOGY



RESPIRATORY
THERAPY



The Manor
at Blue Water Bay

— WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE THE MANOR —



Skilled Nursing Care



Personalized Rehabilitation
Programs



Experienced Clinical Team



Comfortable, Home-Like
Environment



Coordination of Care for
Faster Recovery





1500 N. White Point Road
Niceville, FL 32578



850-897-5592



www.manoratbwb.com

★ ★ ★ ASK YOUR HOSPITAL DISCHARGE PLANNER ABOUT THE MANOR AT BLUE WATER BAY. ★ ★ ★

One of Our Own: Mayor Mark Franks Sworn in as President

By “DOC” DOUG STAUFFER

Some moments in public service feel bigger than a title or an election. Watching Shalimar Mayor Mark Franks become President of the Florida League of Cities was one of those moments for me. It was not simply watching another municipal officer move into statewide leadership. It was watching one of our own—a man born and raised in Okaloosa County, shaped by this community and deeply

FORT WALTON ELKS LODGE #1795

OKTOBERFEST

2026



SATURDAY • SEPTEMBER 19, 2026 •



11AM - 4PM

Bringing the Community Together to Give Back







FOOD

BEER

LIVE MUSIC

GROWING BUSINESSES

Audit • Tax • Consulting



CRI NICEVILLE

4502 E Hwy 20, Ste A

Niceville, FL 32578

850.897.4333

CRI CRESTVIEW

866 N Ferdon Blvd

Crestview, FL 32536

850.682.4357

Carr, Riggs & Ingram | CRIadv.com



*Firm practice structure statement - criadv.com/disclaimer

Hollywood, Fla. The League represents Florida’s 411 cities, towns, and villages and has served as the unified voice of municipal government for more than a century.

Making the occasion all the more special was the man who administered the oath: State Representative Patt Maney. Patt did far more than swear Mark into office. He shared some personal stories about Mark as a young man, giving people from across Florida a glimpse of the person many of us in Northwest Florida have known for years. We all especially enjoyed that part. Titles can tell you what office a person holds; stories tell you something about the person who holds it. If you see Mayor Franks, ask him about the teenage video reenactment that once brought the SWAT team into the story. Apparently, they mistook Mark’s youthful production for the real Miami Vice.

Mark’s roots here run deep. He was born and raised in Okaloosa County, graduated from Fort Walton Beach High School in 1989, and has family ties to the area stretching back to the 1930s. His great-grandfather, James Hayes, was among the local businessmen who helped shape early Fort Walton Beach and built the landmark Goofy Golf in 1959.

Mark has served as Mayor of Shalimar since April 2019. Before reaching the top statewide post as president, he built his leadership experience close to home, including serving as president of the Northwest Florida League of Cities. He joined the Florida League of Cities Board of Directors in 2023 and was elected second vice president in 2024. That began a multi-year progression: first vice president for 2025-26 and now president for 2026-27.

That progression has involved real work, not simply waiting for the next title. As first vice president, Mark chaired the League’s Legislative Committee, helping review policy recommendations affecting municipalities throughout the state. The League’s work includes advocacy, education, training, and resources that help local officials better serve their communities.

What I appreciate about Mark is that he has never forgotten where he comes from. When he first won statewide office in the League in 2024, he spoke about bringing the perspective of smaller cities to the table. That matters. Shalimar may be a small town, but its size has never limited its influence. Good local government is built on service, relationships, and stewardship—and on leaders who remember the people they were elected to serve.

It was wonderful to celebrate this achievement with Mark. I was proud for Shalimar, proud for Okaloosa County and proud for Northwest Florida. Something was fitting about seeing a leader from one of our smaller communities entrusted with helping lead an organization representing municipalities throughout the free state of Florida.

Mark has also been quick to recognize the support of his wife, Luoma, throughout this journey. Those of us who serve in public life know that every elected official has loved ones behind the scenes who share the schedule, the travel, the late nights, and the responsibilities. Mark publicly thanked Luoma when his statewide leadership journey began in 2024 and thanked her again.

Congratulations, President Mark Franks. You have represented Shalimar and Northwest Florida well. Now you can carry that same hometown spirit across the entire state.

It was a privilege to be there and celebrate the moment with you and many of our other Northwest Florida elected officials.



Floral Trends We're Loving in 2026



BY KRISTIN LOCKHART, OWNER & LEAD DESIGNER, COUTURE FLORALS & EVENTS

One of my favorite parts of being a floral designer is watching wedding trends evolve while helping couples create celebrations that feel timeless and uniquely their own. Every year brings fresh inspiration, and 2026 is proving to be a beautiful blend of modern elegance, organic design and personal expression.

As we continue designing weddings and events across the Emerald Coast, several trends are standing out in a big way this year.

One trend that continues to dominate wedding receptions is the use of bud vase tablescapes. Couples are embracing the understated beauty of individual stems arranged in collections of small vases rather than large, traditional centerpieces. The look feels intentional, romantic and sophisticated while maintaining the minimalist aesthetic many couples are seeking. Bud vases create visual interest across a table while allowing guests to easily connect and converse.

Another trend we're seeing is a move away from the traditional floral arbor and toward statement floral columns. Large floral installations create a dramatic focal point while offering a more contemporary, architectural feel. Whether framing a ceremony or anchoring a reception space, floral columns make



an impact without overwhelming the venue.

I'm also loving the continued shift toward organic, nature-inspired floral design. Today's couples are less interested in perfectly symmetrical arrangements and more drawn to florals that feel gathered, textured and naturally beautiful. These designs often incorporate movement and unexpected elements that create depth and visual interest while still feeling refined and elegant.

If there's one floral element making a statement this year, it's hanging amaranthus. Its flowing texture adds drama and romance to bouquets, ceremony installations and reception designs.

We're also seeing continued demand for calla lilies and other modern floral varieties with clean lines and sculptural forms. White-and-green palettes remain incredibly popular, offering a fresh, sophisticated look that complements nearly any setting.

But don't get me wrong—modern neutrals aren't the only trend here to stay.

Soft pastel palettes continue to be a favorite among brides, bringing romance and timeless beauty to wedding celebrations. We're also seeing plenty of blue-



toned palettes, especially along the Emerald Coast, where the colors naturally complement the water, sky and coastal surroundings. From soft blush and lavender to dusty blue and French blue, these color combinations continue to create stunning, memorable events.

While trends are always fun

to follow, the most beautiful weddings are the ones that reflect the couple's personality and story. Flowers should do more than decorate a space—they should help create an experience and leave guests with lasting memories.

The best part of 2026's wedding trends is that there truly is



something for everyone. Whether your style leans modern and minimalist, romantic and colorful or somewhere in between, today's floral designs offer endless opportunities to create something uniquely your own.

And honestly? We love it ... all of it.

Kristin Lockhart is owner and lead designer of Couture Florals & Events, serving couples across the Emerald Coast with custom floral and event design. Visit www.couturefloralsdesign.com.



Local, professional photographer specializing in families, weddings, and events. My passion lies in creating lasting memories through photographs, and I cherish the opportunity to be part of such meaningful moments!

BEST IN DESTIN
WEDDING MAGAZINE | FORT LAUDERDALE | 2025

2024 BEST of the EMERALD COAST

205-567-2779
savvyleighphotography@gmail.com
www.savvyleighphoto.com



MEDICAL MARIJUANA CARD CONSULTATION



Elevate Your Wellness with Medical Marijuana

Obtain Your Physician Consultation and Med Card for a Healthier, Happier You!

- PANAMA CITY
- MIRAMAR BEACH
- PENSACOLA
- MARIANNA

BOOK A VISIT!



850-213-1215 THEKAYALIFE.COM



COUTURE FLORALS & EVENTS

WHERE EVERY DETAIL *Blooms* BEAUTIFULLY

DESTIN | 30A | EMERALD COAST

Custom floral and event design specializing in breathtaking weddings, elegant installations and unforgettable celebrations.



WEDDINGS • BRIDAL EVENTS • CORPORATE EVENTS
LUXURY INSTALLATIONS • FULL-SERVICE DESIGN



Schedule Your Consultation Today

COUTUREFLORALSDESIGN.COM
850-830-5865 | 214-733-1100



Niceville High School Graduate Now Serves as Leadership

BY KENNETH BOOKS

If anyone understands what Niceville High School is all about, it's Amy Meyer.

Meyer was named principal of the school at an April 27 meeting of the school district, creating a circle of responsibility and success that began when she was a student at the high school. She succeeds Charlie Marelo, who was named Director of Human Resources for the district. She was formerly the principal of Niceville Elementary.

"(Administration) is something I thought I would never do because I liked teaching," Meyer, 54, said. But, she added, serving as principal enabled her to have a bigger impact than teaching. "I love the relationships I can build with so many people and offer guidance and perspectives," she said. The only thing about administration that she could do without is "the paperwork and emails. I always want to be able to communicate with people."

Meyer began her years in the classroom as a math teacher, serving special needs children at Valparaiso Elementary School before moving to Niceville High. She earned her bachelor of arts in psychology and master of arts in educational leadership from the University of West Florida after her family moved back to the area with her Air Force father. Education is a fam-



ily affair as well, as her husband, Grant, serves as assistant superintendent of operations for the district. She also has two grown sons, Hayden and Harley.

"I always wanted to be a teacher," she said, "starting with elementary and then high school. It doesn't matter the age of the kids. They're all the same. When I was teaching here I recognized some kids I knew from elementary school. It was really cool to see how far they had come. It really changed my perspective. I realized everyone can grow and learn because there's so much potential in all of us."

While she enjoys this aspect of her career, Meyer looks back fondly of her days in the classroom. "The best part of teach-

ing is reaching the kids who really didn't want to be there," she said, "and trying to motivate them to want to succeed. I want to help all of them."

And sometimes the youngsters who didn't want to be there eventually appreciated her mentorship. "I love hearing from

kids who say, 'Hey, I did that because you taught me,'" she said. "I had one who hated school. She was smart, but unmotivated. But eventually, she went to Troy and got her RN degree. 'Kids often don't know what they want to do, but need to find their passion.'"

What does the future hold for Meyer? "I hope to stay here and finish my career," she said. "I hope to leave the school better than when I found it. I want everyone when they come here to feel welcome and invited. I want people to know I'm happy here and I want to be an open door."

Start Here. Engineer Your Future Here.

A newly approved partnership between Northwest Florida State College and the University of West Florida will give local students a more affordable path to an engineering degree.

Students can begin at NWFSC's Niceville campus, then transition to UWF to complete their bachelor's degree at the schools' joint campus in Fort Walton Beach—remaining close to their families, jobs and community.

The Florida State Board of Education approved four new Specialized Associate in Arts Transfer degree programs at NWFSC:

- Civil Engineering
- Computer Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering

"A student can start here, stay here and build a successful future here," said NWFSC President Mel Ponder.

Students will complete foundational mathematics, science, engineering and general education courses at NWFSC before moving into upper-level engineering courses through UWF.

The specialized transfer degree includes prerequisites beyond those in a traditional 60-credit Associate in Arts program, helping students transition smoothly.

The additional required credits may qualify for financial aid. Combined with NWFSC's affordability and the option to live at home, this could make an engineering degree attainable for more students.

The partnership also supports Northwest Florida's demand for engineers in



aerospace, defense, technology, construction, infrastructure and manufacturing. By creating a clear path from a student's first college course through a bachelor's degree, NWFSC and UWF hope to prepare more residents for high-demand careers—and encourage them to build their futures locally.

Enrollment details, schedules and anticipated start dates will be announced as implementation plans are completed.

Learn more at NWFSC. edu/engineering.

**you might not know we
have life, home, auto and
business insurance.
now you do.**

simple human sense



(850) 729-2131

www.nicevilleinsurance.com

Auto-Owners
INSURANCE

LIFE • HOME • CAR • BUSINESS

Contact Niceville Insurance to determine eligibility for property insurance in the state of Florida from a member of the Auto-Owners Insurance GroupSM.

5 Tips to Help Your Child Develop Good Study Habits

When it comes to studying, kids need to have good habits to start the year off right and stay on track. Good study habits will build strong math students and instill a positive outlook on their learning, which is so important for young students.

Fortunately, this does not have to be overwhelming. Here are five tips to help your child develop good study habits:

Tip #1: Find the best time to study and stick to it.



One thing is for sure, daily study time is important, and this is undoubtedly true for math. Together with your child, determine the best time to do this each day. When does your child feel they are most productive? Are there extracurricular activities to consider? Since consistency is most important in building habits, it is critical to prioritize these study sessions.

Building this habit is a team effort and can be made into a fun family activity. Perhaps take some time this month to sit with your child and create a monthly or weekly calendar to display the schedule visually. You may need to tweak the schedule throughout the year. Consider a magnetic, Velcro, or dry-erase board. Use stickers and colors so the calendar is attractive. Hang the schedule somewhere where it will be easily accessible all year!

Tip #2: Set aside downtime for rest and play.

A well-rested student shows up alert to school, with a positive attitude, ready to focus. A good night's sleep helps a student process information and



better retain the material studied that day.¹ To ensure a good night's sleep, setting rules for electronics use and eating might be helpful.

Besides rest, we know that a balance of study and play is beneficial for any child to keep them engaged and happy. Dedicate time for play, just like you do for study. A student who gets outside to exercise has an easier time focusing on their studies, is better equipped to face emotional challenges, and has a better night's sleep.

Tip #3: Foster the art of taking good notes ...

... and reviewing them.

Taking good notes in class as well as at home is a valuable skill to have. Here are some ways your child can get the most out of it:

- Copy class notes over by hand. This is a great way to keep it in memory.
- Make sure your child understands what they have written down. If not, ask questions.
- Discuss school lessons with friends or family members. Teaching is a proven way to master your skills.
- Revisit and review notes regularly to keep the material fresh.

Tip #4: Set personal goals.

Whether it is to complete all assigned homework, improve a grade over a specific period, or excel in class in both understanding and grades, a goal will push your child forward.

How you can help:

For many people, the question is not whether they are wealthy enough to need a trust. The better question is whether having a clear plan would make life easier for the people they care about most. In many cases, the answer is yes.

• Ask what they want to accomplish. Explore academic and non-academic goals.

• Make a checklist to have something to look at and work toward; after all, there is nothing better than checking something off a list! Alternatively, consider a vision board or a goal ladder.

• Avoid comments such as, "This is easy," "This is going to be tough," or "I was never good at this either." Begin the school year with a clean slate.

Tip #5: Create a study space that works for your child.

Effective study takes place in a space that feels comfortable and safe. Your child will be most productive in a dedicated, organized study space.

Whether it is a separate room or the corner of a shared space, designate an area of study that is distraction-free, clean, and organized. Be sure to have the necessary supplies and keep them in this specific location for easy access. Consider decorating the space with the child's accomplishments and words of inspiration.

A lack of organization directly correlates with student success and grades. Effective study habits, when implemented correctly and consistently, can lead to

personal discipline — a critical component to lifetime success.

For additional support in Math or in reinforcing good study habits, call or stop by Mathnasium of Niceville—serving students from Niceville, Bluewater Bay, Shalimar, Valparaiso

and Fort Walton Beach. Local schools include Niceville High School, Bluewater Bay Elementary School, Plew Elementary School, Ruckel Middle School and Rocky Bayou Christian School. Mathnasium of Niceville | 1538 E. John Sims Pkwy. | 850-987-MATH (6284).



Ace the School Year from Day One

Get Ahead Now. Stay Ahead All Year.

With each math concept depending on the last, today's small confusions can snowball into tomorrow's poor test scores. Invest now in math skills that will carry your child through the entire year with confidence and competence.

Experience the Mathnasium difference:

- Expert instructors that teach for comprehension
- Results that stick, not temporary fixes
- A fun environment where students actually get excited about math



MATHNASIUM
The Math Learning Center



the enjoydrive

New and Used auto loan rates as low as

4.74% APR
up to 66 months

Apply for on-site financing when you shop at any participating dealer, or apply online.

eglinfcu.org/auto

Repayment example: If you borrow \$30,000 at 4.74% APR for 66 months, your monthly payment is approximately \$519.30.



Some restrictions apply. Rates valid Sept. 1 – Oct. 31, 2026.

TRUSTS

continued from page 9

to create clarity. It is not a tool reserved for a select few, but a planning option available to families who want greater organization, continuity, and peace of mind.

Local Dining, Drinks, Coffee & Entertainment

AJ's Seafood & Oyster Bar

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

area. Attention all die hard football fans, AJ's boasts the one and only Jumbotron on the Destin Harbor. AJ's serves up delicious daily specials, mouth-watering drinks plus entertaining live music all month. Don't miss any of the action just come on down to AJ's Seafood and Oyster Bar all season long.

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

LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant

Suds, Songs, Sunsets and Sports! Welcome to LJ Schoo-

ners 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.

Sundays: Brunch, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Tuesdays: Taco & Margarita

Night, 3-9 p.m.

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

Thursdays: Open Mic/Karaoke, 6-10 p.m.

Saturdays: Steak Night, 5-9 p.m.

Sept. 13: Cardboard Boat Race, 4 p.m.

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

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

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

(850) 897-6400



bluewaterbaymarina.com/schooners

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

JoJo's Coffee and Goodness

An iconic favorite of locals, owner and operator of JoJo's Coffee and Goodness Angela "JoJo" Stevenson invites you to enter her cafe and relaxed coffee shop atmosphere for a daily dose of "goodness." Stop in for mouth-watering cinnamon rolls, scones, coffee cake, banana and pumpkin breads, apple cider muffins, chocolate chip cookie bars, or brownies with espresso ganache. Gluten free bakery items available. Coffee roasted every week in-house. Try a breakfast special with quiche or kolache alongside hashbrown casserole and cup of coffee. Breakfast burritos are rolled and ready to grab and go- choose from bacon, birria, chorizo or veggie served with house made cilantro lime or chipotle sauces. Espresso, latte, cappuccino, cold brew or nitro made to order. Breakfast and lunch sandwich specials and a full evening catering menu if you are looking to host an event or party. Come for the coffee, stay for the goodness!

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

Tuesday-Saturday.

(850) 737-6194

4652 Hwy. 20 East, Niceville
bigorangehousedesigns.com



Step Up
Provider

Our beans are roasted in house!

Breakfast: Bakery • Breakfast Sandwiches • Burritos

Lunch: Chicken Salad • BLTs • Paninis • And MORE

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

Come for the coffee, stay for the goodness.

Looking for event space? Give us a call!



Come create with us! ART CLASSES FOR ALL AGES!

We do PARTIES! Kid's Birthdays • Girl's Night Out

Summer Art Camp Tues. & Thurs. 10-2

FOLLOW US FOR CLASS SCHEDULES: [f](#) [i](#) [i](#) [p](#)

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

bigorangehousedesigns.com

— 4TH ANNUAL —

SANDY BAGS

"Bags on the Porch"

CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

BENEFITTING

FORE her™

Helping local women facing breast cancer through support, education & financial assistance on the Emerald Coast.

SATURDAY
SEPT. 12, 2026

9AM - 2PM

THE BACK PORCH
DESTIN, FL

SCAN TO REGISTER!

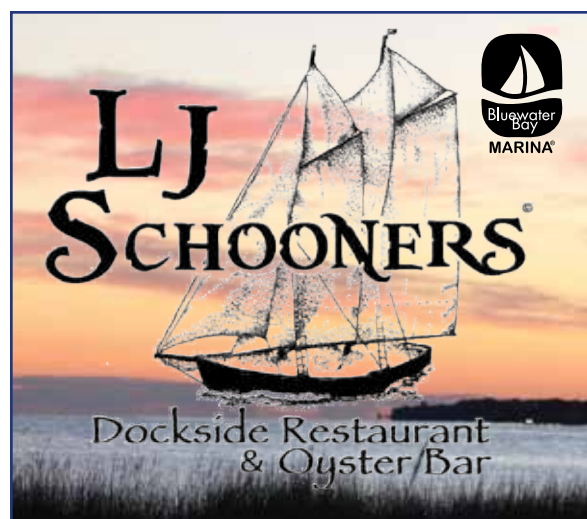
GRAB YOUR PARTNER
REGISTER YOUR TEAM
Today!

\$150 PER TEAM

- ✓ 1 TEAM IN THE TOURNAMENT (2 PLAYERS)
- ✓ 2 EVENT T-SHIRTS INCLUDED

PLAY. SUPPORT. MAKE AN IMPACT.
Let's toss it for a great cause!

BENEFITTING FORE HER AND OTHER LOCAL ROTARY INITIATIVES



19th Annual Cardboard Boat Race

Sunday, Sept. 13 • 4PM

Course to be run in front of LJ Schooners Dockside Restaurant & Oyster Bar. Rules & registration: bluewaterbaymarina.com.



Weekly Specials and Activities

Sunday Brunch: 9am - 1pm | Margarita Monday | Taco Tuesdays

Wednesday: Kid's Eat Free & BBSC Sailboat Race 6pm

Monday & Tuesday: \$15 Dozen Raw Oysters, \$3 House Pints

Thursdays: Open Mic/Karaoke 6-10pm | Thursday Throw Down 6pm

Oyster Bar Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 3pm-10pm, Fri.-Sat. 11am to midnight, Sun. 9am to 9pm w/Brunch 9am-1pm, Lunch 1pm

Restaurant Hours: Mon.-Tues. Closed, Weds.-Sat. 11am to 9pm, Sun. 9am to 9pm, Sunday Brunch 9am to 1pm, Lunch 1pm



More Events and Live Entertainment

Sept. 4: Trevor Van 6-10pm

Sept. 5: Coconut Radio 4-8pm

Sept. 11: Jody Lucas 6-9pm

Sept. 13: 19th Annual Cardboard Boat Race 4pm

Sept. 13: Niceville Valparaiso Rotary Club Duck Race (Following Cardboard Boat Race)

Sept. 18: The Aces 6-10pm

Sept. 25: Parker & Ivoree Willingham 6-10pm

Sept. 27: Shrimp Boil with Byrd's Seafood Market 4pm-7pm, Ronny Dean Garrett 4-8pm

290 Yacht Club Dr., Niceville • Bluewater Bay • (850) 897-6400 • Visit www.bluewaterbaymarina.com for more events!

SOLDIERS

continued from page 3

there are people that care about us. Second, this experience has been a great transformation not only in myself but in others.”

His words capture the heart of Soldiers on the Water: Fishing may provide the setting, but the relationships formed among veterans, caregivers, captains, volunteers and community members carry the event’s impact far beyond the day itself.

Answering the Call

Soldiers on the Water reflects a spirit Niceville and Valparaiso residents know well—neighbors stepping forward to support those who serve.

The event is made possible through the generosity of people and organizations across the Emerald Coast. Charter captains and boat owners provide vessels, equipment, expertise and time. Businesses and professional organizations contribute financial sponsorships and in-kind donations, while volunteers assist with registration, meals, supplies and logistics.

Community support also provides participants with bags



containing water, snacks, sunscreen and other necessities. Additional in-kind needs may include lip balm, coolers, raffle prizes, gift certificates and food support.

Niceville and Valparaiso businesses, civic organizations, professional groups and residents can all take part. Whether someone volunteers, provides supplies, registers a boat or connects an eligible veteran with the program, each contribution becomes part of a larger expression of gratitude.

ECAR represents more than 5,000 REALTOR® members across Okaloosa and Walton

counties and maintains an office in Santa Rosa Beach. Soldiers on the Water allows the organization to extend its community involvement beyond the real estate profession, uniting REALTORS®, local businesses, charter captains and volunteers in honoring those who have sacrificed in service to the country.

Want to Get Involved?

Combat-wounded veterans must register in advance. There are no tickets to purchase, and eligible veterans participate at no cost. Space is limited, and applicants may be placed on a waitlist.



Local charter captains and boat owners are invited to register a vessel.

Businesses and community organizations can assist through financial sponsorships or in-kind donations.

Niceville and Valparaiso-area residents interested in volunteering or providing other support should contact ECAR to learn which needs remain.

Veterans can register at form.jotform.com/ECAOR/2026-sow-attendee. Prospective sponsors and in-kind donors can visit form.jotform.com/ECAOR/2026-sow-sponsors. Boat owners, charter



captains, volunteers and other supporters can find information at www.emeraldcoastrealtors.com/soldiers-on-the-water/. For additional information or to ask about remaining opportunities, contact Wendy Permenter at info@ecaor.com.

For Niceville and Valparaiso—a home to many veterans and military families—Soldiers on the Water offers a meaningful way to honor neighbors whose courage and sacrifices continue long after their uniforms are put away.

LARGEST SELECTION OF GOLF CARTS



EXCLUSIVE GIFT

Present this layout upon purchasing a cart to receive an exclusive gift.



Watersound® is a service mark of The St. Joe Company and is used under license.



SALES • SERVICE • PARTS AND ACCESSORIES • FINANCING

Join the *Neighborhood* Fun

SHOP BY BRANDS

Star EV

EVolution

GEM Car

Club Car

Denago EV

Atlas

Epic/Icon





Niceville City Council Salutes Little League State Champs

By “DOC” DOUG STAUFFER

There are some nights at City Hall when the best thing on the agenda has nothing to do with ordinances, budgets or roads. Tuesday, August 11, was one of those nights as the Niceville City Council had the privilege of recognizing the Niceville-Valparaiso Little League 8-10 All-Stars, the **2026 Florida Little League Baseball State Champions**. The City of Niceville proudly celebrated the team afterward as the “Niceville Little League STATE CHAMPS!”

It had been **16 years** since a Niceville Little League baseball team at any age level had brought home a Florida state championship. These young men changed that with a remarkable summer run that took them from the District 1 championship through Section 1 and eventually to St. Augustine for the Florida championship.

Niceville dominated Section 1, defeating Northwest Leon 16-1 and 6-0. At state, the competition became tougher, but the victories kept coming. Niceville opened with a 15-5 win over Viera Suntree, followed by an 8-5 victory over North Naples. Their only setback came in a narrow 6-5 loss to Dunedin, located near Clearwater in the Tampa Bay area.

That loss could have ended the dream. Instead, Niceville



advanced through a three-team tiebreaker based on the fewest runs allowed, earning a championship matchup with undefeated Winter Garden.

With everything on the line, the Niceville All-Stars responded. They defeated Winter Garden **6-3** and brought the Florida championship banner home to Okaloosa County.

Winning Florida was not the end of their journey. The team **traveled 779 miles to Wilson, North Carolina**, to represent the Sunshine State in the Tournament of State Champions. For the 8-10 division, the tournament represents the highest level of postseason competition available. Niceville advanced all the way to the semifinals before South Carolina champion Northwood Little League ended the run with a hard-fought 5-3 decision.

At the August City Council meeting, Mayor Pro Tem Kathy Alley and the Niceville City Council recognized the players and coaches with a proclamation honoring their championship season. The team, in turn, presented the City of Niceville with a signed jersey—a fitting keepsake from a group of young men who represented their community so well.

Great coaching produces outstanding results, but youth sports are about far more than the final score. They teach young people how to prepare, work together, handle adversity, and represent something larger than themselves. Those lessons do not happen by accident. They come because adults are willing to invest their time, experience, and encouragement in the next generation.

Niceville-Valparaiso Little League is the largest organized baseball program for boys and girls in District 1, and it is powered by volunteers. Niceville’s recreation facilities have long been part of that partnership. The city’s softball complex, established in 1975, serves as a home for Little League baseball and softball.

Head Coach Chris Brunson was joined by assistant coaches Jacob Lovell, Justin Brazell and Alex Sandroni. The championship roster included Kellan Tomaschko, Carson Forehand, Chase Lovell, Gunner Gheen, Porter Brunson, Bodhi Spillman, Tyler Broussard, Isaac Dwyer, Liam Sandroni, Pierson Dvorak, Winston Winterer and Jordan Brazell.

It was a joy to meet these young champions at City Hall and congratulate them personally. Their trophy and banner tell us what they accomplished on the baseball field. Their teamwork, sportsmanship, and determination tell us something even more important about the young people who will someday lead our community.

Niceville is proud of its 2026 state champions—and rightly so.





ROOF PRO

Roofing Specialists

Most Awarded Roofing Contractor

State Licensed • License # CCC133693

Shingle - Metal - Tile Roof Replacement Experts

FREE Estimates within 24 Hrs.



Scan this QR Code for a 5% Discount!



(850) 332-3330 | Roofproroofing.com |  [roofproroofing](https://www.facebook.com/roofproroofing)

BRIGHT BLUE POOLS

Commercial & Residential
Pool Remodeling
No Pool Too Big



We'll Make Your Pool Look New

Professional Plastering and Tile

Blue Diamond Finish • Pebble Finish
10 Year Guarantee • Free Quotes

Our owner, Curtis Nelson, makes it a point to be on the jobsite for every project to ensure everything goes according to plan.

Plastering Pools Since 1975

850.496.2025
BrightBluePools.com

Proudly serving the entire Florida Panhandle!

High School Football Schedules

Niceville High School	2026 Rocky Bayou
Aug 21: vs. Prattville (AL), 5 pm	Aug. 20: at Northview (7 pm)
Aug 28: vs. West Florida, 5 pm	Aug. 28: vs. Joshua Christian (7 pm CT)
Sep 4: at Mosley, 7 pm (or 5 pm)	Sept. 11: vs. Aucilla Christian (7P M CT)
Sep 11: vs. Navarre*, 7 pm (District game)	Sept. 18: vs. Franklin County (7 pm CT)
Sep 18: at Choctawhatchee, 7 pm	Sept. 25: vs. Brookwood (7 pm CT)
Sep 25: vs. Tate*, 7 pm (District game)	Oct. 2: at Deane Bozeman (7 pm)
Oct 2: vs. Godby, 5 pm	Oct. 9: vs. Central Milton (7 pm CT – Homecoming)
Oct 9: vs. Pace*, 5 pm (District game)	Oct. 16: at Wewahitchka (7 pm)
Oct 16: at Crestview*, 5pm (District game)	Oct. 23: at Maclay (7 pm ET)
Oct 23: at Dunnellon, 5 pm	
Oct 30: Open Week	

New Era Begins at Niceville Eagle Stadium

Alumnus and 1988 Champion Adron Robinson Leads a Young Niceville Squad into 2026

By “DOC” DOUG STAUFFER

Under a bright August sky at Eagle Stadium, three teams of Niceville Eagles — varsity, junior varsity and freshman — lined up for the annual rite that unofficially opens every high school football season: picture day. Three squads’ worth of players filed onto the same field where, 38 years ago, a Niceville team won the only state football championship in school history.

This year, picture day carries extra weight. It marks the first fall under new head coach Adron Robinson, a Niceville graduate who was a two-way starter on that 1988 Class 4A championship team and who has now returned to lead the program where he once helped establish a championship legacy.

Robinson was hired in April, chosen from a field of 23 applicants by a hiring committee that, according to Niceville principal Charlie Marello, made him a unanimous pick. “No one has deeper roots with Niceville Eagle football than Coach Adron Robinson,” Marello said at the time.

Those roots run deep. After graduating from Niceville, Robinson joined the Army before eventually returning home to coach. He joined the Eagles’ staff in 2010, and during his 16 seasons as an assistant, Niceville compiled a 146-47 record and reached the playoffs every year. He also had a stint as head coach of the girls’ flag football program.

Along the way, Niceville advanced to four state semifinal games, winning one, while Robinson learned under three head coaches: John Hicks, Grant Thompson and Richard Morgan, who stepped away after one season in 2025.

That 2025 season ended on a high note that hinted at what this program could become. An eighth-seeded Niceville squad pushed top-ranked Ponte Vedra to overtime in the playoffs before falling 31-30, capping a run in which the Eagles won four of their final five games to finish 6-5.

Robinson’s message to this year’s team, delivered in a sit-down with Niceville Quarterback Club President Heath Rominger — his own teammate

on the 1988 title team — was blunt: The game has changed since the 1980s, but the standard hasn’t.

“You still got to run, still got to pass, you got to block, still got to tackle,” Robinson said. “Some kids want things to be given to them, and that’s just not gonna happen here at Niceville High School. Everything’s gonna be earned.”

He has built his coaching philosophy around a single phrase: “Everything matters.”

That means discipline on the practice field, in the classroom and in the community — not just under the Friday night lights. Robinson wants his players to think of themselves as ambassadors for the program every time they put on an Eagles jersey, on the field or off it.

This is a young football team.

The Eagles return quarterback Deagan McCoy, who threw for 2,071 yards and 23 touchdowns as a sophomore last fall, and running back Jakobe Gilyard, who piled up 1,211 yards and 14 touchdowns — as a freshman.

On defense, junior linebacker Noah Renes returns after racking up 64 tackles, 18 of them for loss, alongside fellow returning tacklers Clay Nelson, Dominic Ealy and Andy Bocchino.

The Eagles will need to replace graduated leading receiver Robert Oliver, but with so much production coming back from underclassmen, Niceville’s roster this fall is noticeably short on seniors and long on players who may not reach their prime until 2027 or 2028.

For a program accustomed to having the next man ready — Niceville has missed the playoffs only rarely since 2010 — that youth is being viewed less as a rebuilding year and more as a foundation for what could lie ahead.

Robinson has talked openly about tailoring his offense to the talent on the field rather than forcing his players into a single system. With what he describes as a “pretty good quarterback” and a “pretty good running back,” both still years from graduating, the Eagles will look for a balanced run-pass attack built around what their players do best.



The Eagles opened the regular season Aug. 21 against Prattville, Ala. The 2026 schedule also includes West Florida, Mosley, Navarre, Choctawhatchee,

Tate, Godby, Pace, Crestview and Dunnellon.

But for one August afternoon at Eagle Stadium, the schedule could wait.

Three teams’ worth of Eagles — the varsity that will carry Niceville’s tradition forward, the junior varsity developing behind them and the freshman team getting its first taste of high school football — gathered for the photographs that will forever mark the beginning of the Adron Robinson era.

Nearly four decades after Robinson first put on a Niceville uniform himself, he is back at Eagle Stadium.

This time, he is the one leading the Eagles onto the field.

Bluewater

PLASTIC SURGERY

Steven J. Clark, MD, DMD, FACS

Board Certified Plastic Surgeon

Michelle Sasala MSN, APRN, FNP-BC

Nurse Practitioner/Aesthetic Injector

Maya Newell, Licensed Esthetician



UltraClear

TURN BACK THE CLOCK!

Non-Surgical Treatments

Botox Bar

Facial Fillers

Laser Hair Removal

Laser Pigmentation and Wrinkles

New – Ultra Clear Laser

Surgical Procedures

Breast Augmentation

Breast Lift or Reduction

Tummy Tuck

Mommy Makeover

Liposuction (Vaser, 360)

Facelift, Necklift, Eyelift

Gynecomastia (Male Breast Reduction)

Post Weight Loss

Labiaplasty

Skincare & Aesthetician Services

Medical Grade Skin Care

Facials

Diamond Glow

Dermaplane

Peels

Book your appointment today!

Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach

(850) 530-6064 | bluewaterplasticsurgery.com



BY BARBARA PALMGREN

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson! Simon and Garfunkel! Batman and Robin! Lewis and Clark! These dynamic duos solved crimes, wrote extraordinary music, saved Gotham or explored the American West.

But did they ever shank a drive into the woods or three-putt a green? Did they ever work to create and maintain acres of green space on a golf course, book tee times, give golf lessons and provide a once-in-a-lifetime golf experience for members and visitors to the Emerald Coast?

No, that responsibility is now in the hands of two gentlemen. One is Sam Newell, a marketing consultant with an English accent who views The Golf Club at Bluewater Bay as an opportunity to help the local community thrive, with a great golf course at its center.

Sam works with management on course design and development. Born outside London, England, he is now a U.S. citizen and has lived stateside for the past 16 years. His company, SGW Design, relocated from the West Coast to Niceville three years ago, and Sam has thankfully found his forever home on the Emerald Coast.

The other member of this dynamic duo is Jason Timlin. Jason is a certified PGA professional with years of golf club experience, ranging from Southern California to serving



as head golf professional at the Robert Trent Jones course in Birmingham, Alabama. Jason is excited and motivated to make The Club at Bluewater Bay succeed. There was something about the enthusiasm of the Bluewater Bay community that became the clinching point in his decision to move to what he calls “a piece of paradise.”

After he and the board of directors interviewed Jason, Sam said he knew Jason was the perfect candidate to manage the

course. Once Jason was hired, he and Sam began making significant changes. The club can now move forward with additional development to improve the course and its surroundings. Sam said he has great ideas, but Jason knows whether they will work.

One example is the new, netted, five-bay driving range, which enables golfers to warm up and allows Jason to give lessons using a portable Full Swing golf monitor. Another incentive was a one-time, substantial reduction in the cost of individual golf memberships. The roster has grown from 73 to 202 members, giving management additional capital to pay the bills. They have also created annual sponsorships for equipment, the driving range and other course needs — all creative ways to generate income for the course.

Controlling costs in other areas is critical as well. Owning and servicing golf maintenance equipment with the help of a trusted mechanic is a key element of the club’s success, as is leasing gas-powered Yamaha golf carts with a record of durability.

Yes, bringing together Jason and Sam was an inspired move by the board of directors and investors, who all stepped up to save the golf course two years ago.

Congratulations, gentlemen, and may you “live long and prosper,” as Mr. Spock told Captain Kirk. I think that could be translated as, “Live long and hit your drive straight down the fairway.”

But do those things happen only in a galaxy far, far away? Maybe not. They happen at The Club at Bluewater Bay!



LITHIUM BATTERY UPGRADE!

As low as \$1,995.00 installed.

Includes: Charger, Meter, Charge Port, DC Converter



Our Mobile Repair Experts can bring your cart back to **PEAK PERFORMANCE!**

850-837-2600 | 147 PROFESSIONAL PLACE



Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance Announces 2026 Amateur Photo Contest Winners

The Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) has announced the winners of its 2026 Amateur Photo Contest, part of the Mattie Kelly Environmental Initiative. Launched earlier this year, the contest challenged amateur photographers of all skill levels to capture the natural beauty and ecological heritage of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the surrounding Northwest Florida region.

Twelve winning images, one for each month, will appear in the 2026 Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance Photo Contest Calendar, offering a year-long look at the Basin through the eyes of local photographers:
January: Bill Horn
February: David Bailey
March: David Bailey
April: Sarah Brock
May: John Cooper
June: Jessica Temple

July: Jennifer Pawlik
August: Anna Brotzman
September: Whitney Walker – 3rd Place Winner
October: Richard S. Ives
November: Richard S. Ives – 1st Place Winner
December: Randal R. Ketchum – 2nd Place Winner

“These images are a reminder that people are paying attention to this watershed, and that connection is exactly what keeps it protected,” said Alison McDowell, Executive Director of the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance.
Winning photos, along with more on CBA’s ongoing programs, can be found at basinalliance.org.



Mark Your Calendar: Family Bay Day Returns in September

Community members will have another chance to celebrate the Bay this fall at the annual Mattie Kelly Family Bay Day, set for Saturday, September 26, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at Fred Gannon Rocky Bayou State Park. The free, family-friendly event features exploration stations, hands-on learning activities, and the always-popular fish printing, giving kids and adults alike the chance to connect with the bay up close. The only cost is the park’s standard \$5 per vehicle entrance fee.

EOD Warrior Foundation Honors 25th Anniversary of 9/11

The EOD Warrior Foundation invites the community to gather Saturday, September 12, 2026, for a day of remembrance, reflection and connection honoring the 25th anniversary of September 11. The day begins at 8 a.m. with “One Last Sweat for the EOD 137,” a memorial workout at the Eglin Air Force Base EOD Training Squadron honoring the 137 fallen EOD warriors. An evening dinner and panel discussion, “Where Were You on 9/11?” will

follow at The Island Resort’s Maui Ballroom. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. Guests will reflect on September 11 and its lasting impact on the EOD community, the military and the nation. Both events are open to the community. Get registration details by scanning the QR codes.



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



Fast and Affordable Repairs
FREE ESTIMATES! Fully Insured

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

850-987-5433

www.BeachsideSlide.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC.



- All Types of Fencing Installation to Create Safe and Private Spaces
- Timely and Professional from Quote through Install
- Backed with Guarantee



Veteran Owned Business

Call 850-407-2128

Visit www.dirtynsturdyfencing.com



Full Service Plumbing

Residential / Commercial
Water Heaters / Water Conditioners
Licensed & Insured
License #CFC1427172

(850) 830-7875



Creatine and Strength Training:

The Powerful Combination for Healthy Aging and Brain Health



BY KASSIA GARFIELD,
MAXSTRENGTH FITNESS

If you've spent any time reading health headlines lately, you've probably seen creatine making a comeback, it is quite the hot topic. Once viewed as a supplement reserved for bodybuilders and elite athletes, creatine is now one of the most researched supplements for healthy aging. Scientists are discovering that when paired with regular strength training, creatine may help older adults preserve muscle, improve physical function, recover faster from sleep deprivation and possibly support brain health.

The key phrase, however, is paired with strength training.

Creatine is not a magic powder. It works best when it supports muscles that are being

challenged through resistance exercise.

Muscle Is More Than Strength—It's Brain Insurance

One of the most exciting discoveries over the past decade is the connection between muscle and the brain. Researchers now describe skeletal muscle as an endocrine organ, meaning it releases signaling molecules called myokines that communicate directly with the brain, heart, bones and immune system.

Large population studies consistently show that people with greater muscle strength have a lower risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Grip strength, leg strength, and overall muscle mass have all been associated with healthier brain aging. While no single exercise prevents Alzheimer's disease, maintaining muscle appears to be one of the strongest lifestyle predictors of preserving cognitive function as we age. Resistance training has also been shown to improve memory, executive function, and overall cognition in both healthy older adults and those already experiencing mild cognitive impairment.

Why? Exercise improves blood flow to the brain, reduces chronic inflammation, stimulates growth factors such as brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), and helps maintain insulin sensitivity—all factors linked to healthier brain function.

Where Creatine Fits In

Creatine is naturally produced by the liver and kidneys and is also found in foods like beef and fish. Approximately 95% of the body's creatine is stored in skeletal muscle, where it helps rapidly regenerate ATP—the body's immediate source of energy during short bursts of activity.

As we age, natural creatine stores and muscle mass gradually decline. This contributes to sarcopenia, the age-related loss of muscle that can reduce mobility, independence, and overall quality of life.

Multiple meta-analyses have found that older adults who combine creatine supplementation with resistance training gain more lean muscle mass and greater strength than those who strength train alone. Average improvements include approximately 1–1.5 kg (2–3 pounds) of

additional lean mass along with greater improvements in upper- and lower-body strength.

Importantly, studies show that creatine by itself produces relatively modest benefits. The greatest improvements occur when muscles are consistently challenged through progressive resistance exercise.

Think of strength training as planting the seed. Creatine simply helps fertilize the soil.

Could Creatine Help the Brain?

This is where current research becomes especially interesting.

Because the brain also requires tremendous amounts of energy (almost 60% of oxygen consumption is our nervous system), scientists have begun studying whether increasing creatine availability may improve cognitive performance in older adults. Early evidence suggests creatine may enhance memory, attention, and mental performance—particularly in older adults or during periods of increased mental stress.

However, the evidence is still developing. Recent systematic reviews conclude that while several studies report improvements in cognitive function, more large, high-quality clinical trials are needed before creatine can be recommended specifically as a dementia prevention strategy.

What is much clearer is that resistance training itself has a well-established positive effect on brain health. If creatine enhances a person's ability to build muscle, train harder, and maintain independence, it may indirectly contribute to healthier cognitive aging.

A Simple Formula for Healthy Aging

Healthy aging isn't about chasing the latest supplement trend. It's about combining proven habits that work together.

Strength training two to three times per week remains one of the most effective interventions for preventing age-related muscle loss, improving balance, maintaining bone density, and supporting cognitive health. Adding approximately 3–5 grams of creatine monohydrate daily may provide an additional boost for muscle growth and strength in many healthy older adults, especially when paired with adequate dietary protein. Individuals with kidney disease or other medical conditions should consult their healthcare provider before beginning supplementation.

The conversation around creatine is exciting, but the real headline isn't the supplement itself.

The real breakthrough is our growing understanding that preserving muscle may also help preserve the brain. As researchers continue to explore the muscle-brain connection, one message is becoming increasingly clear: lifting weights isn't just about staying strong enough to carry groceries. It may be one of the most powerful investments we can make in protecting our independence, our memory, and our quality of life for decades to come.

If you are looking to jumpstart your fitness journey, try MaxStrength Fitness. We do effective, efficient and safe 20-minute workouts, just twice a week. We deliver results with a science backed program. Give us a call at 850-373-4450 (Niceville) or 850-467-9729 (Fort Walton Beach)!

Claim 2 FREE SESSIONS!

New Clients Only

- Appointment based personal one on one training
- Slow continuous motion style
- Science based protocol
- As low as \$54 per session

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

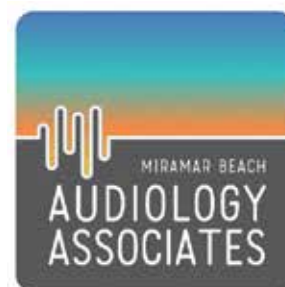
20 MINUTES + 2X A WEEK = TRANSFORMATION

M A X
STRENGTH
FITNESS

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



www.maxstrengthfitness.com/niceville



Audiologist Dr. Mandy
Rounseville-Norgaard

Accepting New Patients

850-517-6977

42 Business Centre Drive, Unit 306
Summit Building • Miramar Beach
Check us out on Facebook!

miramarbeachaudiologyassociates.com



BY KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, CERTIFIED NUTRITION AND SKIN ADVISOR

I had heard of microplastics but had not paid much attention to them until recently. However, I think the subject is quite interesting.

A little history: Leo Baekeland, a Belgian immigrant to the United States, developed Bakelite, considered the first fully synthetic plastic, in 1907. Early uses included electrical components; Bakelite was later used in radios, automobiles, and appliances. In the 1930s and '40s, new synthetic materials included polyester, nylon, polystyrene foam, and plexiglass. In 1955, Life magazine published an article titled "Throwaway Living," focusing on how plastics were helping overburdened housewives. Fast-forward to now, and you will find plastics in modern medicine, food packaging, construction, cosmetics, apparel, paint, cleansers, toothpaste, and the list goes on.

Microplastics are particles

smaller than 5 millimeters, and nanoplastics are smaller than 1 micrometer. Some come from larger plastics breaking down, while others are manufactured for use in certain products. Most conventional plastics do not readily biodegrade; instead, they can persist and break into increasingly smaller particles. We find them in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the clothes we wear, and the food we eat. They've been found from the summit of Mount Everest to the ocean depths. To date, microplastics have been found in more than 1,300 aquatic and terrestrial species and detected in various human tissues and fluids.

Stanford physician Desiree LaBeaud has described this as being "born polluted," after studies reported microplastics in meconium (a newborn's first stool). Researchers have also reported microplastics in breast milk. During preliminary research, Teflon specks were visible under a microscope in one child's tonsil tissue.

Micro- and nanoplastics have been detected in brain and reproductive tissues, among other areas. Researchers are investigating whether smaller particles can

cross cell membranes, disrupt signaling processes, or affect other cellular functions. What these findings mean for human health is still being studied.

Researchers struggle to know which substances to study, as more than 10,000 chemicals have been identified as being used in plastics. More than two-thirds have not been fully assessed for safety, and over 2,400 have been identified as potentially hazardous. Heat and sunlight can increase the migration of some substances from plastic bottles, so avoid storing bottled water in hot cars or direct sunlight. Notice how many cases of water are left in the sun at gas stations and other stores.

So, what can we do about it? Ready, set . . .

Children: When practical, choose well-made, age-appropriate metal or wooden toys that meet current safety standards. How many kids put toys in their mouths?!

Here are some more options for reducing plastic use and potential exposure:

- Purchase clothes, towels, bed linens, rugs, and other items made from natural materials such as cotton, linen, silk, and wool.
- Choose stainless steel, cast iron, glass, or properly made

food-safe ceramic or clay cookware.

- Replace single-use plastic water bottles with reusable stainless steel or glass bottles.

- Take a glass container with you when you eat out so you can use it for leftovers. If you receive leftovers in a polystyrene foam container, transfer them to a different container as soon as you get home.

- When microwaving food, use glass, ceramic, or a container specifically labeled microwave-safe. Dispose of plastic items that are damaged or showing wear.

- Plastic wrap and plastic utensils can contribute to plastic waste and may release chemicals or particles, particularly when heated or damaged. Reduce the number of single-use plastic items in your kitchen. When using plastic wrap, follow the label directions and do not allow it to touch food during microwaving. Consider reusable food-grade silicone lids or Bee's Wrap. I have both, and they are great!

- Do not reuse containers designed for single use. Follow the manufacturer's directions for reusable plastic products.

- Look for products sold in glass jars rather than plastic ones, such as peanut butter.

- Once opened, store meat in

a leakproof glass or food-grade silicone container.

- Consider using glass food-storage containers.

- Pick up some inexpensive silverware to use at the beach or on picnics, and keep some in the car for those fast-food stops.

As always, don't overwhelm yourself. Start with what you use most often. The next time you're shopping for clothes, check the material label inside the garment and ask yourself whether the choice supports your health and environmental goals. I recently needed to pick up a few new items and found that some international brands didn't have material labels, so I chose not to buy them.

Look for flatware at thrift stores. Another good place to start is with bed linens and jammies. We spend up to eight hours in them every day of our lives. IKEA has some good stainless steel cookware at a reasonable price. Lastly, if you're at the farmers market and there is a pottery booth, stop in and look for a new pie pan or other items to replace the not-so-healthy ones at home. Just confirm that the pottery is intended for food use, was made by a reputable potter, and has a food-safe glaze.

Here's to Health!
HealthyDay HealthyLife

The World of Microplastics



EMERALD ENT
Ear, Nose, Throat, Allergies
Hearing
Facial Plastic Issues
From newborns to the elderly

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



We are thrilled to announce our second location in Panama City Beach.
12909 Panama City Beach Parkway, Panama City Beach, FL 32407

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

Life is complicated.
Your insurance doesn't have to be.



ABORA
INSURANCE GROUP



Personal & Commercial Insurance

850-424-6979
11275 U.S. Hwy. 98 #7 | Miramar Beach, FL 32550
www.GetAbora.com

 Wellness


By DR. RICHARD CHERN

As we age, our hormone levels naturally decline, often leading to symptoms that affect energy, mood, sleep, and overall quality of life. For many men and women, bioidentical hormone pellet therapy offers a long-lasting option to help restore hormone balance and reduce these symptoms.

Bioidentical hormones are designed to be chemically identical to the hormones naturally produced by the human body. Tiny pellets containing these hormones are inserted just beneath the skin by a healthcare provider, where they slowly

release a consistent dose over several months. This steady delivery helps avoid the highs and lows that can occur with some other forms of hormone therapy.

Women experiencing menopause or perimenopause may notice improvements in common symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings, vaginal dryness, decreased libido, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping. Some women also report improved mental clarity, increased motivation, and better overall well-being when hormone levels are restored.

Men with low testosterone may experience fatigue, reduced muscle strength, weight gain, low sex drive, erectile difficulties, irritability and trouble concentrating. Bioidentical testosterone

pellets may help improve energy, enhance libido, support muscle mass, sharpen focus and promote a more positive mood when low testosterone is the underlying cause of these symptoms.

For example, a woman who has been waking several times each night because of hot flashes may begin sleeping through the night after appropriate hormone treatment, leading to more energy and a better mood during the day. A man who has struggled with low energy and decreased motivation due to low testosterone may notice improved stamina, increased interest in exercise, and enhanced productivity after his hormone levels are optimized.

While many people experience meaningful improvements,

hormone pellet therapy is not a cure-all and is not appropriate for everyone. Symptoms such as fatigue, weight changes or mood concerns can have many causes, so a thorough medical evaluation and laboratory testing are essential before beginning treatment. Hormone therapy should always be individualized and monitored by a qualified healthcare provider to maximize benefits and minimize potential risks.

When prescribed appropriately, bioidentical hormone pellets can be an effective option for men and women seeking relief from symptoms related to hormone deficiency. By restoring hormone levels to a healthier range, many patients report feeling more energetic, sleeping better, thinking more clearly, and enjoying a higher quality of life.

At The Hormone Restoration Center, hormone optimization is never a one-size-fits-all approach. Every patient receives a comprehensive evaluation, detailed lab work, and an individualized treatment plan designed to address the root cause of their symptoms—not simply mask them. Our experienced team works closely with each patient to monitor progress and make adjustments as needed for safe, effective care.

If you're ready to stop feeling like you're just getting by and start feeling like yourself again, schedule a consultation with The Hormone Restoration Center and call (850) 837-1271 to schedule a consultation. Together, we'll determine whether bioidentical hormone pellet therapy is the right solution to help you look, feel and live your best.

ACUPUNCTURE*continued from page 4*

plateaued or symptoms persist despite appropriate treatment.

Fertility and Women's Health

Fertility is another area where acupuncture can complement conventional care.

Some women incorporate acupuncture while trying to conceive naturally, while others use it alongside care from an OB/GYN or reproductive endocrinologist. Treatment may also address accompanying concerns such as stress, sleep or menstrual symptoms during what can be a physically and emotionally demanding process.

It illustrates an important point: patients don't necessarily have to choose between two worlds of healthcare.

Where Could Acupuncture Fit for You?

Perhaps you're living with persistent pain. You're sleeping but rarely waking refreshed. Your headaches have become

too frequent. Stress is affecting your digestion. You're navigating fertility treatment or lingering symptoms after COVID. Or perhaps you or someone you love is managing Parkinson's, vertigo, neuropathy, stroke recovery or another complex neurological concern.

These are very different rea-

sons to consider acupuncture. And that's precisely the point.

The best healthcare doesn't always require choosing one approach over another. Sometimes it means understanding how much more we may be able to accomplish when we thoughtfully bring different disciplines together.



**Dr. Chern, MD,
Sue Griffin, ARNP
Presley Pulse, APRN**

Look Healthy, Feel Alive!

Personalized Hormone & Wellness Care

At The Hormone Restoration Center, we help you restore balance, energy, and confidence through personalized, science-backed care—designed for your body and your life.

Bio-Identical Hormone Therapy • Thyroid Optimization • Weight Loss • Anti-Aging & Aesthetics

Miramar Beach, Florida
850-837-1271
thehormonerestorationcenter.com

BEST IN DESTIN




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

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



\$5 Million Crunch Fitness Coming to FWB

The 37,000-square-foot club will feature Crunch Reform Pilates™ and Pump Strength Training™ studios, with pre-sales beginning this winter.

If you've driven past Longhorn Plaza on Mary Esther Cut Off and wondered what is taking shape, here's the answer: a brand-new Crunch Fitness—and it is going to be big.

The \$5 million, 37,000-square-foot club is expected to open this winter at 546 Mary Esther Cut Off NW, with membership pre-sales beginning this fall. It will serve members from Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Destin and communities around Choctawhatchee Bay, including residents connected to Hurlburt Field and Eglin Air Force Base.

The former retail space is being transformed into a modern fitness club that will be open and staffed 24 hours a day—making it a practical option for shift workers, military members and anyone whose workout schedule doesn't fit neatly between nine and five.

Crunch's 3.0 design will give the club a modern look while or-

ganizing the space so members can move easily between cardio, strength, classes and recovery.

Never been inside a Crunch? Think less “quiet room full of treadmills” and more high-energy fitness playground. Crunch built its name around making serious exercise fun, with a “No Judgments” philosophy that welcomes beginners, longtime lifters, busy parents and everyone in between.

“The Crunch experience is a natural fit for the area's active coastal lifestyle and strong, family-friendly, military-connected community,” said Mike Goodsell, Chief Officer for Fit Fusion, the franchisee opening the club. “Crunch will give the community a place to challenge themselves, connect and feel stronger together.”

Two new specialty studios will help set this location apart. The Crunch Reform Pilates™ Studio will offer instructor-led reformer workouts with digital guidance—bringing the feel of a boutique Pilates studio into a full-service gym. The Pump Strength Training™ Studio will



feature structured, coach-led sessions designed to help members build strength and track their progress. Both studios are included with Peak Results memberships.

There is plenty more under one roof. Plans include expanded cardio, strength and functional training areas; Olympic lifting platforms; indoor turf;

TRX®; hot yoga; advanced HIIT classes; Power Half Hour circuit training; personal training and Crunch's signature group fitness classes.

And because recovery matters, too, the Relax & Recover® area will include HydroMassage® beds, red light therapy and cryotherapy. Members will find tanning, a sauna, full-service locker rooms with showers and Kids Crunch babysitting—a welcome perk for parents trying to fit in a workout without arranging separate childcare.

Memberships start at \$9.99 per month, and Crunch Fort Walton Beach will offer an exclusive, limited-time promotion for founding members. The first 500 members can join for only \$1 and receive their first month free, a limited-edition founding member T-shirt and free Crunch swag, to be part of this Founding 500 group reserve your rate here. Prospective members can also enter

to win one of 10 free one-year memberships info.crunch.com/sweepstakes-presale?club=821.

Local businesses can get involved, too. Crunch's Corporate Membership and Perk Partners programs offer employee discounts and opportunities for small businesses to reach members through the Crunch app, in-club events, gym TVs and social media. Partnership information is available at fitfusion-team.com/crunch-partnerships.

Think Crunch sounds like a great place to work? Explore career opportunities at fitfusion-team.com/careers.

Whether your ideal workout is Pilates, heavy lifting, hot yoga, a quick circuit or simply 30 minutes to yourself while the kids are nearby, Crunch is preparing to offer our Gulf Coast communities plenty of ways to move—and a little more fun while doing it.

To learn more visit:
CrunchFortWaltonBeach.com
546 Mary Esther Cut Off NW,
Fort Walton Beach
850.655.8285



FORT WALTON BEACH COMING SOON!

CRUNCHFORTWALTONBEACH.COM

BE THE FIRST TO RESERVE YOUR
FOUNDING 500 RATE

SCAN HERE



**\$1 TO JOIN &
1 MONTH FREE**

Memberships start at \$9.99 per month

546 Mary Esther Cut Off NW
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
850.655.8285

Franchise held with local owners & leaders.

Wellness in Your Home

By MARTA ROSE-THORPE,
WWW.ASUPERIORMECHANICAL.COM

One of the fastest growing wellness trends, growing at a rate of nearly 24% per year, is a thought-provoking sector known as Wellness Real Estate. It represents a cultural and economic shift, where homes are no longer seen as just shelters but as infrastructure meant to actively enhance health span, mental wellbeing, and longevity. It is a design and development trend that integrates neuroscience and architecture. It features ergonomic spaces for movement and mindfulness: dedicated spaces for cold plunges, saunas, daily fitness and yoga, mental relaxation, and meditation.

Wellness Real Estate creates environments in the home that support brain health, reduce stress, improve mental clarity, and promote overall wellbeing. Here are eight elements:

Circadian Lighting - Mimics the natural progress of sunlight. Think: cooler, brighter lights in the morning to boost energy, and warmer, dimmer lighting in the evening that supports better sleep.

Aromatic Design - Approaches fragrance as environmental neuroscience to elevate mood, cognitive function, and health. This built-in diffusion

system of essential oils is integrated directly into the HVAC system. Think eucalyptus in the home gym; lavender in the bedroom.

Acoustic Insulation - Reduces sensory overload and mental fatigue through sound-masking and noise-dampening architectural materials.

Biophilic Design - Incorporates aromatic plants and herbs directly into the architecture, which allows for natural, plant-based fragrances and helps with air purification.

Low VOC Paint (Volatile Organic Compound) - Emits fewer hazardous airborne chemicals and odors ~ especially important for the bedrooms of family members with allergies.

EMF Home Shielding - Electro Magnetic Fields affect our nervous system regulation, leading to bad sleep. Modify your living environment with shielding fabrics and conductive paint to reduce EMF from outside sources like cell towers.

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) - Indoor air is estimated to be 2x to 5x more polluted than outdoor air. Toxic microparticles include VOCs from paints, cleaning supplies and air fresheners. Biological pollutants such as mold, mildew, pet dander and pollen. Combustion pollutants

like carbon monoxide (CO) and secondhand smoke. And Radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can build up in homes.

Most AC companies use the standard, high-efficient Merve 13 filter that captures 98% of airborne, fine microparticles, but for truly clean air in the home, an Air Scrubber is essential. These advanced, whole-home air purification systems are installed directly into the central air ductwork and utilize activated carbon filters to capture 99.98% of airborne contaminants.

Water Purification and Water Softening - Who doesn't want to drink pure water that tastes and smells good? Reverse Osmosis uses a semi-permeable membrane to remove harmful contaminants from drinking water. Whole-home water softening treatments remove hard chemicals from the water - namely calcium and magnesium - and scale build-up in the pipes - to preserve the home's entire plumbing system and appliances like sinks, dishwasher, and washing machine. Soft water also feels silkier on the skin, is better for your hair, and requires less soap, shampoo and laundry detergent to achieve the same lather.



What's in Our Local Water?

Our primary source of water for the entire Florida Panhandle comes from the Upper Floridan Aquifer. In Bay County, the water comes through the Aquafer into Deer Point Lake. Through environmental runoff and treatment processes, local water contains elements including Chlorine, Copper, Aluminum, Barium, Radium, Nitrate, Blue-Green Algae, and Cyanobacteria which, if ingested, can affect our liver and nervous system. When we do a Water Assessment in a home or business, we are looking for not more

than one part per million (PPM) of any of these common toxins.

"Wellness in the Home" embraces a variety of facets, including carefully designed architecture, distinct materials utilized in the home construction process, and placing special systems in the home to optimize Clean Air and Pure Water - the very essence of our bodily health and mental wellbeing. For more information on increasing wellness in your home, feel free to call me at (850) 814-3822.

A Superior Mechanical

Whole Home Wellness:

- Air Conditioning
- Indoor Air Quality
- Plumbing • Electrical
- Water Filtration Systems

850-258-3225
ASuperiorMechanical.com

Our Electrical Services:

- Emergency Electrical Services
- Electrical Repair
- Replacement & Installation
- Whole Home Rewiring
- Electrical Panel Upgrades & Rewiring
- EV Charger Installation
- New Construction Electrical

DOWNLOAD OUR NEW APP!
Download the A Superior Mechanical app on your smart phone, and schedule your own appointments with us!

LICENSED & INSURED:
CAC1821064, CFC1431881, EC13004739

PITELL

LAW FIRM, P.L.



LISA Y. SHORTS PITELL
ATTORNEY AT LAW

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

1402 Cat Mar Rd., Suite B, Niceville, Florida 32578

850.897.0045 | LYP@LYP-LAW.COM

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



Sean of the South: Nah, I'm Good

BY SEAN DIETRICH

Marriages are down 60 percent since the '70s. Divorce rates are soaring. And the New York Times reported that more 40-year-olds are choosing to live alone than ever before.

Another recent survey of U.S. high-schoolers showed that the percentage of 12th graders who have ever dated has fallen 85 percent since the '80s. It has fallen another 50 percent within just the LAST FIVE YEARS.

What the heck is going on? Why aren't people dating, or getting married? What's to blame? I can't answer that, I'm too busy scrolling my phone right now.

Nevertheless, one marital expert chimes in.

"The problem is risk. People want guarantees these days. We are a nation of consumers, and consumers require return policies. We need guarantees."

Another psychologist has a different assessment. "It's helicopter parenting that's killing marriage. How can a 20-year-old decide to get married when they haven't ever built a fort in the woods or ever played House?"

Well, I decided to approach the marriage crisis by asking random people to give their opinions and advice on the institution of matrimony.

Gary and Delores have been married for 54 years. Gary says: "My 38-year-old son has never been married. Recently he asked what it's like to be married, so I told him to 'LEAVE ME ALONE!' When he did, I asked why he was ignoring me."

Simon and Anne have been married 62 years. They were married the same year Kennedy was shot. "Marriage is simple. You can either be happy or you can be right. But you can't be both. Too many people want to be both."

Lydia and Eddie, 48 years: "Nobody tells you that you don't fall in love before you're married. It takes years and years to fall in love. A little more every day."

Pearl and Jacob say: "People

don't realize that you actually can survive on love. They've been told otherwise."

Dan and Kristie say: "In marriage, don't use 'absolutes' such as, 'You never,' or 'You always.' They never work, and you always end up sounding like an absolute idiot."

Karen and Dale, 41 years: "I once gave my wife the silent treatment for a week, and at the end of the week she said, 'Hey, we're getting along pretty good, lately, aren't we?'"

Kevin and Rachel: "Don't ever point out your husband's weaknesses during an argument. Wait until the next morning."

Ron and Tiffany, 32 years. "I told my nephew that I haven't spoken to my wife in 20 years, and that's why our marriage worked. My nephew said, 'Why haven't you spoken to her?' I told him 'Because she hasn't stopped talking.'"

Ella and Charles, 59 years: Ella says, "I always tell my married daughters, 'Remember that the grass is always greener over the septic tank.'"

Peter and Catherine, 56 years. "I told my husband that I had a dream he'd given me a diamond bracelet for our 30th anniversary. He smiled and said, 'Wait until tonight, and you'll see.' That night, he gave me a book called 'Interpreting Your Dreams.'"



Sylvia and Tyler. "If your mom is laughing at your dad's jokes, it means there are guests in your house."

Sarah and Greg, 49 years: "When we got married it was for better or worse. I couldn't have done better, and she couldn't have done worse."

Gina and Todd, 55 years: "If you ever think that women are the weaker sex, try pulling the blankets back to your side."

Sandra and Thomas, 62 years. "If you're not laughing together, you're not really married."

Rhonda and Brian, 55 years: "If you ever start to think you've got marriage figured out, just ask your wife if that's true."

Dori and Andrew, 58 years: "A good husband is someone who, after taking out the trash, acts like he cleaned the whole house."

After all my research, I have come to this conclusion. Marriage has no guarantees, if it's guarantees you're looking for, marry a set of Craftsman socket wrenches.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and novelist, known for his commentary on

life in the American South. His work has appeared in *Southern Living*, *The Tallahassee Democrat*, *Good Grit*, *South Magazine*, *Alabama Living*, *the Birmingham News*, *Thom Magazine*, *The Mobile Press Register* and *Life Media* publications, and he has authored seven books.



When only the best will do.

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

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



- ✓ Receive one season pass to Concerts in the Village.
- ✓ Enjoy early admission access to Concerts in the Village.
- ✓ Receive discounts on Festival of the Arts merchandise.
- ✓ Receive membership rates on select MKAF events.

BECOME A MEMBER
- JOIN TODAY!

MKAF.org



 Musing


BY PASTOR DOUG STAUFFER

We are quick to say, “God bless America.” Perhaps we should stop long enough to ask

whether America is seeking the God whose blessings we desire.

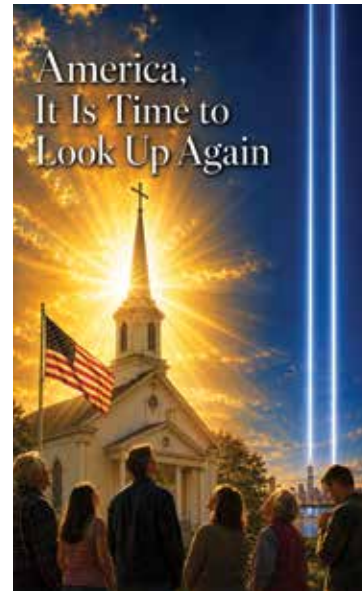
Scripture is not silent on the matter. 2 Chronicles 7:14 gives the terms plainly: “*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*” Notice the order.

God does not say, “*If my people ask for blessing*.” He says seek my face. The blessing is not the first request. It is the fruit of obedience — what follows humbling, praying, seeking, and turning, not what precedes it.

This September marks two anniversaries that ought to be considered together. Two hundred fifty years ago, a fledgling nation declared its independence “*with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence*”—the founders sought God, not merely invoked His name. And twenty-five years ago this month, the nation buried nearly three thousand of its own in the wreckage of two towers, a field in Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon.

I remember that day and that week. I remember pews filled that had not been filled in years. I remember members of Congress standing together on the Capitol steps, setting politics aside long enough to sing “*God Bless America*” with one voice. For a season, the nation did what Second Chronicles asks. It humbled itself. It sought Him.

Washington warned us that the seeking of God would not last on its own. In his Farewell Address he admonished the young republic that “*of all the*



ward God. It drifts away from Him, the way a field left untended does not drift toward harvest -- it drifts toward thorn and thistle. Humbling is a discipline. Prayer is a discipline. Turning from wicked ways is a discipline. None of the three happens by accident, and none of them happens once and stays finished.

So on this September, weighted with two anniversaries, let the church do what the nation will not likely do on its own. Let us humble ourselves. Let us pray. Let us seek His face -- not His hand only, but His face -- and let us turn, specifically and by name, from what needs turning from.

The God who spoke those words in Second Chronicles has not changed. America is not Israel, and the promise was given specifically to God’s covenant people concerning their land. But the spiritual principle remains unmistakable: God honors humility, prayer, repentance, and those who genuinely seek His face.

Twenty-five years after September 11, and 250 years into the American experiment, perhaps the question is not whether America still wants God’s blessing. The question is whether God’s people still want God badly enough to seek His face.

A nation does not drift to-

ward God. It drifts away from Him, the way a field left untended does not drift toward harvest -- it drifts toward thorn and thistle. Humbling is a discipline. Prayer is a discipline. Turning from wicked ways is a discipline. None of the three happens by accident, and none of them happens once and stays finished.

So on this September, weighted with two anniversaries, let the church do what the nation will not likely do on its own. Let us humble ourselves. Let us pray. Let us seek His face -- not His hand only, but His face -- and let us turn, specifically and by name, from what needs turning from.

The God who spoke those words in Second Chronicles has not changed. America is not Israel, and the promise was given specifically to God’s covenant people concerning their land. But the spiritual principle remains unmistakable: God honors humility, prayer, repentance, and those who genuinely seek His face.

Twenty-five years after September 11, and 250 years into the American experiment, perhaps the question is not whether America still wants God’s blessing. The question is whether God’s people still want God badly enough to seek His face.

A nation does not drift to-

Bluewater Bay Area
Affordable Climate Control Mini Storage

Increase Your Living Space!
Store your excess furniture and keepsakes in a climate control unit to protect them from mildew and humidity.
850-897-3314
pollyconc@cox.net

Military Discount
Move in Special
Call for Details

10x10 \$98

U-HAUL
AUTHORIZED DEALER
Call for reservations and rentals

1466 Cedar St., Niceville

- Climate & Non-Climate
- Business & Residential
- Multiple Sizes Available

FAITH INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH
NICEVILLE, FLORIDA

Join Us in Transforming Lives Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ
Embark on your FAITH journey with a dedicated body of believers focused on spiritual growth and compassion.
At FAITH, we welcome everyone to join our mission to spread the Gospel.
Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

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

Watch or Listen Live with Pastor Doug Stauffer
Services broadcast live on several platforms, including Youtube, Facebook, SermonAudio and our Website.

“Church Like it Used to Be”
1309 Valparaiso Blvd., Niceville, FL 32578 | (850) 678-4387 | www.FaithNiceville.com

MIKE CAN DO IT
LAWN SERVICE & HANDYMAN

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

CALL MIKE FOR AN ESTIMATE
850-496-3229
Email msvenghaus@gmail.com

Midnight Mixtape Brings the Soundtrack of a Generation to a Venue Near You

By WILL ESTELL

If you've ever found yourself smiling from ear to ear when the opening notes of a favorite anthem blast through the speakers, you're definitely not alone. That feeling of instant nostalgia is exactly what Northwest Florida's hottest new band on the block, Midnight Mixtape, has built its reputation on — delivering energetic performances that transport audiences back to some of music's most memorable eras.

Midnight Mixtape has quickly become one of the area's most entertaining live acts, combining exceptional local musicianship, polished vocals and an electric stage presence that transforms every performance into a sing-along. Rather than simply covering familiar songs, this band recreates the feel, emotion, excitement and energy that made these tracks part of the soundtrack of our youth and young adulthood. These guys and girls aren't simply performing songs — they're playing memories.

For its most recent experiment in music history, the band has shifted to "Y2K Rewind: The Ultimate Early 2000s Live Experience," featuring an impressive collection of hits spanning rock,

pop, alternative and dance music from the late 1990s and early 2000s. Think Avril Lavigne, Blink-182, Concrete Blonde, Britney, Evanescence and many more artists whose music defined an entire generation. Whether you grew up burning cheap CDs for friends or loading your first iPod with these bangers, Midnight Mixtape delivers the sounds and shows that instantly reconnect us with those unforgettable moments.

As band co-founder Dan Collins told me, "The concept behind our Midnight Mixtape shows is essentially to pick an era and build an entire show around it. A Midnight Mixtape show isn't simply an array of cover songs; it's an event." Collins added, "We play different themes and learn full new sets for each new theme. Keeping the performance more organic and unplugged, with acoustic guitars, simple hand percussion, the addition of violin playing many of the lead guitar parts, along with keys and multipart harmonies gives the shows a more intimate and up-close vibe."

Collins says he and his fellow band members believe this concept is why, to date, all of their limited-run shows have sold out



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MURPHY

at every venue where they have performed across Northwest Florida.

Dan Collins, whose lead vocals and guitar anchor each performance with confidence and charisma, has become well known throughout Northwest Florida as the frontman and founder of Black Eyed Blonde, as well as for producing unique live entertainment events that go beyond the typical cover band performance. He also built his reputation during his time playing with Naked Gunmen and Miss Demeanor.

Sharing center stage is Dan's equally talented wife, Becca (also of Black Eyed Blonde), whose dynamic lead vocals add

both power and versatility to the band's sound. Her ability to move effortlessly between emotional ballads and high-energy rock anthems gives Midnight Mixtape an impressive vocal range that keeps audiences engaged from the first song to the final encore.

The ensemble also includes Sarah Mangum on vocals and keys, adding rich harmonies and melodic depth. Jess Murphy (formerly of Continuum), with her always impressive violin arrangements, gives familiar favorites an unexpected twist, adding a sound and a brand of showmanship that any band would envy. Stacy Clearman delivers strong

vocals and percussion that enhance the band's layered sound and infectious rhythm. Together, Midnight Mixtape creates a polished production that feels much larger than that of just another local band.

I believe what really separates Midnight Mixtape from many other bands across our coastal communities is the way they invite the audience into the performance. A Mixtape concert becomes an interactive celebration. It's like a show that you also get to be part of — because it is your show, your memories and your music.

Continued on next page

Night at the Museum Brings America's 250th to Life!

By BARBARA PALMGREN

Every few years, the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida brings history to life during a special evening that includes food and beverages. Participants move in small groups through several museum stations, where people from the past come alive through performances. Appetizers and drink refills add to the feel of a storybook garden party. Guests may also receive a souvenir to help them remember the special evening.

Past events have focused on historical figures from area communities. One year, Valparaiso's founders discussed the development and promotion of the city. Another year, prominent Niceville leaders were highlighted. At a Crest-



view-themed event, longtime U.S. Rep. Bob Sikes came to life to discuss politics.

From 6 to 8 p.m. Oct. 3, 2026, the nation's 250th birthday will be celebrated throughout the museum. Guests might even meet George Washington and sign a commemorative copy of the Declaration of Independence. All patriots attending the event will leave their "John Hancock" on a special document commemorating the evening.

Tickets may be purchased by credit card by calling the museum at 850-678-2615 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Tickets may also be purchased with cash or a check at the museum in Valparaiso.

Seating is limited to the first 80 people who register and pay. Tickets are \$60 per person or \$50 for museum members. Annual memberships are available throughout the year, with prices varying by age. The museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and contributions may be tax-deductible.

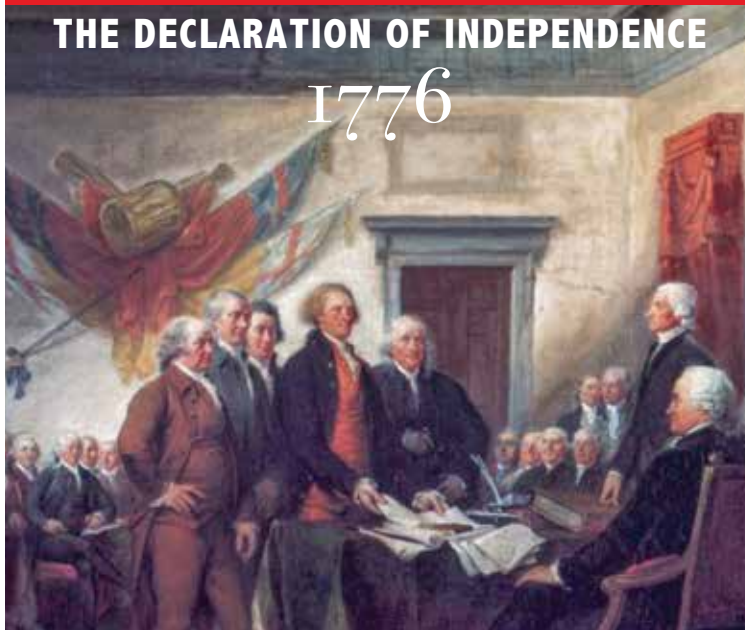
Mark your calendar and join us for a memorable night as the nation continues to honor the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.



CELEBRATE THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

1776



NEW EXHIBIT AT THE HERITAGE MUSEUM

Stories of Colonial Resistance leading to the Revolutionary War

PORTRAITS LETTERS COLONIAL MONEY ARTIFACTS

115 WESTVIEW AVE. VALPARAISO, FL 32580



heritage-museum.org | 850.678.2615

OPEN TUESDAY-SATURDAY 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

Admission to museum only. No special fee for exhibit. Adults: \$5. Seniors, teachers, first responders \$4. Children 6-8 \$3. Ages 5 and under are free.

Arts & Music

ECTC Kicks Off Season 14 with the Tony Award Winning Musical, "Come From Away," Sept. 10–27



By CAMERON HUGHES

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) opens its landmark 14th season with the critically acclaimed musical *Come From Away*. Celebrating compassion, community and the triumph of the human spirit, this inspiring true story runs from Sept. 10 – Sept. 27, at ECTC’s theater in Grand Boulevard. Performances are held Thursday through Saturday at 7

p.m., with matinees on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 1 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m.

Based on the events following the September 11 attacks, *Come From Away* shares the remarkable story of 7,000 air passengers stranded in a small Canadian town, Gander, after US airspace was shut down. The local residents open their homes and hearts to strangers from all over the globe known as “come from aways,” turning a tragedy into a display of kindness and unity.

“Opening our 14th season with *Come From Away* sets a powerful tone for what ECTC is all about: storytelling that unites, uplifts and connects our community,” said Nathanael Fisher, Producing Artistic Director. “It’s a high-energy show

with a foot-tapping score that reminds us of the profound impact that hospitality and human kindness can make.”

The talented cast features several returning favorites including Darla Briganti, who returns as Beulah, previously seen as Leona Silva in *Mystic Pizza*, Princess Dragomiroff in *Murder on the Orient Express*, Genie Klein (Carole King’s mother) in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* and Miss Hannigan in *Annie*. Joining her is Teresa Lombardi, who takes on the roles of Hannah/Margie after cracking audiences up with her Portuguese accent as Mrs. Araujo in *Mystic Pizza*. Rebeca Lake returns to the ECTC stage as Diane/Crystal, most recently seen on stage as Greta Ohlsson in *Murder on the Orient Ex-*

press. Adam Silorey returns as Kevin, following his standout performances as Phileas Fogg in *Around the World in 80 Days*, Zeus in *Xanadu*, as well as Aaron in *First Date*, and Zachary Ryan returns to the stage as Claude, having previously played Barry Mann in *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*.

Produced right here on the Emerald Coast, the creative team includes Nathanael Fisher as Director, Emily Bainbridge as Choreographer, Rebeca Lake as Scenic Designer, and Taylor Walker as Costume Designer. Tom Baroco returns as Music Director, joined by New York City based Lighting Designer Matt Morris. Baroco and Morris most recently collaborated on Season 13’s hit finale *Mystic Pizza*. Morris also designed the

lighting for *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Performances will be held at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, located at 560 Grand Boulevard, Suite 200, Miramar Beach, FL.

ECTC’s 2026–2027 season is made possible with generous support from Grand Boulevard Town Center, St. Joe Community Foundation, Visit South Walton, Howard Group, and Jerry and Alice Zich.

To purchase tickets, make a tax-deductible donation, join as a VIP or sponsor to get the best of what Season 14 has to offer, or learn more about Emerald Coast Theatre Company, call (850) 684-0323 or visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org. Engage with ECTC on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

MIDNIGHT

continued from previous page

Midnight Mixtape will perform live at Distillery 98 in Santa Rosa Beach on Friday, Aug. 28, 2026, presenting “The Ultimate Early 2000s Live Music Experience.” This two-hour show promises to be a nonstop celebration of the music that defined

the Y2K era.

At press time, a limited number of VIP and general admission tickets were available. However, given the band’s recent enthusiastic crowds, I definitely recommend purchasing tickets soon. You can also follow the band online for more details, dates and performance videos.

Will Estell is a writer, editor, and media entrepreneur with over 750 published articles in a wide array of regional and national publications. Estell is the chief creative officer of Estell Hussey Media and has been instrumental in bringing 12 new startup magazine brands to market over his 25-plus-year media career. He currently consults for publishing companies locally and nationally, as well as maintaining a career in coastal real estate and development. Originally from the backwoods of Booneville, Miss., Will is a father of three, who along with his wife, WEAR ABC 3 anchor, Laura

Hussey Estell, now calls Destin and Navarre Beach home.



ECTC emerald coast theatre company
Presents

THE HIT MUSICAL BASED ON THE
REMARKABLE TRUE STORY

COME FROM AWAY

SEPTEMBER 10 - 27

Don't miss the most produced musical of this year and winner of over thirteen international awards, including a Tony Award! This inspiring true story follows a tiny Canadian town that welcomed thousands of travelers who were grounded on 9/11.

Tickets or info, call 850.684.0323 or visit EmeraldCoastTheatre.org
560 Grand Boulevard, Suite 200 | Miramar Beach, FL 32550

ENTERTAIN. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

20 YEARS SINFONIA GULF COAST
DEMETRIUS FULLER
MUSIC & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
YOUR SYMPHONY EXPERIENCE ... REDEFINED

SINFONIA INITIATIVES

- Paint the Music
- Link Up IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CARNEGIE HALL
- Sinfonietta Strings & Intermediate Strings
- Sinfonia Youth Orchestra
- Musicians in Schools
- Guest Artists in Schools
- Live orchestra performances for students
- Ensembles in Residence in the schools in partnership with Florida State University

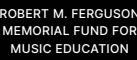
Educational outreach remains at the forefront of Sinfonia's mission. Since it was established in 2007, Sinfonia Gulf Coast has introduced music to more than 220,000 children in Okaloosa, Walton, and Bay Counties.

Donate today to help Sinfonia bring music, education, and the arts to our schools.
SinfoniaGulfCoast.org | 850.460.8800

YOUR SUPPORT IS INSTRUMENTAL TO OUR SUCCESS

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

SEASON PRESENTING EDUCATION SPONSORS





Call to Artists: 2027 Emerald Coast Arts Festival

The Arts & Design Society of Fort Walton Beach invites artists to apply for the 2027 Emerald Coast Arts Festival, a juried outdoor fine arts festival featuring \$5,000 in awards.

The festival will be held April 10-11, 2027, on the landscaped, four-acre grounds of the Freedom Tech Center in Fort Walton Beach. Located on Beal Parkway, the venue is near hotels, RV parks, restaurants, shopping, a public golf course and the white-sand beaches of the Emerald Coast.

Application and Jury Information

The festival is open to artists age 18 and older. All submitted and exhibited work must be original and created solely by the exhibiting artist.

- Early application period: Aug. 1-Sept. 30, 2026; \$35 application fee
- Regular application period: Oct. 1-Nov. 15, 2026; \$50 application fee
- Selection notification: Dec. 1, 2026, by email
- Deadline to accept or decline invitation: Dec. 8, 2026

- Booth payment deadline: Dec. 11, 2026
 - Application fees are nonrefundable.
 - Applicants must submit high-quality digital images of three recently completed works. A booth image is also preferred. A three-member panel of qualified jurors will review all applications.
- Eligible Media**
- Applications are invited in drawing; painting, including acrylic, oil, pastel and watercolor; mixed media; ceramics and pottery; jewelry; wearable art and accessories; fiber; photography; metalwork; sculpture; and wood.
- Festival Schedule**
- Friday, April 9**
- Artist check-in, booth assignments and setup: Noon-6 p.m.
- Welcome reception and artist meet-and-greet: 7-8 p.m.
- Saturday, April 10**
- Festival hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Awards dinner: Saturday evening
- Sunday, April 11**
- Festival hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Admission is free to the public.

Awards

A total of \$5,000 in juried awards will be presented during the Saturday evening awards dinner:

- Best in Show: \$1,500
- First Place: \$1,000
- Second Place: \$800
- Third Place
- People's Choice Award
- Six Honorable Mention awards of \$100 each

Artist Amenities

Participating artists will enjoy volunteer booth sitters, food trucks, live acoustic music, convenient restrooms, 24-hour on-site security and lodging within walking distance.

The Emerald Coast Arts Festival is presented by the Arts & Design Society of Fort Walton Beach, a nonprofit organization that has supported artists and promoted the visual arts throughout Northwest Florida since 1956. Join us for a week-end of art, creativity and community on Florida's beautiful Emerald Coast.

Big Orange House Designs Creates August Art & Events

Get Creative This September

Big Orange House Designs offers a full month of hands-on art, jewelry and pottery experiences at its CREATE studio in Bluewater Bay.

Friday, Sept. 4 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Open Studio Glass Art

Friday, Sept. 11 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Open Studio Glass Art: Word Board

Saturday, Sept. 12 | Noon. Permanent Jewelry

Wednesday, Sept. 16 | 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Six-Week Pottery Series

Friday, Sept. 18 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Open Studio Glass Art

Saturday, Sept. 19 | 10 a.m. Open Studio Glass Art

Saturday, Sept. 19 | Noon. Leather and Pearls Open Studio

Thursday, Sept. 24 | 6 p.m. Come to the Table — A community dinner for active-duty military members and veterans.

Friday, Sept. 25 | 10 a.m. Glass on Glass

Saturday, Sept. 26 | 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Open Studio Glass Art

Saturday, Sept. 26 | Noon-2 p.m. Bangle Bracelets

Classes are held at Big Orange House Designs, 4652 E. Hwy. 20, Pineapple Plaza, Suite 102, Niceville. Advance reservations are recommended. Visit bigorangehousedesigns.com/book-online, call or text JoJo at 334-320-6658, or email bigorangehousedesigns@gmail.com.

Local Coupons

ROOF PRO

\$500 OFF

ANY NEW ROOF INSTALLATION

(NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER DISCOUNTS OR OFFERS)

Offer expires 9/30/26
(850) 332-3330
Roofproroofting.com

CULLIGAN WATER

\$300 OFF

WHEN YOU MENTION THIS AD/COUPON

Offer expires 9/30/26
850-664-7771

YOUR AD
COULD BE
HERE

CALL 850-688-9886

TORTOISE CLINIC

\$30 OFF

NEW PATIENT OFFER

Present this coupon and receive \$30 off any service at the Tortoise Clinic. One coupon per person.

Offer expires 9/30/26
2441 U.S. Hwy 98, Santa Rosa Beach
TortoiseClinic.com | 850.267.5611

LJ SCHOONERS

DOCKSIDE RESTAURANT AND OYSTER BAR

FREE APPETIZER
OR DESSERT

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

Offer expires 9/30/26
290 Yacht Club Dr., Niceville • 850-897-6400
www.bluewaterbaymarina.com

MAX STRENGTH
FITNESS

2 FREE SESSIONS!

NEW CLIENTS ONLY

Offer expires 9/30/26
4576 E Hwy 20, Niceville • (850) 373-4450
www.maxstrengthfitness.com/niceville

BAY LIFE
AMERICA 250

SPECIAL OFFER

BUY 3 ADS, GET 1 FREE

Call Scott 850.688.9886
Offer expires 9/30/26

BLUEWATER PLASTIC
SURGERY

\$100 OFF LASER PACKAGES

INCLUDES LASER HAIR REMOVAL, PHOTOFACIALS, AND PIGMENTATION TREATMENTS (EXCLUDES ULTRACLEAR).
PLUS ENJOY A COMPLIMENTARY CONSULTATION WITH MICHELLE, NP.

Offer expires 9/30/26
Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach 850-530-6064
www.bluewaterplasticsurgery.com

BEACHSIDE SLIDING GLASS
DOOR MAINTENANCE, LLC

\$25 OFF SLIDING DOOR TRACK REPAIR
WITH ROLLER REPLACEMENT

FREE ESTIMATES

Offer expires 9/30/26
BeachsideSlide.com
850-98-SLIDE (850-987-5433)

THIS COULD BE YOUR COUPON
CALL SCOTT FOR DETAILS

(850) 688-9886
SCOTT@LIFEMEDIAGR.COM

THIS COULD BE YOUR COUPON
CALL SCOTT FOR DETAILS

(850) 688-9886
SCOTT@LIFEMEDIAGR.COM

BLUEWATER PLASTIC
SURGERY

20% OFF ANY FACIAL

PLUS A FREE SKIN CONSULTATION WITH OUR AESTHETICIAN, MAYA. NEW PATIENTS ONLY.

Offer expires 9/30/26
Niceville • Santa Rosa Beach 850-530-6064
www.bluewaterplasticsurgery.com



APEX
DESIGN | REMODELING
ApexHomeDesign.com



Adam Shepherd, Owner

*Expert Solutions for Your
Home Design Inspiration!*



TRANSFORM YOUR SPACE WITH EXPERT CRAFTSMANSHIP

4641 HWY. 20 E. NICEVILLE | 850-424-6062
YOUR COMPLETE HOME REMODELING CONTRACTOR. CGC# 1532771

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



Review our Project Gallery at www.apexhomedesign.com