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SoWal Life

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Christmas Memories: Christmas In Illinois

BY GUEARY CLENDENING

Many years ago, My wife, Linda and I lived in Illinois. Memories of driving to southern Illinois to spend Christmas with her family are truly cherished memories! On one particular Christmas, we left on Christmas eve driving down on Interstate 57. We were traveling at night and had the car radio tuned to KMOX, a St. Louis, Missouri, station. During Christmas Eve, the station would visit several area churches and broadcast their Christmas Eve services live. The drive of 210 miles, in the snow, to Southern Illinois, was so much fun- as we listened to Christmas Choirs celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Linda's parents lived on the outskirts of a small town. It didn't matter if it was Christmas or another time, Linda's Dad would often be sitting at a window watching for our arrival. I would blow the car horn and blink the lights as we drove into their yard. At these gatherings, it was so refreshing. The girls would be in the



kitchen, preparing the Christmas dinner. The aroma of the food cooking and the chatter coming from the kitchen was just the right environment for me to lay down on the sofa and take a nap.

Linda's Dad always kept a small Pony for the grandchildren. There wasn't much riding, but regardless of how cold it was, he always wanted a picture of the children on the Pony!

I'm sure you can imagine what dinner was like. And then came dessert time! For Linda, it was a German Chocolate cake with double icing. For my Brother in Law, Earl, it was a Chocolate pie, and I got a Coconut pie. All were homemade by Linda's Mother.

A I reminisce those days, there was something special that would always happen! Before opening gifts, we would read the Christmas story of the birth of Christ and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for God sending His son. But something else would happen

MEMORIES
continued on page 3

A Visit From St. Nicholas

BY CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,

In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The children were nestled all snug in their beds;

While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;

And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,

Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap,

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter;

I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,

Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,

Gave a lustre of midday to objects below,

When what to my wondering eyes did appear,

NICHOLAS
continued on page 3



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MEMORIES

continued from page 1

at the dinner table. We all knew this would occur, we just didn't know when. Linda's Dad would begin to speak these words, "I am the happiest and richest man in the world, I have all of my family together."

There would always be tears that followed. His words mean more to me now as time passes. Several sitting at that table have passed into eternity, and I look forward to the day of finally being reunited with them forever!

His words remind me of God's greatest desire for us. It's found in



Ephesians 1:9-10: "God's secret plan has now been revealed to us, it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago, according to

His good pleasure. And this is the plan: at the right time, He will bring everything together, both in Heaven and on Earth." God's ultimate plan is to have all His family home with Him forever!

I trust you are planning to be there! According to John 14:6, Jesus is the way to His Father. We soon will be celebrating the birth of Christ. If you are not a part of God's family, this would be a wonderful time to reserve your place at God's dinner table! (Read John 1;12 and Romans 10:12-13. See you at the table, Merry Christmas!

NICHOLAS

continued from page 1

But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny rein-deer,

With a little old driver so lively and quick,

I knew in a moment he must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,

And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:

"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!

On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!

To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!

Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

As leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,

When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;

So up to the housetop the coursers they flew

With the sleigh full of toys,

and St. Nicholas too—

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof

The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

As I drew in my head, and was turning around,

Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,

And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;

A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,

And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.

His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!

His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!

His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,

And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,

And the smoke, it encircled his

head like a wreath;

He had a broad face and a little round belly

That shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,

And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head

Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,

And filled all the stockings;

then turned with a jerk,

And laying his finger aside of his nose,

And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,

And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim, as he drove out of sight—

"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"



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Community

December 2022 WCSD Superintendent's Update



Superintendent A. Russell Hughes

Our schools support the development of the whole child, and our endeavors toward excellence have paid off! Several of our schools also were recognized as Schools of excellence; Freeport High School, South Walton High School, and Seaside Neighborhood School. Congratulations to the Principals, students, and staff of these campuses!

As we approach the end of our first semester of school, our Walton County School District continues to carry the torch of educational excellence! Teachers, staff, and students have worked hard to maintain high academic achievement, and state rankings show their efforts. Yet, we never rest in our accomplishments but continue to press toward becoming the number one District in the state!

As District students and employees return from Thanksgiving break, we reflect on opportunities to celebrate veterans for their unselfish service to our country. Their courage is why we can work, play and pray as we choose. Many schools held programs to recognize the sacrifices veterans have made for our comfort. What better way to honor these men and women than for teachers to accurately share with students the tremendous responsibility of exercising their civic duty? Walton County School District students are learning this, and our state ranking of third in U.S. History and ninth in Civics attests to the fact. There are 67 counties in Florida, and our children rank in the top

ten regarding knowledge of civic virtues.

Our academic progress has been phenomenal, but our successes don't end there. Our 2022-23 year of excellence in sports includes Walton Middle School Football having an undefeated season and ending their year as Conference Champions. All Walton County School District Football teams earned opportunities to compete at the State level. South Walton High School and Paxton Cross Country took part in the State competition. South Walton High School Volleyball

team earned the designation of Regional Finalist, and Rhiannon Fountain of Walton High School competed in Regional Tournament Play.

Because of the tremendous work put forth by teachers and employees, the Walton County School Board and Superintendent Hughes have implemented salary increases, and since 2016 these increases, recurring and non-recurring, equal 61.7%! As a result, beginning teachers will now earn a starting salary of 50,000 dollars! This new teacher base salary is unprecedented

in the panhandle. The Walton County School Board and Superintendent Hughes made it happen to show every member of the Walton County School District Team and new educators to our team how much they are appreciated!

Remember the Christmas Holidays are upon us, and schools will soon be closed for the season. The second nine weeks and the first-semester end on December 16, 2022. Please encourage your student to stay focused until we begin our winter break. End of Course exams (EOCs) will begin soon, and we want all students to do well! District offices and schools will be closed from December 19 through December 30, 2022. Parents, be on the lookout for students playing and enjoying their break. Drive a little slower and observe all safety signage. Students will return to school after the new year on January 4, 2023.

Superintendent Hughes wishes each student, employee, family, and community member the happiest holiday season!



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December 2022 Coastal Seniors Update

FRIDAYS WITH FRIENDS - from 10 AM - Noon

Each "Fridays with Friends" program will be open from 10 AM until noon. Coastal Seniors will welcome members, who are 50 years and older, to our office to participate in activities, such as: card games, board games, ping pong, bingo, art classes, exercise classes, etc. If you are interested in any of these activities, please let us know so that our volunteers can prepare. You can contact us by calling 850-280-5342, or by sending an email to: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

ART CLASS

Karen Peterson will teach seniors Beginner Watercolor Painting on Friday, Dec 9th 9am-Noon. Cost is \$20. Sign up by calling 850-280-5342, or by

sending an email to: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

MONTHLY MEETING - CHRISTMAS POTLUCK LUNCH AND BINGO

Friday, Dec. 16th from 11:00 AM - 1 PM (bring your favorite holiday casseroles and desserts. Also, we will be playing holiday bingo. We ask everyone to bring a wrapped prize of \$5.00 or less value. Sign up by calling 850-280-5342, or by sending an email to: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

PICKLEBALL

Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex courts - Check the Coastal Seniors web-

site calendar or Facebook page after Dec.6th for December dates and times, or contact Sandra Gulak at sowalpickleball@gmail.com. The public pickleball courts are now open daily from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the Walton County sports complex behind Dune Lakes Elementary School. Please join the SoWal Pickleball Association on Facebook for more information and weekly updates.

Seniors 50 years of age and up residing in or visiting Walton County are invited to join CSSW. Membership is \$20 for individuals, \$30 for family, and \$50 for businesses (your business will be listed on our home webpage and our Facebook page). You can

become a member via email at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com, or on the website at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org. Also, follow us on Face-

book at Coastal Seniors of South Walton. Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. is a non-profit 501© (3) organization for active adults and we're looking for dedicated, enthusiastic persons to join our Board of Directors.



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Community

Fore Her Announces Expanded Annual Pink Walk & 5k

The Pink Walk Benefiting Fore Her is back and better than ever! The event, which takes place on Saturday, January 28, 2023 at The Village of Baytowne Wharf will introduce a timed 5k race in addition to the Survivor Stroll and annual Walk.

The community is invited to walk or run with friends and family, wear pink, and have fun while raising funds for breast cancer patients in financial need. Attendees will enjoy an After Party with music, a photo booth, prizes and food samples. All registered breast cancer survivors can enjoy the VIP Survivors' Lounge featuring special treats including hand massages, and more.

"For the first time, this will be an actual 5k along with our annual Survivor Stroll. This will be our opportunity to cheer on these strong women and their supporting communities," says Jennifer

Crawford, Vice President of Fore Her Board of Directors. "I am so excited that the Pink Walk is bigger and better than



ever so we can help more breast cancer patients. I have my pink tutu ready to go!"

Registration for the Pink Walk & 5K is now open online at ForeHer.org/PinkWalk5k. Early Bird 5k registration starts at \$50 through December 31st and then increases to \$60 in the new



year. Those who register through December 31st will receive a free Pink Walk t-shirt. Fore Her offers a discounted rate of \$45 to register for breast cancer survivors and the Survivor Stroll is free to participate for survivors. Packet pick up will be at The Village of Baytowne Wharf on Friday, January 27th from 3 to 5 p.m. and on Saturday, January 28th starting at 7 a.m. Day of registration will also be available from 7 to 8 a.m. The 5k will start on Saturday at 8:30 a.m.

"To our local community, we need YOU!," adds Crawford. "We are looking for sponsors, donors, walkers, and runners looking to have fun and raise funds to help breast cancer patients along the Emerald Coast."

For more information, and available sponsorship opportunities, visit pinkwalk5k.org or email ali@weilhousecreative.com.

Founded by Amy Walsh after her mother and aunt lost their battle with breast cancer, Fore Her was initially conceived as an annual golf benefit to assist local women battling breast cancer with the financial burden of the disease, but as the need grew, the nonprofit expanded to host three annual events to raise funds to continue to support those affected in Northwest Florida. Funds raised are used to provide temporary assistance with bills such as mortgage or rent payments, utilities or helping pay for auto repairs so patients can get to treatments. Fore Her offers resources, hope, compassion and education for all who are affected by breast cancer.

Find additional information about volunteering, available resources, and how you can help, visit Foreher.org

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Green Thumb Garden Club Holiday Bazaar and Season of Giving Fundraisers

Support Walton County Scholarships and Charities

Green Thumb Garden Club is very grateful to its members and the community for their donations and support of the second annual Holiday Bazaar.

The "Where Every Day is a Celebration" theme of the November event showcased unique seasonal décor and other items which were purchased by members, residents, and visitors. Special thanks to Cantina Laredo for allowing the Club to host the event at their Grand Boulevard location and for their on-going support of our mission.

The Bazaar net proceeds will fund the 2023 Mercer Scholarship which is awarded to a deserving Walton County horticulture college student every year as well as youths participating in Timpooshee 4H Youth Camp and E.O. Wilson Biophilia Naturalists Outdoor Program.

Caring & Sharing of South Walton received monetary and food donations in November



prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Walton County Sheriff's Santa Patrol will receive gifts for young children and gift cards for teenagers before the Christmas holiday.

The Club chose a well-deserving single mom, son, and grandson as their 2022 Habitat

for Humanity family. The family will receive a monetary donation and gifts to help ensure a great holiday season for everyone. GTGC will also donate to Habitat's general fund to support their mission to improve the lives of less fortunate families in Walton County.

On January 18, 2023, members will be at Northwest Florida State College for a presentation by the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance about their mission to protect the local waterways and fragile ecosystems. The event cost is \$25. per person and lunch will be prepared by the College's

culinary management students. Check-in begins at 9:30 am and the meeting starts at 10:00 am.

Please visit the Green Thumb Garden Club website to learn about our charitable mission, how to join and details on meetings, activities, and events. The website address is greenthumbgardenclubinc.org or send an email to greenthumbgardenclubinc@gmail.com.

The Green Thumb Garden Club, Inc., located in Walton County, Florida, is a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Its mission is to stimulate interest in the beautification of Walton County, furthering the education of its members and the public in gardening ~ horticulture ~ botany ~ floral design ~ environmental awareness ~ conservation of natural resources ~ civic beautification ~ nature studies and instill in our youth the love of gardening and respect for the environment.



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By JODELL HAVERFIELD,
HAVE TRAVEL MEMORIES

One hundred years ago in January, a young writer from England embarked on a 10-month luxury voyage around the world with her husband. She was 31 years old. Her first novel had been published just two years earlier. On her trip she would surf in Hawaii, cruise the Zambezi River, and ride the train through Australia's Dandenong Ranges. These experiences would find their way into her later works.

Throughout her novels, foreign destinations became more than just a backdrop – they almost became the characters in her books. She traveled many times on the thrilling train that inspired one of her most famous novels, "Murder on the Orient Express."

By now you know I am referring to the author Agatha Christie. Whether it was a suite at Brown's Hotel, a luxury ship or train, her travels were a huge influence on her writing. She was very courageous in her youth as she traveled alone to Syria and Iraq, where she met her second husband and later assisted him in his archaeological digs. "Death on the Nile" was published four years after they cruised the Nile River. Many claim their 1958 trip to Barbados was the setting and inspiration for Agatha's novel "A Caribbean Mystery."

By the time Agatha Christie reached the height of her fame, she was an older woman, but it all started with the adventures of her youth. When she first went to Baghdad, she was on her own. She got on a train in London and stopped off in Istanbul. Later, with her first husband and then her second husband, she would travel the

whole world. While for most of us our travels won't make us famous, but they will make us happier.

There is something in our psychological well being about the travel experience. Growing evidence shows that travel is good for body and mind and taking a vacation is more than just a fun diversion from the grind of daily life. Psychologists call it the Easterlin paradox. Travel literally rewires the brain; it reduces depression and just the anticipation of a vacation makes you happier. Perhaps this explains why after the pandemic and mandates, travel is one of the busiest and highest grossing industries. Millennials value experiences over stuff, and science says they might be onto something.

Cruising the Holiday High Seas

A few years ago, my husband and I had the opportunity to host several couples on a Crystal Cruise during the Christmas season. I wasn't really thrilled about cruising during the busy holidays, even though Crystal is a luxury cruise line and a favorite of many of my clients. "What, Me? Not excited about going on a cruise!?" I know you don't believe me, but it's true. We had never sailed at Christmas, and I expected to be eager to get home to my long list of things to do. However, we soon discovered that even with our cruise experience, we seriously underestimated a Crystal Christmas. Soon we became what is known as "Crystalized!" Their 6-Star personalized service and sophisticated atmosphere have long been a favorite of cruise enthusiasts. Crystal Cruises is the world's most awarded cruise line. Spending time on a Christmas ship transports guests to a winter wonderland and truly magical world. Since that Christmas cruise, Dave and I have sailed the Holiday High Seas a few more times, especially with our grandchildren, sharing with them the magic of a Christmas cruise. Every cruise



line from family to luxury celebrates Christmas so there's a holiday cruise for every budget. A few of my clients even wrap up a cruise ship, plane or train as a gift under the tree.

Very Special Cruises

Through the years, I have had the pleasure of helping my clients plan trips as gifts and surprise trips for other special occasions like anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, reunions, retirements, honeymoons and more. I have even helped two clients plan bucket list trips for their terminally ill spouses and one terminally ill client asked me to help him plan his dream trip, to take his family on an Alaska cruise before he passed. I personally witnessed the joy and comfort these trips brought to my clients and their families. The family memories will last forever.

During the pandemic, the entire world lost the right to travel. Now that all the mandates have been lifted and travel is back to normal, think about planning a trip in 2023 or 2024. Make memories with those you love! This week, our team will head for Israel to see where Christ was born and walk where he walked in preparation for our November 2023 tour to the Holy Land. Those who did the 2022 tour absolutely loved it.

I wish all my readers a very Merry Christmas!

~JoDell, CEO and Luxury Travel Advisor at Have Travel Memories Vacations

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ECCAC Welcomes Lee Curtis, New Head of Marketing and Donor Advancement

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) officially announced that Lee Curtis has joined their team as the non-profit's head of Marketing and Donor Advancement. In this role, she will be leading the marketing efforts of ECCAC's Centers in Okaloosa and Walton Counties and will be closely working with their donors.



A native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Curtis has lived along the Emerald Coast for the past 19 years. With a degree in Business Administration, she worked in the banking world with Regions Bank as an individual private banker and a branch manager for 12 years. Before joining ECCAC, Curtis was a Realtor with Pinnacle Beach Properties.

Highly active in the community, she has served on the board of directors of the Walton Area Chamber, as well as serving as the chamber's Chairman of Mentoring Emerald Coast. Curtis was also on the board of the Junior League of the Emerald Coast, and worked with Seaside School activities.

"Giving back and help-

ing those in need is vital to our community," said Curtis. "I am thrilled to join ECCAC and help them achieve their mission of addressing child abuse through collaborative intervention, prevention education and awareness."

Christen Cowgill, ECCAC's Director of Development and Marketing, commented, "I have known Lee Curtis through her many community endeavors over the years. We are so glad to have Lee on board with us, her talents and capabilities will definitely have a positive daily impact helping ECCAC accomplish our mission for the children and families we serve."

ECCAC's two Centers house representatives from the Florida

Department of Children and Families, Child Protection Team, State Attorney's Office, local law enforcement, licensed mental health counselors, and ECCAC's staff and volunteers. In the past 22+ years, ECCAC has provided more than 170,000 services at no cost to over 15,000 children who

have been abused, neglected or assaulted.

For further information about the Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center, visit www.eccac.org or call 850-684-4422. If abuse is suspected, call the anonymous Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE.

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Democratic Women's Club Hosts Annual Chili Cook-Off January 17

Please join the Democratic Women's Club of Walton County for a meeting and their annual chili cook-off on January 17th, from 4:30 to 6:30 at the South Walton Public Library meeting room.

This is a meeting emphasize-

ing veterans, active duty military and reserve members, and is part of our club outreach to our large veteran community. We invite you to join us for chili, help us vote on the best tasting batch, and hear a speaker to be announced on a topic of inter-

est to veterans.

This is a free event and open to the public. If you know of a veteran who would like to attend please feel free to invite them to attend.

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Community

Insights for Investors



By MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

As one year closes out and another one begins, we have

some thoughts for our clients on things to review and consider.

First: Know What you Own

We suggest it is a good idea to review your assets, stocks, bonds, cash, real estate, business interests and family interests, among others.

Second: Know Where you Own It

It is a good idea to conduct an inventory of all your assets and where they are held.

Third: Know How You Own It

Is the account taxable or tax deferred? Is it a retirement asset

(401k, IRA, pension or other retirement asset)?

Also, do all your assets have a beneficiary?

Many people want their families to avoid the probate process if possible. Having a beneficiary on as many assets as possible is a common practice. Some might find that using a living or revocable trust is an effective way to ensure that assets pass directly and avoid probate. Single people, be they widows or widowers, might want to review how their home is titled and to give some thought to how that asset will pass upon their death.

Next, we suggest you think about what your estate plan is. Whether you have a formal plan or not, you do have an estate plan. Formalizing it might make sense:

Chief among these is to have a will. It usually makes sense to at the very least have a will. It is often a good idea to also have a power of attorney in place (we suggest a durable power of attorney, which takes effect if you are physically or mentally incapacitated. Note, those cease at passing). Also, an advanced medical directive for family, friends and loved ones to carry out your wishes if necessary. That would include things such as a do not resuscitate order for your caretakers.

Next, what is your long-term care plan?

Whether formalized or not, everyone has a long-term care plan. Will it be workable for you and your family is the question. Long-term care can come in the form of insurance (be it a term policy for pay as you go, or the increasingly popular asset based long term care insurance). Many people want to be able to rely upon family so it is a good idea to perhaps formalize that and to learn what support and benefits might be available to them (for example, some states are allowing family members to apply for payment, through Medicaid, for providing in-home care for a family member). Most people will need some form of long-term care and the need grows for most people in their last two or three years of life.

Also consider if you have a permanent source of income at retirement

It is a good practice to go to ssa.gov and get updated on what your Social Security benefits are scheduled to be. Also, do you have a pension (most estimates are that fewer than 15 percent of private sector workers have these anymore)? Perhaps you have deferred annuities that can pay you and or a beneficiary income for a lifetime.

Do you have a protected or conservative source of cash on which to draw for emergencies and opportunities?

Is that cash in the bank, a money market mutual fund, or CDs? For some it might be cash value life insurance which we feel is best left as a strategic



reserve particularly if you are taking an income stream from your investments. That way you can shield yourself from the effects of the sequence of returns (which means you are taking more of your principal in down years and might run out of that source sooner than expected). We feel most retirees, or those needing a consistent source of income should not ever tap into principal.

It is considered a good practice to review and perhaps update all things as they pertain to your wealth and your health periodically or at the very least to go through this exercise on a yearly basis. Here at The First Wealth Management, we look forward to helping you review and discuss and perhaps help you find solutions.

Maurice Stouse is a Financial Advisor and the branch manager of The First Wealth Management and Raymond James. Main office located at First Florida Bank, a division of The First, 2000 98 Palms Blvd, Destin, FL 32451, with branch offices in Niceville, Mary Esther, Miramar Beach, Freeport and Panama City; 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymondjames.com.

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Your usual?

Familiarity bias means sticking with what you know – but there may be a lot that you don't. Familiarity might be playing a role in some of your decisions.

Think Before You Act

To help you keep familiarity from overly influencing your financial plan:

- Don't confuse awareness with understanding or expertise. Rely on objective research.
- Take the time to consider your motivations for selecting certain investments or strategies.
 - Don't rule out an investment or financial strategy because it's foreign to you.

Call us to schedule a meeting anytime to receive the objective insight you need to make important decisions surrounding your wealth.



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Financial Advisor

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A Division of The First Bank, NA
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Amy Parrish
Financial Advisor

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Florida's "30A" License Plate to Help Keep Walton County Scenic

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill 676 (2021) to help create a new "30A" specialty license plate for Florida motorists. The 30A tags cost \$33, with all proceeds being donated to support Scenic Walton, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that promotes projects designed to improve the quality of life in Walton County. Three thousand vouchers must now be sold before Florida's Department of Motor Vehicles will manufacture the 30A tags. Vouchers can be purchased at www.30Atag.com or at any Florida Tax Collector's Office.

"Money raised by the new tags will help promote beautification and safety projects throughout all of Walton County, not just along the beach," said Leigh Moore, Scenic Walton's Executive Director. "We work to improve landscaping in roadway medians, reduce litter, promote underground utilities, expand infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, and other projects that enhance the quality of life for Wal-

ton County residents and visitors."

The team asked Walton County locals and 30A's 1.5 million social media fans to help select the final tag design, which was created by Gulf Coast native Jake Meyer. The winning design depicts the blue 30A logo against a silhouette of Western Lake, one of Walton County's most famous vistas.

"Of course, we have amazing beaches here, as do many Florida towns, but our coastal dune lakes really are unique to Walton County," said Mike Ragsdale of The 30A Company. "I think our

community made an excellent choice."

"This is the only specialty tag that generates revenue exclusively for community projects here in Walton County," added Moore. "So, everyone who buys an official 30A / Scenic Walton tag for their vehicle will help preserve Walton County's beauty."

Florida residents can go to any Tax Collector Office to buy a 30A tag voucher. They can also be purchased online at www.30Atag.com.

For more information, visit www.scenicwalton.org.



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ScenicWalton

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INDEPENDENT LIVING



Community

There's No Place Like Pecan Jacks for the Holidays!

BY HEATHER BENNETT

Tim and Ronnie Wyatt, who were high school sweethearts, also share a love for sweets. When their printing business started to slow during the economic downturn, they turned towards pralines to help supplement their income. Having made the delicious, sugary treats for years for family and friends, they decided other people might enjoy them and want to purchase them. So, they started selling their homemade pralines around their home State of Virginia. "We sold out of our Caribbean Rum in three hours," recalled Ronnie. Needless to say, the pralines were a big hit, and the Wyatt's began the transition from operating a printing business to Pecan Jacks.

Tim and Ronnie spent the next two years selling their pralines at wine and food festivals throughout Virginia. In 2012, they decided to try a brick and mortar location, a holiday store in a Richland mall. They signed a two-month lease and played it by ear. "We did so well and had so much fun, we ended up staying five years," said Ronnie. Then, they opened a second Pecan Jacks location in Richmond in the Omni hotel.

But what makes them so good? "Tim and I have a love of flavor and a love of taste," said Ronnie. Their pralines and brittles are made with various flavor profiles. The pralines come in flavors such as Traditional, Caribbean Rum, Bourbon and Sweet



Tim and Ronnie Wyatt

Heat, while the brittles embody Pistachio, Cashew, Bayou Pecan and Picante. All the recipes are homemade.

The Wyatts vacationed for years in the area, dreamed of moving here, and so decided to bring Pecan Jacks to the beach. They closed their original location in the mall, and opened a Pecan Jacks location on 30A in Santa Rosa Beach, across from Ed Waline Beach. And now, after a few years, they've opened a new Pecan Jack's in Destin!

Tim and Ronnie serve more than 40 flavors of homemade ice cream they've created at both Pecan Jack's area locations. "We are an authentic operating candy and ice cream store where we make the candy and ice cream

right there. We package it and have gorgeous gifts for the holidays," said Ronnie. "We're not just an ice cream store."

If you are looking for a something to bring to Christmas dinner, a holiday party, or a gift to send to family and friends, you can stop by Pecan Jacks and order filled gift box collections full of their amazing, handmade candies, brittle, toffee, milk-chocolate cashews, gourmet chocolate pecans, dark chocolate espresso and much more. "What's better than locally crafted fresh candy?" Ronnie asked. The store is stocked with corporate gifting and holiday boxes, too, where they can package and ship directly from the store. We're all about presentation and delicious



sweets," Ronnie said. Pecan Jacks has holiday ice cream flavors, too, such as Peppermint Bark and a



Cherry Cordial with Amaretto for the adults.

As our area is a melting pot of people from different regions, I asked Ronnie, is it pronounced PRAW-leen or PRAY-leen? "There's no right or wrong way," he said. "No matter how it's pronounced, it's a delicious piece of candy that everybody should try."

You can check out Pecan Jacks at 4368 W County Hwy. 30A across from Ed Waline Beach, or the new Destin location at 535 Harbor Blvd. (98 West) in Destin (850-427-3080). Hours Noon to 9 p.m. daily. Visit the Website at www.pecanjacks.com. But I suggest a visit to sample the candy and ice cream as soon as possible! You can find Theo the Turtle there, too!

Speaking of Theo the Turtle..... Both Pecan Jack's locations are stocked with great Theo-themed gifts, including the lovable Theo Plush, Christmas Ornaments and the new "Adventures of Theo" childrens book, all attractively priced for the holidays!

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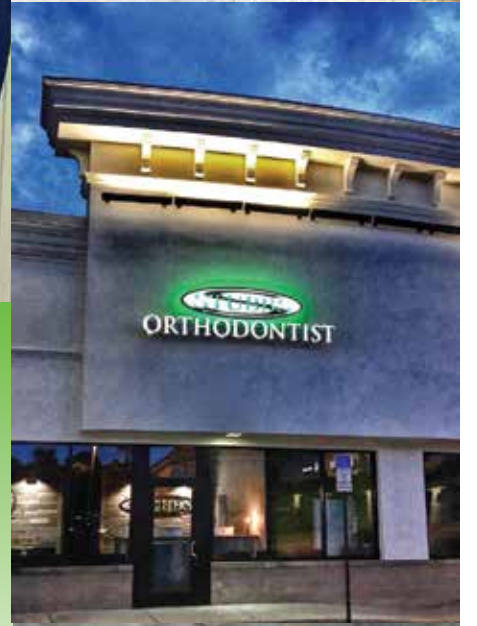
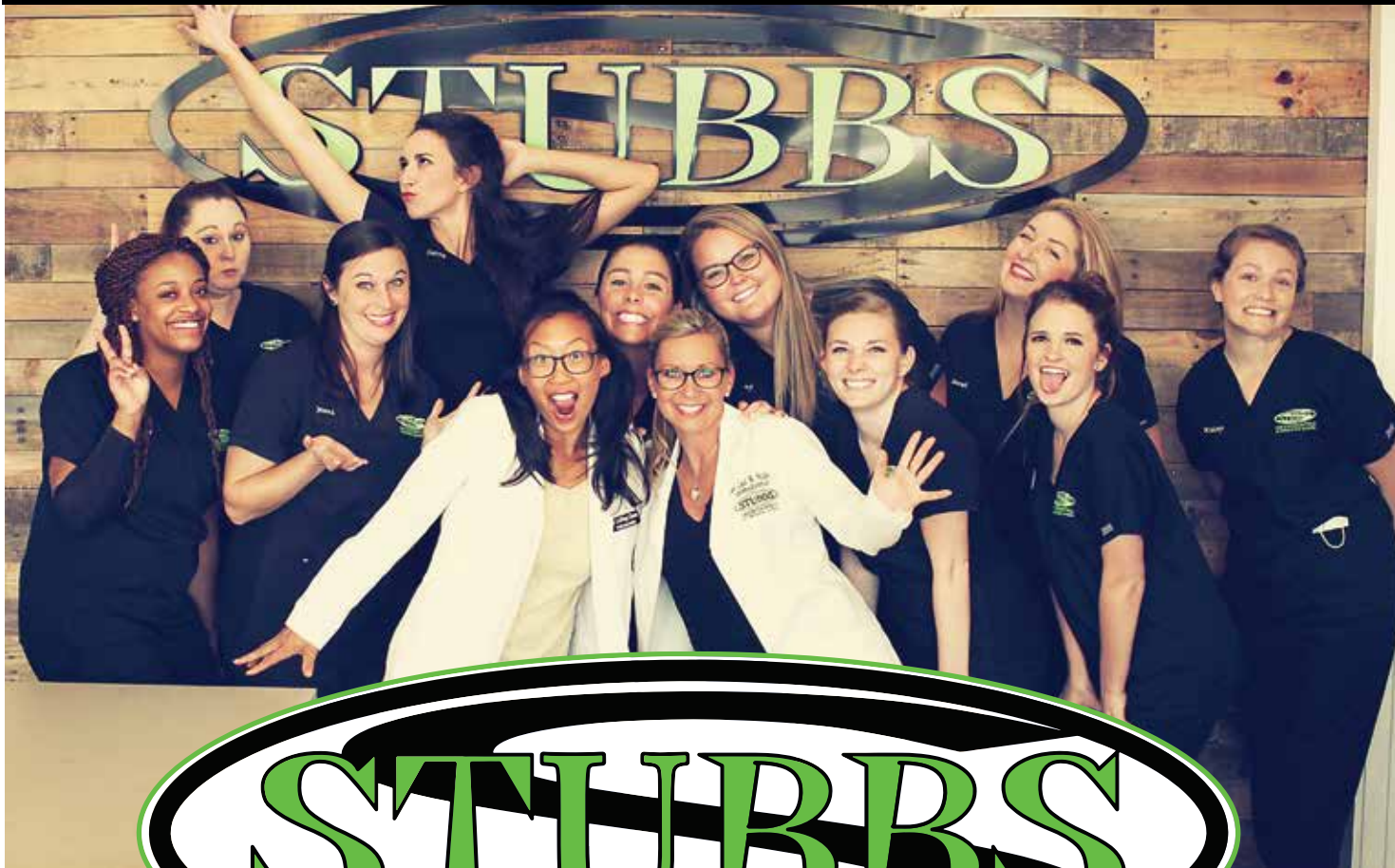
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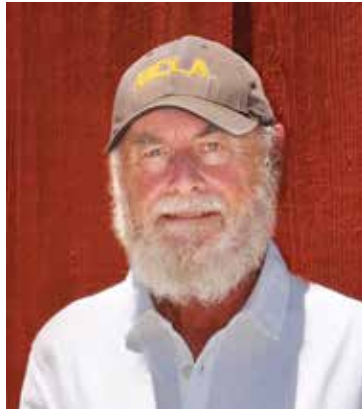
"Our daughter just completed her second phase and had her braces removed today, what a milestone!! This experience has been amazing. We love Dr. Stubbs and her staff. Always friendly and always went above and beyond for my daughters comfort. ~ Micha K.



Community

Seaside Institute Announces 2023 Seaside Prize Winner: UCLA's Donald Shoup

The SEASIDE Institute™ is pleased to announce that Donald Shoup, Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Urban Planning at UCLA, will be honored as the 2023 SEASIDE Prize™ recipient for his radical rethinking of parking policy. In his groundbreaking 2005 book, *The High Cost of Free Parking*, and his work since then, Shoup changed the way cities view the relationship between parking and the built environment, traffic congestion, energy consumption, and local economic development.



The Institute will hold the 29th Annual SEASIDE Prize™ on February 24-26, 2023. Last year's winner, Jeff Speck, wrote in his seminal *Walkable City Rules*: "Parking covers more acres of Urban America than any one thing, and yet planners have neglected it for years ... that was until the research of one man, who helped change the way planners think about parking forever."

That man was Donald Shoup. As noted in *The Wall Street Journal*, Shoup is described as a "parking rock star" whose works have inspired a group of followers dubbed Shoupistas.

The *New York Times* wrote that Shoup's work "has led to a revolution in ideas about relieving congestion." *The High Cost of Free Parking* and Shoup's 2018 book, *Parking and the City*, remain classics in the fields of transportation and city planning. Jeffrey Tumlin, the author of

Sustainable Transportation Planning, wrote: "If your city wants to focus on one topic for reducing traffic congestion, improving housing availability, cleaning the air, lessening climate change, making government more efficient, and enlivening the economy—all at the same time—then it should focus on parking."

The SEASIDE Institute™ awards the SEASIDE Prize™ annually to individuals, organizations, or places that have made major contributions to the quality of the built community. Recipients have significantly influenced how towns and cities can best be built and rebuilt to reflect and promote New Urban principles, such as walkability, affordability, diversity, beauty, and sustainability. For more information on the SEASIDE Prize™, visit SeasideInstitute.org.

In addition to his position at UCLA, Shoup is a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners, an Honorary Profes-

sor at the Beijing Transportation Research Center, a winner of the American Planning Association's National Excellence Award as a Planning Pioneer, and the American Collegiate Schools of Planning's Distinguished Educator Award. More on Shoup can be found at ShoupDogg.com.

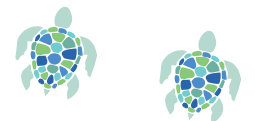
For Walton County, FL, like other areas throughout the country and world, parking and traffic congestion are critical challenges. With wit and humor, Shoup will present solutions that he discovered over many years of research.

The SEASIDE Prize™ Weekend will include guest lectures (some of which will be CEU accredited); the SEASIDE Prize™ Gala and awards ceremony; walking tours of SEASIDE®, Alys Beach and Rosemary Beach; and social gatherings. The Prize Weekend is an opportunity for all who have an interest in New Ur-

banism, walkable communities, and human-scale planning and design. While the Prize Weekend is often of interest to architects, planners, and design students, all members of the community are invited to attend and learn why parking and traffic can be manageable with the right policies.

"You don't have to be a planner to appreciate Dr. Shoup's insights. Everyone in our community will be enlightened by his perspectives on why "free parking is anything but free," said SEASIDE Institute™ Executive Director Thomas Cordi.

To become a member of the SEASIDE Institute™, visit SeasideInstitute.org/membership.



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Local Author Robert Reynolds Pens 'Pathway to Paradise,' a History of Scenic 30A

The Emerald Coast of north-west Florida stretches from Pensacola to Panama City, and encompasses Fort Walton Beach, Destin, Seaside, Grayton Beach, and other communities.



Pathway to Paradise on Florida's Emerald Coast details the history of one of Florida's most exciting destinations, and tells the story of one of its most celebrated roads, Scenic Highway 30A. Robert Reynolds, author of Simply Seagrove, which earlier covered the history of Seagrove Beach, now broadens his scope to

cover all the communities along Highway 30A, with background on the entire Emerald Coast. From its creation in 1937 by the Florida legislature to its designation as a Florida Scenic Highway in 2008, 30A has witnessed the

milestones in the development of the Emerald Coast. At first opposed by developers because of fears of congestion, 30A became the pathway that would connect and unify the diverse communities along its path.

Explore the towns that developed along its route, from family-built communities like

Dune Allen Beach and Seagrove Beach to architect-designed layouts managed by big corporations, such as Rosemary Beach and Watercolor. Witness the creation of unique community de-

signs, such as Seaside and Alys Beach. Learn about the larger-than-life figures who spearheaded the developments over the decades, from Chicago snake oil salesman Charles Cessna, who dreamed of a dynamic city at Santa Rosa, to Edward Ball, who bought Cessna's property after the nascent empire collapsed, and went on to build the St. Joe Company into the largest private landowner in the state. From J.J. and Robert E. Lee McCaskill and the development of Inlet Beach, to C.H. McGee, Sr. and his son

Cube at Seagrove Beach, developers were a driving force. Learn about the natural phenomena of the Emerald Coast, the Gulf, bays, and lakes, the sand and dunes, the plants and animals. From state parks and trails to festivals, landmarks and outdoor activities, to food and shopping, see the many facets that make life on 30A all that it is. Whether you're coming to the area for a one-time vacation or to make a home and a life, Pathway to Paradise is a must-have resource for Highway 30A and Florida's Emerald Coast.

Walton County To Host Hospitality, Service Industry Job Fair

The Walton County Tourism Department is pleased to help support local businesses and the community by hosting the second Hospitality & Service Industry Job Fair on Friday, Jan. 13, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Boys & Girls Club, located at 427 Greenway Trail in Santa Rosa Beach, Fla.

Representatives from more than 30 local companies will be present. Each business will be actively recruiting to fill positions.

Job seekers are encouraged to attend this free event and network with business professionals who represent some of Walton County's largest employers. Attendees should bring copies of their resume.

"Walton County businesses rely on a strong, steady workforce to provide superior service to our visitors and residents," says Nicole Barefield, director of communications for the Walton

County Tourism Department. "With the spring tourism season just around the corner, this is a great way for talented, qualified job seekers to connect with local businesses about high-demand employment opportunities."

For more information about the job fair, please contact the Walton County Tourism Department at (850) 267-1216.

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Holiday Magic All Season Long! Then Baytowne Countdown at the Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Twinkling lights, skating on ice, magical tunes and streets filled with sparkle, tinsel, holly and jolly beckon your inner child to “believe” in the magic of the holidays all over again. Kids know it and we know it, too! The wonder of Santa and the holiday season jingles in our hearts and in the joyful Village of Baytowne Wharf!

Wednesday Night **Holiday Concerts Holiday Edition + Visits with Santa** usher you into the holiday spirit! Listen to some of your favorite holiday classics from 6-8 p.m. during the holiday edition of Baytowne Wharf’s Wednesday Night Concert Series. Each concert features a festive choreographed light show and fun. Visit with St. Nick and share your holiday wish list on Dec. 7, 14 and 21 from 6-8

p.m. for a Holiday Concert and Visits with Santa. No cost to attend!

December 7 | Gateway Singers of Gateway Academy and Fort Walton Beach High School

December 14 | Niceville High School

December 21 | Matt McCarty Band

Lighting up the holiday nights are **12 Nights of Lights!** Enjoy a festive, choreographed light show where the tree lights in the events plaza will dance and blink to music every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday in December (2-23) leading up to Christmas on the Events Plaza Lawn! This sparkling event will also be featured during the special holiday edition of the Wednesday Night Concert Series. No cost to at-



tend, watch three dazzling shows on the NEW Village tree at 6 p.m., 7 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Baytowne On Ice continues through February 5th! You can’t help but be in the winter spirit at The Village of Baytowne Wharf’s Baytowne on Ice. For those visitors who miss the cold and ice, this seasonal ice rink is the perfect opportunity to share some of your favorite holiday traditions. Sponsored by JVC Broadcasting, Rock 92.1, 102.1 The Wave, Highway 98.1 Country and Florida man Radio 103.1, hours vary daily. You can check the schedule at baytowne-

wharf.com. The cost is \$13 for 90-minute skate and \$3 skate rentals. You can rent the rink for private parties and functions starting at \$300. For more information call 850.428.2736 or visit baytownewharf.com.

Put a little snark in your holiday spirit with **The MEAN One** on December 16! Meet the maven of mischief himself for a photo opportunity from 5-7 p.m., then enjoy a movie showing of Dr. Seuss’s How the Grinch Stole Christmas starting at 7 p.m.

And don’t forget the **Farmers Market at Baytowne**

Wharf each Saturday through Dec. 31 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

All holiday events are **NO COST** to attend!

After a full season of holiday magic, ring in the **New Year at Baytowne Countdown | NYE** from 6 p.m. – 1 a.m.—The Village of Baytowne Wharf’s end-of-the-year celebration! It’s an evening to remember with two breathtaking fireworks displays at 8 p.m. and midnight. Enjoy fun for kids and kids at heart from 6-8 p.m. with face painting, kids’ activities and **LIVE** music on the Baytowne **LIVE** stage with DJ TreVy. Finish off the family friendly evening with our first fireworks display at 8 pm.

But, the fun doesn’t stop there! Dance the night away with **LIVE** music from Bay Kings Band from 7 p.m. until 1 a.m. featured on the Events Plaza Stage! With sets that range from Motown, classics to rock and everything in between, Bay Kings Band will have your feet tapping in no time. End the night with a spectacular, midnight fireworks show. There is no better place to ring in 2023!

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Remember our Seniors During the Holidays

Caring for Those that Cared for Us

The holidays are here and once again, we are most thankful to live, work and play along the Emerald Coast. It is also time to remember to spend time with those that have cared for us. The holidays can be a depressing time for a lot of people, especially seniors. It tends to serve as a reminder about who is not there to celebrate anymore and how they cannot often go to where everyone else is gathering. Long-Term Care/Skilled Nursing and Assisted Living facilities often have seniors without any extended family in the area. Little to no visitors, birthdays and holidays often leaves an empty feeling for our aging population. While caregivers do their best to make every occasion special, having a visitor, friend and/or family member visit makes all the difference in the world to each individual. It is human nature to feel loved, appreciated and cared for.



One reason why the holidays are so important to seniors, is they give them time to reflect on their lives. Looking through photo albums is a great way to reminisce about the past. Taking time to look at photos and ask questions creates an opportunity for one to "tell a story." Becoming a "senior" is an achievement in life. We need to remind them how blessed they are and how

much richer our lives are for spending time with them.

Perhaps it is time to start a new tradition this holiday season and carry it through 2023. All facilities have a volunteer program. Have you considered including in your holiday plans to adopt a "grandmother or grandfather" in a facility? Maybe your church or civic group would be interested in volunteering and spending time with seniors. Spare a little time to help bring joy to others during this joyous time of the year.

Perhaps this holiday season is your year to "make a difference" the lives of others. Happy Holidays!

*~Teresa Halverson
Director of Business Development & Community Relations
The Manor at Blue Water Bay*



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Make a Difference with Guardian ad Litem

BY MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

One of the greatest gifts you can give to a child is the knowledge they have someone on their side. Carita Smith, Volunteer Recruiter, for the Florida Guardian ad Litem, is on a mission to ensure that local children who find themselves displaced from their homes know there is someone they can still count on to advocate for their best interests. In our area, there should be 136 volunteers. There are currently only 43.

The Guardian ad Litem is made up of a three-pronged system that becomes part of a child's team when a judge rules they need to be sheltered, or removed from the home. One part of Guardian ad Litem is the Case Advocacy Manager, who maintains the level of care from the office and supports the volunteers to ensure they can advocate effectively. These managers are on staff along with the child's Best Interest Attorney to make sure the team is running smoothly. At the center of the trio, is the Volunteer Child Advocate. It is this volunteer who visits the children to make sure their needs are being met. If they find the children are in need they report back to the Case Advocacy Manager and the attorney to see if services can be put in place. They are the thread that connects the child to the judge and all other agencies that work with the court. Their sole mission is to take care of the child. It is this Volunteer Child Advocate position that Carita is working hard to fill and it is mission-critical.

"We work alongside any agency that's in contact with that child," Carita said. "If the child is in foster care, we visit with them at least once a month, but our volunteers usually go more often. We talk to the child, make sure they're getting what they need, and ask how they feel. We want to make sure their innermost person is taken care of."

"We also talk with the foster parent to get a sense of how the child is behaving and what their day looks like," she continued. "If the child has interactions with their parents, we want to know how they responded to the visitation so we can keep an eye out for any triggers. If they're visiting with a parent twice a week for 30 minutes to an hour, how's that

child's behavior when they come back? There are a lot of variables that go into a visit like how the visits are maintained and observing how the child feels after these visits. What we observe then becomes information that we provide to the court."

Due to the shortage of volunteers, Case Managers often have to fill the additional role of the Child Advocate Volunteer, which is far from ideal. Carita shares the steps to becoming a CAV.

"There's a three-phase training process," she said. "The first phase is talking with me, submitting your application, and having your fingerprints taken at no cost to the volunteer. You must also pass a level two background screening because of the confidentiality that is required and the places you're going to. You're part of the court system and officially taking care of the needs of a child on the state level. Have a clean background."

"Phase two is the classroom portion which is 30 hours, so you do get a lot of training before you get started. Volunteers can choose to do it all online or in two parts by doing the majority online and then coming to a one-day class from 9a.m. to 3:30 p.m."

"Phase three is the most important because it's when you go out and do the work," Carita said. "This is when you're visiting with a child, going to court, seeing how the parents react, and seeing how the judges behave. Just going into court can be scary but when you just observe and start building an understanding of what people are doing, then it becomes easier. You understand that you're just putting down on paper what you observed and passing it on to someone else. You understand your role in the process of helping these children."

So who would make the ideal volunteer?

"Someone who loves children," Carita said. "You have to want to see children get beyond traumatic situations. Children remember what's happened to them so you have to be patient. Be confident in your abilities so you can ask critical questions."

Carita stresses that once someone becomes a volunteer, they have plenty of support from the case manager and attorney on



their team. In addition to their immediate team, there are also

mentors who have been in the position for multiple years, and events are put together so volunteers can be together and make a connection.

As for community support, Carita asks that you contact her to speak about Guardian

ad Litem to your churches, small groups, networking groups, businesses, classrooms, etc. She will talk to any group that can help grow the volunteer base.

For more information, call (850) 461-3877 or email carita.smith@gal.fl.gov.

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Sinfonia Music & Artistic Director Appointed to Young Concert Artists BOD

Young Concert Artists (YCA), the prestigious New York-based international advocacy organization which champions young classical musicians, has honored Sinfonia Gulf Coast Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller with an appointment to its board of directors.

“Maestro Fuller has a long association with our organization and has engaged many YCA artists over the years,” said YCA president Dan Kellogg. “He cares deeply for our mission and supporting young artists. It will be a gift to have his voice on our board as we begin the many bold initiatives outlined in our new strategic plan. He not only brings the passion and expertise of an accomplished conductor; Demetrius is also a skilled administrator and fundraiser.”

A versatile conductor and accomplished musician, Fuller founded Sinfonia Gulf Coast in 2005 to “redefine” the symphony experience in Northwest Florida. The nonprofit orchestra is in its 17th season of innovative musi-

cal programming, designed to entertain, educate and inspire the community.

A Fort Walton Beach native, Fuller trained at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, receiving bachelor and master of music degrees. He has been chosen to work with some of the world’s most prestigious conductors and orchestras. He is an award recipient from the National Foundation for the Advancement in the Arts, the Werner Foundation and the International Music Foundation.

“I am honored to join the board of the Young Concert Artists, a venerable international institution dedicated to nurturing young musicians. As a prize giver each year for a winner, Sinfonia already has a standing relationship with YCA and I am excited to serve in this additional capacity to help the organization continue to be a leading and guiding force in the development of young musicians.”

YCA was founded in 1961 to discover and launch the careers of brilliant but unknown young

classical musicians from all over the world. Each year, the organization holds its international auditions in New York City and hears hundreds of applicants. The winners are presented in their New York debuts as part of the Young Concert Artists Series. The list of YCA’s discoveries includes some of the most illustrious names in the classical music world today: Pinchas Zukerman, Emanuel Ax, Dawn Upshaw, and Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

Fuller will continue to oversee the annual Sinfonia Gulf Coast

Prize offered to a winner of the YCA finals each fall. Several Sinfonia Gulf Coast Prize winners have gone on to major international careers, including soprano Julia Bullock, now artist in residence with the San Francisco Symphony, Avery Fisher, Career Grant recipient and heralded violinist Caroline Goulding.

Follow Sinfonia Gulf Coast on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Join us and be a part of the conversation using #SinfoniaGulfCoast.

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Community

A South Walton Holiday!

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For many years, our piece of Paradise has ignited the holiday spirit in each of us and allowed the season to come to life for the young and young at heart. With a unique blend of theatrical storytelling, musical notes and beautiful and whimsical Christmas lights, we are welcomed into a world of Yuletide nostalgia and local flavor and personalities where reindeer fly, sugarplums dance in our heads and Christmas comes alive in our own area – coastal style. I invite you to explore the vast, unique holiday traditions, some many years in the making and new ones to delight our senses, and usher in the “reason for the season” – the celebrated birth of Jesus, our Savior. Join South Walton Life in some of these holiday celebrations where you can create some new family traditions of your own while rekindling your favorites.

You can **visit St. Nick at The Village of Baytowne Wharf** at his sleigh Wednesday, Dec. 14 and 21, 6-8 p.m. Tap your feet to some of your favorite sing-along classics each Wednes-

day during the holiday edition of the Wednesday Night Concert Series. Dec. 14 – Niceville High School; Dec. 21 – Matt McCarty Band. Visit baytownewharf.com.

Jolly Jubilee, a festive celebration of the holiday season, happens every Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Destin Commons through Dec. 24. Centered around the iconic 50-foot Christmas tree, there’s magical free entertainment featuring Christmas carolers, local vocalist groups, student ensembles, theatrical groups and more!

Emerald Coast Theatre Company presents fantastic shows to get you in the holiday spirit!

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical runs Dec. 8-18, Thursday-Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2:30 p.m., and Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2:30 p.m. Christmas Cabaret at the Boulevard will sing you into the Christmas spirit, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 17, 2:30 p.m. Enjoy classic holiday songs and join in some carols as well. All will be held on the second floor of 560 Grand



Boulevard in Grand Boulevard Town Center in Miramar Beach. Purchase tickets online at emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

Grab your chairs and find your perfect spot in front of the Seaside Post Office for the magical holiday tradition of **Every Christmas Story Ever Told**. Back for its 12th year, The REP Theatre’s complimentary holiday smash hit returns with all of your favorite Beloved Holiday Classics packed

into one show of high-energy jolly and hilarity! Three REP actors, armed with a bazillion props and costumes, send up everything from Charles Dickens and Dr. Seuss to Jimmy Stewart and Chewbacca in this ever-evolving REP favorite. Dec. 16, 17, and 18 at 11 a.m.; Dec. 20, 21, 22, and 23 at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Suitable for all ages.

Visit the **Festival of Trees** at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

through Christmas Day, an annual event in the park at Grand Boulevard shopping center showcasing uniquely decorated Christmas trees from 12 local, non-profit organizations. Participating non-profit organizations compete to win cash prizes totaling \$7,000 for beautifully decorated Christmas trees. Cast your vote for the People’s Choice award.

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HOLIDAY

continued from previous page

Center at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin while taking in the Coastal White Christmas lights and the Festival of the Trees display. To add to the festivities, get a professional photo with Santa while listening to the seasonal sounds of the Emerald Coast Theatre Company's Dickensian Carolers singing popular holiday carols, Dec. 2-17 Fridays and Saturdays, 5-8 p.m.; Dec. 19-23 all week, 5-8 p.m.

Hosted by the City of DeFuniak Springs through New Year's Eve, Chipley Park lights up with the **annual Christmas Reflection Displays**, a light display like no other in our area with more than 10 million lights reflecting on the lake and throughout the park. You can view the lights by walking, driving or even taking a horse-drawn carriage ride. Friday-Saturday, 5:30-9:30 p.m.; Sunday-Thursday, 5:30-9 p.m., nightly. \$5 per person, free for children under 5, Tuesday discount for military; \$10 for carload up to five people. Carriage rides are available on select nights. \$10/person. (850) 978-2999.

Main Street DeFuniak

Springs brings back **Merry Main Street!** Free to attend, Merry Main Street boasts live music and theatrical performances, an outdoor market, food trucks, rides on the Choctaw Express Train, visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, kids character appearances and more family fun, all taking place outdoors along Baldwin Avenue. Events occur every Friday and Saturday until Christmas. https://bit.ly/MSD_MerryMain, Info@mainstreetdfs.org, (850) 296-9051.

View the **12 Nights of Lights at Baytowne Wharf**, on Saturday, December 17 beginning at 6:00 pm. Throughout December enjoy a festive light show in The Village of Baytowne Wharf every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday leading up to Christmas! The 12 Nights of Light will be featured during their special holiday edition of the Wednesday Night Concert Series. Watch three dazzling shows on the Village Christmas tree and Event Plaza at 6pm, 7pm, and 8pm. Come stroll The Village of Baytowne Wharf after dark. Beautiful holiday decor and sparkling lights throughout the Village will fill your family with the spirit of Christmas. Holiday



festivities are going on during Thanksgiving week and through December.

Baytowne on Ice is now open. The Community Broadcasters Ice Skating Pavilion is a 40ft by 60ft ice rink enclosed in a tent at the event plaza of the Village of Baytowne Wharf in Sandestin. Operating hours vary per day, with extended hours on the weekends. Season passes can be purchased at the Baytowne Wharf Neighborhood Association Office during business hours.

Visit Watersound Origins for their **CandyLand Christmas** event on Friday, December 23

from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the Watersound Town Center Pavilion. The Watersound community invites you to join them under The Pavilion at Watersound Town Center. Free and open to the public. Enjoy live music, face painting, train rides, bounce houses & slides. Sip hot cocoa with ready to eat foods. Shop the farmers' market featuring culinary goods as well as clothing, jewelry and holiday gifts. Be sure to stick around for a meet and greet with Santa from 5:30PM - 7:30PM! Watersound Town Center is located at the entrance to the Watersound Origins com-

munity just north of Hwy 98.

Ring in 2023 with family and friends at **Seaside's New Year's Eve Celebration**. The Celebration in Central Square begins at 4PM on Saturday, December 31. Activities include arts & crafts, face painting, a live performance by Monsters of Yacht and fireworks. Schedule of Events: 4 - 9PM || Arts & Crafts/Face Painting in Central Square - 5 - 9PM || Monsters of Yacht at the Amphitheater Stage - 9PM || Fireworks.

The Village of Baytowne Wharf invites you to experience some **winter magic** on Saturday, January 7 from 9:00 a.m. till noon. The Event Plaza is turning into a Winter Wonderland full of **real snow!** Slide down an ice slide, make snow angels, and enjoy a day of frosty fun for the whole family. Bundle up & bring out the whole family for a day of frosty fun. Come out and stroll The Village of Baytowne Wharf after dark. Beautiful holiday decor and sparkling lights throughout the Village will fill your family with the spirit of Christmas. Baytowne on Ice is open. Operating hours vary per day, with extended hours on the weekends.



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Arts

ECTC: Christmas Time is Here

By NATHANAEL FISHER

“Christmas time is here. Happiness and cheer. Fun for all that children call their favorite time of year.”

It doesn't matter if I am in the car, in a store, or walking down the street at Grand Boulevard listening to their outdoor music...this song makes me stop and feel the holiday season. Back in 1994, as an intern at Jupiter Theatre, I was in a production of A Charlie Brown Christmas in Jupiter, Florida. We sang this song as part of the production. I played Linus with those famous lines of, “Lights please! And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” One of my favorite parts of the play was when Snoopy and I were choreographed to “skate” across the stage as if suddenly the stage was ice and we had skates on. One of the other interns that played Charlie Brown and I became friends through the process. I'd always loved the cartoon A Charlie Brown Christmas, but from that wonderful song to “skating” across the stage to playing Linus

to becoming friends with the guy playing Charlie Brown... all of these are such fond memories. We are so thrilled to be bringing this classic show live on stage at Emerald Coast Theatre Company, and our high school program (Jr. Company) students are doing such a wonderful job with this play. You are guaranteed to feel ALL the happiness and cheer.

Our professional holiday production is The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: the Musical. This is directly taken from the holiday novel that was written in the 1970s by Barbara Robinson. This musical adaptation of the book originated at the Charlotte Children's Theatre in 2016. One of the things I am most excited about this production is that it is a collaboration between ECTC's growing educational program and our professional company. With songs like “Our Perfect Little Town” contrasted with “Die Herod Die,” this musical is full of fun comedic moments and finishes with all the heart and warmth we all want for the holiday season. Many of the children in this production

will be making their professional debut. We always get really excited about milestones here at ECTC. Anna and I sometimes talk about how we get to see our community's children grow up. You can be a part of that too while enjoying a night of exceptional professional theatre. If you have or know a child that would be interested in taking a theatre class or having a part in our spring educational program productions check out our website for a full list of classes and programs: emerald-coasttheatre.org/youthclasses

Another offering this holiday season is our Christmas Cabaret. Vincent Pelligrino will be hosting again this year and if you want to see a musical theatre guy living his best life, then this holiday cabaret is a must. We have a talented cast of singers to perform some classic holiday songs you will definitely know and others you may not. Vincent pulls

it all together with some jokes and a song or two himself. It's more fun than a stocking full of puppies.

Finally, since this is the giving season, we thought it would be nice to share that we helped 38 children through our scholarship program this past fall. This means that these families were

helped with anything from a \$200 to \$600 scholarship towards educational theatre class tuition. Our goal is to make sure that anyone who wants to can participate, and that cost does not prevent any child from experiencing the joy of theatre. This holiday season, if you can make a contribution to help a child out, please go to our website and donate to the scholarship fund. You can also call the box office for ways to sponsor, donate, or volunteer.

We hope you'll let us usher in the holiday season with you and yours. We happen to love Christmas around here... and we love our community. As Charlie Brown and his friends would say, “Christmas time is here, families drawing near, oh that we could always see such spirit through the year.”

*Happy Holidays,
Nathanael Fisher, Producing Artistic Director and CoFounder*

Continued on next page

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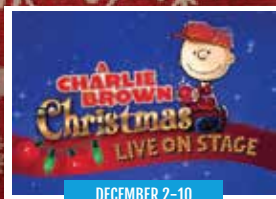
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The Herdmans are the worst kids in the history of the world – so when they crash Sunday school and demand parts in the Christmas pageant, the whole town panics. There's not supposed to be biting or cigar-smoking in Bethlehem and soon everyone is calling for reluctant director Grace Bradley to cancel the whole thing. It's now up to the Bradleys to help the community see the Herdman Kids through new eyes in this buoyant musical adaptation of the funny and touching holiday classic.



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DECEMBER 14 & 17



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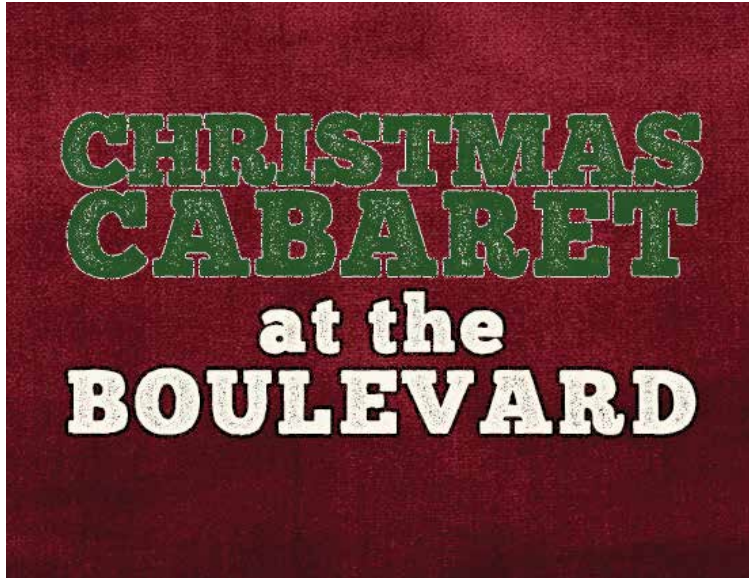
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A Charlie Brown Christmas

By Charles M. Schulz, Adapted by Eric Schaeffer with special arrangement by Arthur Whitelaw and Ruby Persson

December 2-10: Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. & Sunday, December 4 at 2:30 p.m.

Discover the true meaning of Christmas with Charlie Brown, Snoopy and the rest of the Peanuts Gang in this classic adaptation of "A Charlie Brown Christmas." Presented by ECTC's talented Junior Company teen players.



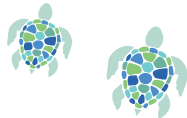
The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical

Book and Lyrics by Jahnna Beecham, Music and Lyrics by Malcom Hillgartner, Based on the play by Barbara Robinson, Orchestrations and vocal arrangements by Deborah Wicks LaPuma

December 8 - 18: Thursday - Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 14 at 2:30 p.m.

The Herdmans are the worst kids in the history of the world—so when they crash Sunday school and demand parts

in the Christmas pageant, the whole town panics. There's not supposed to be biting or cigar-smoking in Bethlehem and soon everyone is calling for reluctant director Grace Bradley to cancel the whole thing. It's now up to the Bradleys to help the community see the Herdman kids through new eyes in this buoyant musical adaptation of the funny and touching holiday classic.



Christmas Cabaret at the Boulevard

Wednesday, December 14 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, December 17 at 2:30 p.m.

Mix, mingle and enjoy live musical selections performed by our talented actors. Enjoy classic holiday songs and join in some carols as well. Like a mug of hot cocoa, this limited-run event will warm your heart and get you in the holiday spirit!

For more information or to purchase tickets go to emerald-coasttheatre.org or call 850-684-0323.

30A Songwriters Festival

For 13 years, the 30A Songwriters Festival has attracted thousands of dedicated live music fans from around the country to hear original songwriters spanning many genres of music perform their songs. The beach resort towns along Highway 30A in Santa Rosa Beach feature 30 venues presenting more than 200 songwriters and 300-plus solo, band and in-the-round performances throughout the weekend.

Grand Boulevard's Town Center main stage will host headline performances by Lyle Lovett, Gin Blossoms, Rickie Lee Jones, Steve Earle, Yola and Morgan Wade Jan. 13-16.

The festival welcomes for the first time to 30A Amy Grant, Tom Rush, Brian Vander Ark (The Verve Pipe), The Black Opry Revue, Beth Nielsen Chapman and John Craigie.

Returning to perform two shows each throughout the weekend are songwriting legends John Paul White (The Civil Wars), Shawn Mullins, Kathleen Edwards, Tinsley El-

lis, Darrell Scott, Adia Victoria, Chuck Prophet, Livingston Taylor, Abe Partridge, Lilly Hiatt, John Fullbright, Sarah Lee Guthrie, Paul Thorn and James McMurtry.

View the lineup of confirmed artists at 30asongwritersfestival.com. An additional 100-plus artists will be announced over the next few weeks – stay tuned! Listen to the Top 50 on Spotify at 2023 30A Songwriter's PLAYLIST.

Festival Weekend Passes are available at www.30asongwritersfestival.com. VIP tickets that include premium seating on the lawn at Grand Boulevard for the headline shows on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, along with access to the VIP tent serving complimentary food, beer, wine and cocktails are also available. For a full description of each ticket package including VIP mainstage and transportation packages for groups of 2 up to 12, visit www.30asongwritersfestival.com.



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Wellness

2023: The Year of Intention



BY TODD CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

As we come to the end of one year and the beginning of another, quotes from two of pop-culture's great philosophers come to mind. Yogi Berra famously said, "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up somewhere else." The other comes from the great fictional mind of Ferris Bueller who said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." Our lives do move fast and it is easy to move from one day to another and one year to another passively watching the calendar days disappear. But, what if 2023 could look different for you? What might it look like to live the next 365 days with intention? The end of a year offers an opportunity for reflection on growth and lessons learned. And, the beginning of a new year invites us to look ahead, to

take next steps with intentionality and create our best year yet.

Here are some questions to help guide you as you reflect on the last year and launch into the next year along with some instructions on how to best use them.

Create space – Set aside at least a couple of hours of undistracted time to work through these questions. Put the phone away!

Write it down – Get honest and vulnerable with yourself as you answer the questions. And, write them down so you can refer back to them throughout the year and review them at the end of next year (I save mine on my desktop to review from time to time).

Share it – Share your responses with one or two trusted people. Sharing your intentions with others helps solidify them internally and increases the likelihood of follow-through.

Live from it – Use the responses to these questions as a daily compass directing your next steps.

The Past Year

What did you accomplish personally and professionally that you feel really good about?

What challenges, struggles



and fears did you have to work through?

What did you hope to accomplish or change but weren't able to? What kept you from doing so?

How are you different from 12 months ago? What did you learn? How did you grow?

How did you make a positive difference in the world around you?

What and who brought you the most joy?

What and who were the greatest stressors?

What did you tolerate this year?

What are you thankful for from the past year?

What are your top three insights?

The Present

Life is made up of multiple domains. Take time to check in with yourself by rating each of the following areas on a scale of 1-10:

Personal – How do you feel about yourself?

Physical – How are you taking care of your body (diet, exercise, rest, etc.)?

Financial – How is your financial situation (income, budget, spending, savings, giving, etc.)?

Spiritual – How satisfied are you with the way faith is integrated into your life?

Vocational – How do you feel about your work/career?

Family – How are you doing as a partner and/or parent?

Friends – How do you feel about your social relationships?

Fun – How well are you creating time for enjoyment and recreation?

What two or three areas of life do you most want to improve in the next year? What steps will you take to make those improvements?

The Upcoming Year

If it were two years from now

and you were living your best life, how would you know?

If it were two years from now and you weren't living your best life, what got in the way?

Who do you want to be by the end of the year? In what areas would you like to grow?

What two to three things if completed would generate feelings of pride and fulfillment at the end of the year?

What is one thing that if you accomplished it next year would make all your other goals easier or unnecessary?

What do you want to start in the next year?

What do you want to stop in the next year?

How will you make a positive difference in the world around you next year?

If this next year was a chapter in a book, what would you title it?

As you create space and reflect on these questions, I hope you have much to celebrate and be thankful for in 2022 even if it was a challenging year. And, I hope you are filled with the excitement of possibility as you look ahead to 2023! For support along your journey, connect with us at www.journeybravely.com.

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The Origins of Hormone Restoration



By RICHARD CHERN, M.D.

Hormone therapy can be traced back over 2000 years when the Chinese isolated pituitary and sex hormones for medicinal purposes. The hormones had not been identified, but the benefits were already known. Of course, many discoveries have occurred since then and today we are not only treating symptoms but also using hormones to improve our overall health.

Health problems associated with hormonal imbalances can go on for years, often undetected by both patients and their physicians. Increased risk of cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, and osteoporosis are only some

of the problems associated with hormonal imbalances. And, like high cholesterol, you can't "feel" any of these to know you have a problem. Instead, you must get tested.

To make things more difficult, the symptoms of andropause, menopause, and hypothyroidism are often so slow to occur that we discard them as part of the aging process. Fortunately, at The Hormone Restoration Center, we know what most of these symptoms are and can screen for them to see if there is a potential hormonal imbalance.

There are a number of symptoms associated with hormone imbalances to help identify those at higher risk. Symptoms can include fatigue, depression, weight gain, decreased libido, joint pain, poor memory, mood swings, low stamina, and sexual dysfunction are just a few.

If you have ANY of the above symptoms, you should complete a symptom checklist and get tested. These symptoms are an indication that you may need treatment.

After identifying an imbalance, physicians and non-physicians may use pills, creams, supplements, tonics, and much more.

At The Hormone Restoration Center we use what we consider

to be the best of the best. We use bioidentical BioTE hormones which means the hormones are identical to what our body produces. That way the key fits the lock exactly as it should

The BioTE method uses hormone optimization created from hundreds of studies using hundreds of thousands of patients worldwide to successfully optimize the hormone levels of women and men once their body's production is no longer sufficient. Surprisingly, our bodies can stop producing sufficient hormones in our early thirties or before.

As shown in different studies, Hormone replacement therapy has been shown to reduce fatigue, improve sleep, improve libido in women and sexual performance in men, decrease muscle loss, reduce body fat, and reduce irritability, anxiety and depression. Also, the symptoms of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis are significantly reduced.

Long term, men and women will have a reduced incidence of Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Also, multiple studies show a long term reduction in breast cancer. Testosterone and estradiol also improve lipid profiles, reduce triglycerides, and increase HDL cholesterol which can have posi-



tive benefits on the cardiovascular system. Therapeutic testosterone levels can also protect the body from diabetes, prostate cancer, and all-cause mortality.

Hormone replacement therapy by pellet implantation has been used with success in the United States, Europe and Australia since 1938, and has been found to be superior to other methods of hormone delivery.

All the practitioners at The Hormone Restoration Center are BioTE certified and have had extensive clinical and didactic training specific to the treatment of hormonal imbalances. This is to ensure the highest safety, effi-

cacy, and results for our patients. More than 96% of patients are satisfied with treatment when using BioTE.

Dr Richard Chern, MD is a Certified BioTE provider in Miramar Beach at The Hormone Restoration Center. He has been seeing patients for over 25 years and treating patients using hormones for nearly as long. Dr Chern is currently accepting new patients and you can call for an appointment at 850-837-1271.

For more info on BioTE and The Hormone Restoration Center please contact visit www.TheHormoneRestorationCenter.com

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Wellness

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Earns Second National Recognition For Maternity Care

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Family Birth Place is being recognized as one of the Best Hospitals for Maternity Care for 2022 by Money magazine and The Leapfrog Group. The hospital is the only one to receive the award in Northwest Florida.

“To have our maternity care recognized on the national level earlier this year was something we were very proud of,” said Bryan Walrath, President, As-

cension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. “To be honored by a second publication in the same year further speaks to the compassionate, high-quality and personalized care our associates provide to all the mothers, babies and their families that our hospital cares for.”

The Best Maternity Care distinction recognizes facilities that have provided exceptional care to mothers, newborns and their families. The Leapfrog Group, in



partnership with Money, used maternity care hospital survey data submitted by August 31st to determine its list of 259 top-performing hospitals in the United States. To qualify for the list, hospitals had to have achieved an “A” or “B” Hospital Safety

Grade on Leapfrog’s spring 2022 assessment and meet Leapfrog’s specific maternity care standards.

Nearly 1,500 babies were born last year at Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. The hospital includes a Level II NICU for premature and criti-

cally ill babies.

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast was also named to Newsweek’s 2022 list of Best Maternity Care Hospitals. It is the only hospital in the area to hold the Baby-Friendly designation in recognition of its commitment to the highest level of breastfeeding support and education. We also received a Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade of an “A” for Spring 2022.

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Launches Emergency Room ‘Concierge’ Program

Program will help patients of hospital ER who need follow-up care

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Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast has launched a new ‘concierge’ program at its hospital emergency room to help patients who need follow-up care. When an emergency room patient needs more specialized care after the ER visit, the concierge can help them get their appointments scheduled.

The concierge can also help patients manage their care team and coordinate their health records, including sending records electronically to specialists at the patient’s request.

“It’s important that our patients who need follow-up care after an emergency room visit actually get it. Unfortunately,

patients can face many external barriers to receiving this care,” said emergency room physician Dr. John «JP» Hill. “We want to do everything we can to make the process of receiving follow-up care as convenient as possible to help ensure patients get all of the care they need, when and where they need it.”

The ER concierge can also set up appointment reminders for patients and even work with them to get transportation scheduled if needed.

“While increasing access to care often looks like building new facilities or adding services, it can also mean evolving and strengthening existing services to ensure

they’re as helpful and convenient as possible for the patients and families we serve,” said Ascension Florida and Gulf Coast President & CEO Don King. “Our emergency room concierge program is a great example of this important work. We want to help our patients get the follow-up care that they need.”

The emergency room concierge program is available at no additional cost to all hospital-based ER patients whose doctor determines they need follow-up care.

To find your nearest Ascension Sacred Heart emergency room, visit www.ascension.org/getsacredheartcare.



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Enjoying This *Holiday* Season



BY KAY LEAMAN,
HEALTH ARCHITECT

We all know that the word 'healthy' gets rescheduled to Jan. 1 during this season. We're not ready to relinquish our favorite recipes for a healthier option. My recommendation in the arena of food and sweets during this season: Be present and aware of how much you eat and savor every bite.

Now, let's take a different look at having a healthy holiday season. Health does not only consist of physical sustenance. It also includes our emotional state, and the holiday season tends to run our feelings and emotions through the obstacle course.

In my research for this article I discovered that I have been living with sadness and the physical effects are surfacing. Joy, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, happiness, frustration, apprehension, etc., can all be experienced during the holidays. Whatever you experience during this special season of hope and giving, being mindful of our emotional state can improve our health and our holiday season.

Sadness can involve feelings of despair, loss, anger, sorrow or defeat. It can make us outspoken and highly sensitive to any situation. The negative effects on overall health can include constipation, diarrhea, chest pain, dry mouth, back pain, fatigue, headache, HBP or heart palpitations. It can also affect our appetite, sex drive, and lead to anxiety.

JOY on the other hand promotes a healthier lifestyle, boosts the immune system, fights stress and pain and supports longevity. Joy releases serotonin and dopamine in the brain (two types of neurotransmitters and heavily associated with happiness), helps us to solve problems, think more clearly and aids in fighting disease.



Laughing can bring on joy. It decreases pain, improves the heart and lungs and helps muscles relax. So, when your feelings and emotions begin to go a bit wacky, stop and take time to write down what you are grateful for. And if it's the "other person" who's experiencing these emotions, take time to remember why you love and care about them.

A few things I am grateful for: the sunshine on my face, a comfy bed, ocean waves and the privilege I have for being able to share with all of you each month information that can help you live a healthier and grateful life.

Have a fabulous Christmas and New Year. Our community is better because you're here. To Happiness and Health

~ Kay Leaman, Health Architect,
succeed.hdhl@gmail.com



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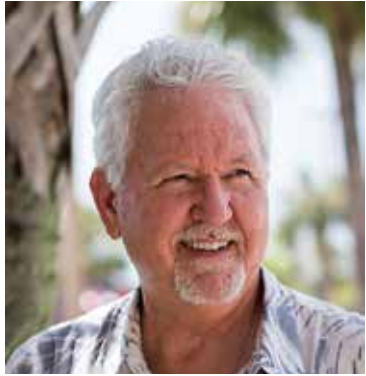
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Musing

A Pastor's Ponderings: The Day Heaven Went Silent



BY PASTOR DAVID HOLLAND

And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the village inn. Luke 2:6, NIV

I saw him, the object of the Father's affections, in a vision. I recognized him as the captain of angel armies, the glory of Heaven. He is the Light of very Light, God of very God, clothed with power, might and dominion. Innumerable legions of angelic creatures sang his praises and marched at his command. Suddenly, without warning, the Son

stood from his throne and strode toward the exit gates of Heaven.

The Son descended from his throne, flinging off his mantle of omnipotence as multitudes of angels gasped. Then he marched toward the gates discharging his infinite knowledge. Finally, as he opened the gates to leave, he poured out his omnipresence. Jesus abandoned heaven's glory to be born a vulnerable babe, trading his divine prerogatives for diapers. For the first time in eternity, Heaven was empty of the presence of the Son of God.

"Whoosh! What was that?" the angels cried as the Breath of Heaven blew out the door. He left Heaven and poured himself into a tiny human body far away on the dark planet. Did the music suddenly stop? Were the heavenly hosts perplexed when the object of their eternal affection was absent? When the Singer of the eternal Song departed, did heaven go silent?

Heaven rejoiced in the radi-

ance of God's glory for eon upon eon. The love dance transpiring between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit twirled in rhythm from time immortal. The friction from their constant expression of love toward one another created such a warm glow the universe basked in its light. But then, the Son departed.

How did God feel the day Jesus left Heaven to pour himself into a human body? Visualize the moment the Trinity's love party stopped. Did God grow lonely for his Son? Did he mourn his loss? Did the Father long for the fellowship they once had? Did God suffer the empty nest syndrome?

Yes, God knew the end of the story. He knew his Son would return in victory. But that does not change the loss he must have felt. God the Father sacrificed the immediate presence of Christ to send his Son to earth. Love presents itself in sacrifice and no one's sacrifice was greater than



the Father God's.

Jesus intentionally left heaven to become human. Paul describes the heavy price Jesus paid to become one of us:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Philippians 2:5-7.

What did Jesus willingly give up becoming that child in the manger? Christ emptied himself of his divine privileges of

all-power, all-knowing, and all-presence to become a vulnerable babe. Beyond that, he also emptied Himself of the heavenly fellowship and glory that he shared with the Father and the Spirit.

It is hard for us to fathom the price the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit paid to enable Christ to be born among us. They endured this pain to redeem us from every kindred, tongue, and tribe. God loves us so much that he allowed this great sacrifice to bring you and me into his family. Heaven lost the glory of the Son for a seaSon that we might receive the glory of the Son for eternity.

Dave Holland pastored churches for thirty-eight years before retiring in Destin, Florida. His book, "Christmas Jesus" is now available at Amazon.com for \$7.99. You can get a copy of his books from his Website, DaveHolland.org, or at Amazon.com. Pastor Dave is available to preach and teach at churches and conferences. Contact him at DavidoHolland54@gmail.com.

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The Road to Redemption: The Chet Walker Story

BY VICTORIA OSTROSKY

“It only takes a glimpse of hope to make somebody not hopeless.” Chet Walker finally learned that lesson after nineteen years of drug use, and now he fully comprehends the furious longing that God has for us.

In Brennan Manning’s book *The Furious Longing of God* he explains it beautifully. And Cory Asbury’s song “Reckless Love” describes it as well. As Brennan states: “the shattering truth of the transcendent God seeking intimacy with us is not well served by gauzy sentimentality, schmaltz, or a naked appeal to emotion, but rather in the boiling bouillabaisse of shock bordering on disbelief, wonder akin to incredulity, and affectionate awe tinged by doubt.” And again: “The furious longing of God is beyond our wildest desires, our hope or hopelessness, our recti-

tude or wickedness...It is simply Jesus, the effulgence of the Father’s love.”

Chet’s story is, amazingly enough, only one of a myriad of miracles where God’s reckless love kept pursuing until the one loved was found. Day by day, Chet destroyed his life by using and abusing every type of drug he could get his hands on. Heroin, meth, cocaine. He became a thief, robber, and “was best friend to the devil.” He lost everything.

Chet had grown up in church and believed in God but didn’t have that experiential knowledge. He didn’t have Jesus.

During those nineteen years of addiction, he went to many rehabs and spent a lot of time behind bars. He spent so much time getting into trouble, that Chet says, “I got addicted to riding in the back of cop cars.”

Then God’s furious longing caught up to him. Chet was arrested again, and as he sat in the back of yet another police cruiser, he heard the words “you’re done” and he knew right then that he would never use drugs again.

While Chet was in jail for his most recent violation, God told him he was going to help other people. “I couldn’t even help myself. I thought I needed money, but that wasn’t in the plan.” Once he was out of jail, he began sharing his testimony to the homeless. “God puts me in front of homeless people who believe they want to be homeless. I come back each day

and if they can see Jesus in my eyes, they get it.” He says that a lot of addicts don’t feel loved by God, and this is exactly what they need to know.

He talks about the importance of hitting rock-bottom, and that at rock-bottom there’s a trap door that leads to the devil: “Until that person finds Jesus and is willing to act on His vision, then they’re not ready.” They need to surrender to Jesus and act in obedi-

ence. Chet’s advice to friends and family of drug addicts is to “get them around Jesus, with books, music, and family love.”

Brennan Manning, a recovering addict, fully understood God’s furious longing. He wrote: “The men and women who are truly filled with light are those who have gazed deeply into the darkness of their own imperfect existence.” I know Chet agrees with Brennan’s assessment.

You can hear Chet’s entire story and listen to many other incredible interviews on the weekly Road to Redemption radio show and podcast at www.roadtoredeemptionpodcast.com.



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Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Christmas Eve night. The mountains of North Carolina were giant silhouettes in the darkness. Sheriff Andy Taylor sat on the bench outside the courthouse, watching the stars.

It had been a hard year. Maybe the hardest of his career. The sheriff was downhearted, which didn't happen often. But then, sheriffs have feelings too.

When it started to snow, Taylor shoved his hands deep into his coat pockets and slipped into a trance. Christmas morning was only a few hours away, and he wanted to feel cheerful, but he couldn't seem to make it happen.

His deputy joined him on the bench. The scrawny, high-strung lawman had just finished doing his nightly rounds, shining a flashlight into storefront windows; checking doorknobs. All quiet in Mayberry.

"Whatcha doing, Ange?" said his deputy. "Why the long face?"

Taylor flashed a fake smile. "I'm just looking at stars."

The deputy was obviously concerned, but Taylor hardly

noticed. He was too busy thinking about all he'd seen during his years serving this sleepy hamlet. He'd seen it all. Or just about.

He'd once seen the town drunk ride a cow down main-street. He'd seen a local goat eat dynamite. He'd jailed bank robbers, swindlers, chicken thieves, speeders, escaped convicts, moonshiners, and Danny Thomas.

Life was moving too fast. The world had gone from AM radios to color TVs. He'd watched the tailfins on Chevys and Fords get taller each year. He'd seen skirts get shorter, hairstyles get shaggier, music get louder, and people get meaner. Airplanes gave way to rocketships. A man hit a golf ball on the moon. Divorce was becoming more fashionable than blue jeans.

But this year...

This year was a humdinger. It was worse than the rest. This was the year the world fell apart. People in town were more frightened and skittish than ever before. And sometimes it seemed like nothing in Mayberry was going right.

Taylor looked at the night-scape and tried to figure out which constellations he was looking at. But he was never very good with astronomy. A single star hung in the distance over the nearby backwater of Mount Pilot.

"You see that star?" said Taylor to his deputy.

"Which star?"



"That one."

"Yeah. I see it."

"You reckon that's how the Bethlehem star looked?"

"Bethlehem? Are you sure you're okay? You worry me."

The sheriff never took his eyes from the sky. "What do you think it was like, Barney? Bethlehem and everything?"

The deputy seemed to be thinking about this. The sheriff could hear the cogs in his friend's head.

His deputy said, "Well, I think it woulda been darn crowded in that stable, for one thing. All them goat herders and wise guys."

"Men. You mean wise men."

"Correct. Males. No ladies were present."

The sheriff paused. "No women? It was a childbirth."

"Well, except for Mary. She stopped in for a little bit."

Good old Barney.

The deputy went on, "I, for one, think it woulda been pretty dang exciting to see the Three Kings bearing their gifts, the gold, the silver, and the bronze."

"You mean the frankincense and myrrh."

"Exactly."

"Do you even know what myrrh is, Barn?"

"Do I? What do you take me for? What I know is that it was quite an important night. There were angels in the sky, and cherubs proclaiming, 'Peace on earth! Goodwill to men! Glory on the eggshells day-oh!'"

"Eggshells?"

"It's French. Read the book, Ange."

The sheriff and the deputy fell silent. They watched their tiny hometown do what it did best. Which was nothing at all. Wreaths adorned each window. Shopfronts featured twinkling lights. The snow was picking up tempo.

Sheriff Taylor asked his deputy, "You think we'll get through this year, Barney? It's been a difficult one."

It was a serious question indeed. And it hung between them for a while. Even the sheriff could feel the weight within his own voice. There was doubt in it.

"Yes, I do," said his deputy. "I know we're gonna get through it. In fact, I'm certain."

"What makes you so sure?"

"What makes me sure?" The deputy raised his voice. "Because, Andy. I just know it."

"But how? How do you know?"

His deputy looked away like he was blowing a fuse. "You beat everything, you know that? Because I know, Ange. I just do. You

wanna know how I know?"

"Yes."

"You really wanna know?" He nodded.

"Well, then I'll tell you. I know because this morning I drove to pick up Miss Emma Brand from her hospital checkup. And do you know what I saw when I walked into the hospital?"

Taylor shook his head.

"Babies, Ange. I passed the maternity ward and saw all kinds of babies. Lots. The nurse even let me hold a few. They spit up on me and everything."

"Is that right?"

"It was beautiful. And last week, when I directed traffic for the school crossing, do you know what every boy and girl did when they passed me? They said 'Merry Christmas, Barney,' and gave me handmade Christmas cards."

"They didn't."

"Every last one. I got forty-three cards. It's enough to make a grown man go all to pieces."

The sheriff looked at his shoes. The somber silence made his deputy uncomfortable.

"Andy..." The deputy's voice was breaking now. "You can't be sad. Cheer up, pal. You're the heart of this town. You're my best friend. I need you. If we lose you, we've lost everything. C'est la vie, man! E pluribus unum! Status quo! Non sequitur! Et cetera, defacto!"

"Huh?"

"It's Latin, it means 'tit for tat,' and qué será será, and livin' la vida loca."

Taylor was laughing now. "What are you talking about?"

"It means we're gonna get through this, Ange. One day we won't even remember this horrible year, and it'll be like old times."

Then the skinny deputy threw his arms around his old pal in an embrace and slapped the sheriff's back so hard it stung. Taylor could hear his deputy sniffing in his ear. The sheriff smiled, then squeezed his oldest friend in earnest.

And somehow Andy Taylor knew that no matter what happens in this raggedy world, a person can face anything if they have a friend.

Anything.

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Imagination



BY RICK MOORE

Albert Einstein said, “The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.” He also said, “If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.” He added, “Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere. It is hard to force young people to excel in math and science. Yet, if you inspire them to make a rocket that takes people back and forth to Mars, suddenly, those same young people have a desire to learn math and science.

My wife used to work in the theme park industry. We lived in Orlando for eleven years, and enjoyed learning how many of the creative projects were produced. In Orlando you can find magical kingdoms that make fairy tales seem real, and walk through real worlds that are transformed into fairy tales. Engineers are often referred to as imagineers because they do more than construct. They bring new worlds to life, and transport visitors to dreamlands and utopias. Guests are willing to enter a mindset where suspension of disbelief is the norm. Through the use of forced perception, costume characters, music, special effects, and state of the art technology, theme parks become incubators for our imagination. Unfortunately, we can not always live as guests in a theme park. We have to find ways to spark our imagination, even when our environments are not always conducive to such thinking.

Before television was invented, families used to gather around the radio. Listeners could not see what was happening, so they used their imagination. They couldn't see the football player score a touchdown. They didn't see the batter hit the home run. They

couldn't see the alien that was destroying the city. These events may have looked a bit different in the mind of each listener, but no visual effects were needed. In many ways, because they were forced to use their imagination, the visualizations in their minds were bigger and better than any special effects film could possibly be.

Not only does imagination foster inspiration, but inspiration fosters hope. We are not talking about hype. We are talking about hope. We must be much more concerned about squashing the dreams of others than we are about injecting a dose of realism into a situation. If a young lady tells you she wants to become President of the United States one day, please do not let your first response be to tell her the odds are about one out of three hundred million she can win. By its very definition, hope is an optimistic state of mind, not a realistic one. Hope is based on the expectation of a positive outcome.

One of the most inspirational stories I've ever known is that of football player Shaquem Griffin. Even though Shaquem only had



one hand, he played Division I NCAA Football at UCF, led his team to an undefeated season, and then went on to play in the NFL for the Seattle Seahawks. The coolest part of his story is he now spends his time assisting retired players, providing guidance and support for whatever they might be going through. Who would have ever imagined a person with only one hand could make it to the NFL? He did. What an imagination!

Perhaps the most inspirational story of this year is that of Jane “Nightbirde” Marczewski. Jane inspired millions while singing her original song “It’s OK” on America’s Got Talent. It is one of the most viewed videos of the year. I can’t watch it without crying. Jane died of cancer shortly after her Golden Buzzer performance. Here is what her family said: “Her lasting legacy will be

the gift of hope she gave to so many through her music and the strength she found in Jesus.” Imagination is needed to discover new worlds. Imagination is needed to invent the latest gadget. But sometimes, imagination is needed most, just to be able to say, “It’s OK.”

Rick Moore is Communication Pastor at Destiny Worship Center.

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Musing

It's Not What You Are, It's Who You Are

By Kirk McCARLEY

In government service, position classification is an important and sensitive endeavor for not just human resources staff, but the employees who are impacted by it. For the uninitiated, the prem-



ise is that each job has a certain monetary value based on either or both the mental and physical difficulty of the assignment, the degree of independent decision making involved,

and a variety of other considerations. Further, and paramount, a determination must be made as to the market value of the job. In other words, will the way this position is classified and rated allow the organization to effectively compete for talent and hopefully "good" talent at that.

In the public sector, the classification of jobs is usually well known by all. It is public information. Given that financial remuneration is often the most sensitive component of the employment relationship, classification is commonly a volatile matter. Incumbents in a job can feel they deserve a higher classification, translating to a pay scale that promises greater present and future reward. Just as typical is the plight of another employee who benefits from their reclassification, drawing the displeasure of those not as fortunate. The refrain: "it's not fair, just, or right," echoes from those feeling "disrespect."

The creative lengths that some go to "gussy up" their job titles are fascinating. For example, an "Office Services Representative," whose primary function might include any or all of the responsibilities of data entry, customer service, or file management might argue

that the "degree of difficulty" for their position is greater than someone with the same title in another area, because their customers tend to be more "demanding."

As for me, I would chortle that I could be called "Head Bottle Washer," so long as the remuneration was all the same. Many did not share my sense of humor.

To each of us is ascribed a label or a title. We give them to ourselves; others give them to us: doctor, lawyer, engineer, accountant, mason, carpenter, husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter. They describe WHAT we are, a designation.

A common exercise I challenge not only career, but life coaching clients with is their "elevator pitch." The elevator pitch is based on the premise that if you had 30-45 seconds to ride up or down an elevator with a total stranger, WHO would you say you are. Notice WHO, not WHAT.

Our natural response is to take the label route of "I am this or that" and then reference a title. What if instead of the usual generic response, you were to share a remarkably memorable "title less" response?

Such as in a sales business set-

ting:

"It's so great to finally meet you. How is business going? I heard you've been struggling with communication issues. My team and I struggled with that too. It wasn't until we added project management software into our routine that we really saw an improvement in teamwork and overall communication. I hope you find a solution that works for your team."

See in this instance how the individual turned the introduction around to be not so much about "them," but rather the other person. They skirted around the temptation to "label."

How about in more of a social environment:

"I find the outdoors to be invigorating. How about you, (asking the other person) what do you enjoy?" If that makes a "connection" then the outdoorsman may go on to ask about where the other person may have been: "have you had a chance to hike the Appalachian Trail, fly fish in Colorado, or snorkel or dive in the Caribbean?" See the beauty of a relationship being built with a minimal focus on status or title.

Next time someone asks, what will be your pitch? Who will you say you are?

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Is it Time to Park a New Sleigh Under Your Tree?

Why this holiday season may be an ideal time to buy that preowned vehicle you've been dreaming about

By WILL ESTELL

Whether you consider yourself a well versed auto aficionado, or someone who simply desires a dependable and presentable automobile to get around in, it's certainly no secret that both the new and pre-owned automobile market have been immensely inflated over the past two years. Some of this overvaluation has been due to issues related to the ongoing semiconductor chip shortage, while some – particularly in the used car segment – has been driven by a need for auto dealers with too little inventory to make similar profits while selling fewer cars.

From 2020 to 2022 we quite literally saw used car prices skyrocket more than ever in automobile history, with the average consumer price of a new vehicle in our country increasing by 6.3 percent from the beginning of 2021 to the beginning of 2022 alone. This means many of us –

from dealers to end consumers – have been paying prices that were above previous book value over the past two years. Remember, in simple terms, if the dealer had to sell it high – and the truth is, for a while, cars, trucks and SUVs were all trading for well over what their book values could substantiate. There's no reason to feel bad about being one of those people if you did this yourself. However, I hope you like your car a lot, because unless you paid for it or decide to toss a wad of money with it in a future trade, you're likely to be stuck with it until it's paid off, something that will most likely haunt the automobile industry by negatively impacting new car sales a few years down the road.

Jump ahead to the third quarter of 2022, and a lot has changed in the auto industry, and much of that is to your favor, thus, making it a better time to buy than over the past

two years. It is now a fact that prices have been coming down at the major auctions for close to six months as of this writing, and though it takes a while for the dealer pricing to catch up to the auction and wholesale trends we are now seeing the results of substantially lower prices at the retail level.

Over the last four months of 2022, we've seen wholesale pricing of almost all pre-owned cars drop considerably around the country. This means that consumers should see those 10-15 percent reductions passed on, with retail pricing already showing signs of trending downward. This is exactly why this holiday season may be a much better time to negotiate that 'best price deal' than any time in the past two years would have been.

As of this October used vehicle prices were down 10.3 percent from a year ago, according



to The Manheim Used Vehicle Index.

All of this represents what I see as a definite bright light at the end of the proverbial car buying tunnel, if you're in the market to buy this holiday season or going into the new year. Having the knowledge of these industry pricing trends can positively affect your ability to close your best deal possible on your

next automobile purchase.

Will Estell is a writer, editor, producer and entrepreneur with more than 500 published features and numerous online articles in an array of genres. Originally from the backwoods of rural Mississippi, Will is a father of three who splits his time between Destin and Navarre, along with his wife, ABC 3 news anchor Laura Hussey Estell.

The Emerald Coast's Favorite Car Buying Service

We all need personal transportation, but most find the process of purchasing a vehicle to be a difficult, time-consuming experience. Emerald Coast Motor Cars Destin provides a car buying service that takes all the hassle away. Stan Hall and Devon Kiss provide a car buying service where customers tell them about their needs for a vehicle, and they search the market for the car, truck or SUV that precisely fits their customer's needs.



Stan began this unique type of car buying experience in 2012, and has had a major success with not only his local customer base, but also in filling customer's orders across the United States. Devon, Stan's associate, is a computer programmer and IT professional who can search for and locate vehicles from all over the United States based on each customer's individual requirements. Each vehicle purchased is graded on a five-point scale from zero to five, and only vehicles in the finest condition are chosen for Emerald Coast Motor Cars' customers.

With many years of experi-

ence in providing the highest quality cars delivered to their customers, Stan and Devon work tirelessly to ensure that each customer's unique desires are fulfilled when a vehicle is purchased through Emerald Coast Motor Cars' buying service. The success of this service can be seen by looking through their pages of stellar reviews on their website at ecmotorcars.com! A photo of the customer at the time of purchase and the customer's review are listed. These reviews are always interesting, and they show all kinds of customers and the wide variety of the vehicles sold, each uniquely fitting their customer's needs.

Over the years, Stan Hall

has perfected the process of ensuring that both value and reliability are provided to customers by recommending that his customers purchase vehicles one to two years old, so that the initial depreciation of a new car purchase is realized before his sale, but with a remainder of the manufacturer's warranty still going with the vehicle. Stan believes this provides a win-

win scenario for his customers looking to purchase the newest vehicle possible, while providing the best value in the car buying experience. Fulfilling customer's vehicle orders is a top priority for Emerald Coast Motor Cars Destin. They also accept trades, purchase vehicles, and are always looking for vehicles to consign.

Stan Hall and Devon Kiss

encourage everyone to check out their current inventory selection at ecmotorcars.com. If you are looking for the perfect car, truck or SUV, call Emerald Coast Motor Cars today. You will appreciate the old-fashioned customer service and incredible deals! The easiest way to get started is to call them directly: Stan Hall, (850) 830-3083, or Devon Kiss, (901) 275-1847.



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Dining

Holiday Dining and Entertainment in South Walton!

Tim Jackson's Storytellers Tour @ Chautauqua Theatre

Enjoy a lively night at the historic Florida Chautauqua Theatre in Downtown DeFuniak Springs, Florida on Friday, December 16th, 2022 for Tim Jackson's Storyteller Tour featuring national recording artist: Jo-

anna Cotten, Kree Harrison and Jason Martin. Tickets are on sale for \$20.00. For tickets & info, visit www.floridachautauqua.com. This two-hour Songwriter Performance Series will consist of an intimate evening by the featured artists. Music lovers will enjoy a meet & greet at the end

or the night's performance. The Florida Chautauqua Theatre is located at 840 Baldwin Avenue in DeFuniak Springs.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Dinner at Havana Beach Bar & Grill

To celebrate Christmas,

this year Havana Beach Bar & Grill at The Pearl Hotel will be offering a 3-Course Prix Fixe Dinner Menu on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Reservations are required, and seating times are available from 4 to 8 p.m. on Christmas Eve, and from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Christmas Day. Diners will have their choice of items for each course, including Roasted Apple and Parsnip Soup; Roasted Beet and Citrus Salad; Lobster Mac & Cheese; or Seared Sea Scallops for the first course, Classic Seafood Bouillabaisse; Pan Roasted Duck Breast; Stout Braised Short Ribs; or Herb Crusted Rack of Lamb for the second course, and for the third course diners may choose between Black Forest Tart; Cranberry Baked Alaska; Old World Gingerbread; or Havana Rum Cake. This is a reservation required event. Call 850.588.2882 for reservations. 63 Main Street, Rosemary Beach. Visit www.thepearlrb.com for more information.

foodie Christmas celebration right, choose any of the crowd-pleasing appetizers, including: Charred buffalo cauliflower with herb goat cheese, red potato and arugula

Ravioli with lemon ricotta, truffle and tarragon broth

Crab Maison with garlic sourdough, buttered saltines and lemon

Celery root soup with vermouth, heirloom apple and brown butter

The entrées are all showstoppers and offer guests a refreshing break from traditional holiday dishes that seem to overpopulate every menu during the season's festivities. With a heavy focus on elevating protein sources, diners can delight on any of the usual suspects, including:

Chilean sea bass with saffron beurre blanc

Maine lobster with tarragon hollandaise

16 oz. Prime boneless rib eye

Braised short rib

8 oz. prime filet mignon

Poulet rouge

The Christmas Menu also features fresh and wholesome salads as well as delicious sides to pair with your meal!

A meal down South is never complete without a sweet ending so don't miss out on the decadent desserts this Christmas: Blueberry & peach cobbler
Buttermilk pie with cranberry-orange compote

Ovide is located in the Hotel Effie, inside the gates of Sand-



New Year's Eve

First Dinner Seating at 5 PM

Elton John Tribute Show

Enjoy an hour of some of Elton John's most popular songs, performed by Ben Fry and band. An incredible Elton John experience.

December 31st 6:15-7:15 PM. Tickets \$49.99. Three Course Prix Fixe Meal \$99. Dinner purchase required.

Info and tickets: www.oldfloridafishhouse.com/events/still-standing-nye-show-and-dinner



Second Dinner Seating at 8 PM

30A's Premier New Year's Eve Party Extravaganza

We'll have live entertainment including the Clinch 46 band, delectable food and drink offerings, balloon drop, late night snack bar, midnight toast with souvenir champagne flute, photo booth and more!

Food and drink additional charge (\$100 minimum per person required).

Band plays 9 PM - 12:30 AM.

Call for reservations 850.534.3045.

Visit OldFloridaFishHouse.com for more information


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Visit Ovide this Holiday Season

Celebrate this holiday season with warm southern hospitality at Ovide, where the decadent Christmas Dinner Menu highlights fresh fall flavors and ingredients, while incorporating gems from the culinary world, like lobster and truffles. The varied a la carte menu has something to satisfy every taste, ranging from traditional favorites to more inventive but equally delicious concoctions. To start off your

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Dining

estin Resort, 1 Grand Sandestin Blvd, Miramar Beach. 850-351-3030. Visit www.hoteleffie.com for more information.

The Bay Wednesday Night Bonfire: A Sand Ole Opry Christmas

Come out to The Bay with family and friends every Wednesday night starting at 5PM for dinner, cold drinks and a bonfire with various local musicians on the beach of the Choctawhatchee Bay. It's a midweek tradition in South Walton, Florida. December Music: Dec. 14 - Sugarcane Jane - Dec. 22 - The Sand Ole Opry Christmas - Dec. 28 - Martin Lane. The Bay is an award-winning, yet casual waterfront restaurant and bar created by Chef Jim Shirley. For More information visit www.baysouthwalton.com. 2415 South Hwy. 331, Santa Rosa Beach.

A Dueling Pianos Christmas @ Old Florida Fish House

Enjoy a lively night of Dueling Pianos with Nate Sangsland on the inside stage at Old Florida Fish House Wednesday December 21 through Friday December 23. Throughout the week, catch artists playing inside the coveted bar and lounge as well as in the large outdoor dining space situated among the palm and oak trees under the twinkling lights next to Eastern Lake. 5 - 7PM - Russ Whitten, 7 - 10PM - A Dueling Pianos Christmas. Old Florida Fish House is a locals'



hidden gem on the shores of Eastern Lake in Seagrave Beach. Find more info and see menus at www.oldfloridafishhouse.com. Follow Old Florida Fish House on Facebook to stay up to date on current specials and events. 5235 E County Highway 30A, Seagrave Beach.

Pescado New Years Eve Celebration

Pescado Seafood Grill and Rooftop Bar invites you to ring in 2023 with them as they host

a New Year's Eve Celebration! 2022 Sign, Sealed, Delivered tickets options for reservation this New Year Eve will be released on December 1st, 2022 - call for reservations 850-213-4600. Bar is first come first serve, Restaurant by Reservation Only. Sign, Sealed, Delivered celebration attendees will be served 1 glass of Cava on arrival before sitting down for a delicious 3-course dinner with selections and an amuse bouche. Throughout the evening enjoy live music by Na-

than Fife in anticipation of the midnight countdown and toast. Also included in the ticket price is entry to The Courtyard at Pescado Time Square Party located on the ground floor featuring party favors and more! Learn more at www.rooftop30a.com. 74 Town Hall Road, Rosemary Beach.

Baytowne Countdown

Ring in the New Year at the Village of Baytowne Wharf, Dec. 31 from 6pm till after midnight! Dance the night away and enjoy a live band in the Events

Plaza and breathtaking fireworks as they light up the sky over the lagoon at midnight. Admission is free and open to the public - 21 & over after 10pm. 20 & Under must be accompanied by a legal guardian after 10pm. Live Entertainment: 5 - 7PM @ Baytowne LIVE Stage: DJ TreVy, 7PM - 1AM @ Baytowne Events Plaza Stage: Bay Kings Band The Village of Baytowne Wharf, 9300 Baytowne Blvd., Miramar Beach.

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Menu table with 15 items including Huevos Con Chorizo, Chimichanga, Pork Carnitas, Quesadilla Burger, Ruben's Plate, Taco Salad, Grilled Chicken Quesadilla, Ground Beef Tacos, Fajitas, Rio Salad, Reuben Burger, Carne Asada, Steak Mexicano, Enchilada Dinner, and Enchilada Supreme.

850-231-0600 www.MiCasita30A.com

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Music

For (More Than Just) the Love of Ballet

BY RACHEL PRESCOTT,
STUDIO6TWENTY5

It's early on a Saturday morning. A group of tiny dancers make their way to the ballet studio in a single file line, up on their tippy toes, with their hands on their hips.

For the next 30 minutes, these independent two- and three-year-olds will explore new ways of moving using their own magical thinking, which in turn lends to a tangible creative expression. Throughout the year, imagination and creative play teaches them concepts such as right from left, standing in a line, counting music, coordination, spatial awareness and a whole universe more.

Ballet is about so much more than just ballet.



In a world of apps, telecommunication and virtual reality, this mind/body all-encompassing performing art form is more beneficial now than ever for our younger generations. From the first day of class in a classical ballet school,

training begins to instill poise, self-confidence, awareness (of oneself and others), physical health and self-discipline. As tiny dancers grow into teenage dancers, these assets and values are a large part of who they are as people, and

therefore spill over into every other area of life.

My longtime ballet teacher, the late Miss Dorothy Lister, used to announce to our class of angsty 14- and 15-year olds, "Ballet dancers make straight

A's!" As I looked around the room, I realized she was right. We were all very good students, enrolled in honors, AP, IB programs, some of us at the NWF Collegiate High School. (We may not all have had straight A's, but close.)

The drive for excellence, self-discipline and the ability to creatively express oneself will carry a person through a lifetime, in

any profession or life path. After all, children with these values become adults with these values. The poise and determination of a once eight-year-old dancer serve her well as a lawyer fighting for justice in the courtroom, just as self-confidence and stage presence can only benefit a career in PR/marketing, and explorative self-expression help guide a photography career.

There are no bounds for how far these life lessons will reach.

Classical Ballet is an opportunity to help instill a foundation in young children that will follow into their adulthood. A dance education is less about being a professional dancer, and much more about developing into a whole human being, with tools and gifts to share with the world.

Studio6twenty5 has many exciting things coming up this year!

- Huge schedule expansion! Now offering Pre-Primary & Primary classes Monday through Saturday

- Weekly Adult/Open ballet classes

- Weekly barre+ classes

studio6twenty5 is proud to include the American Ballet Theatre® National Training Curriculum, a breakthrough 9 level program that combines high-quality artistic training with the basics of dancer health and child development. The ABT® National Training Curriculum consists of

a comprehensive set of age-appropriate, outcome-based guidelines to provide the highest quality ballet training to dance students of all ages and skill levels. Pre-Primary through Level 3 is taught by ABT® Certified Teacher, Rachel Prescott, who has successfully completed the ABT® Teacher Training Intensive in Pre-Primary through Level 3 of the ABT® National Training Curriculum.

Pre-Primary Ballet and Primary Ballet creative dance classes are part of the classi-

cal curriculum for the youngest dancers, instilling foundational elements of movement through creative experience, expression and play. Both boys and girls are highly encouraged. Classes occur once a week on either Tuesday, Wednesday or Saturday.

Visit the website for additional level and adult classes, or to register online: studio6twenty5.com. Please email any questions to rachel@studio6twenty5.com. studio6twenty5.com, 625 Harbor Blvd. (upstairs).



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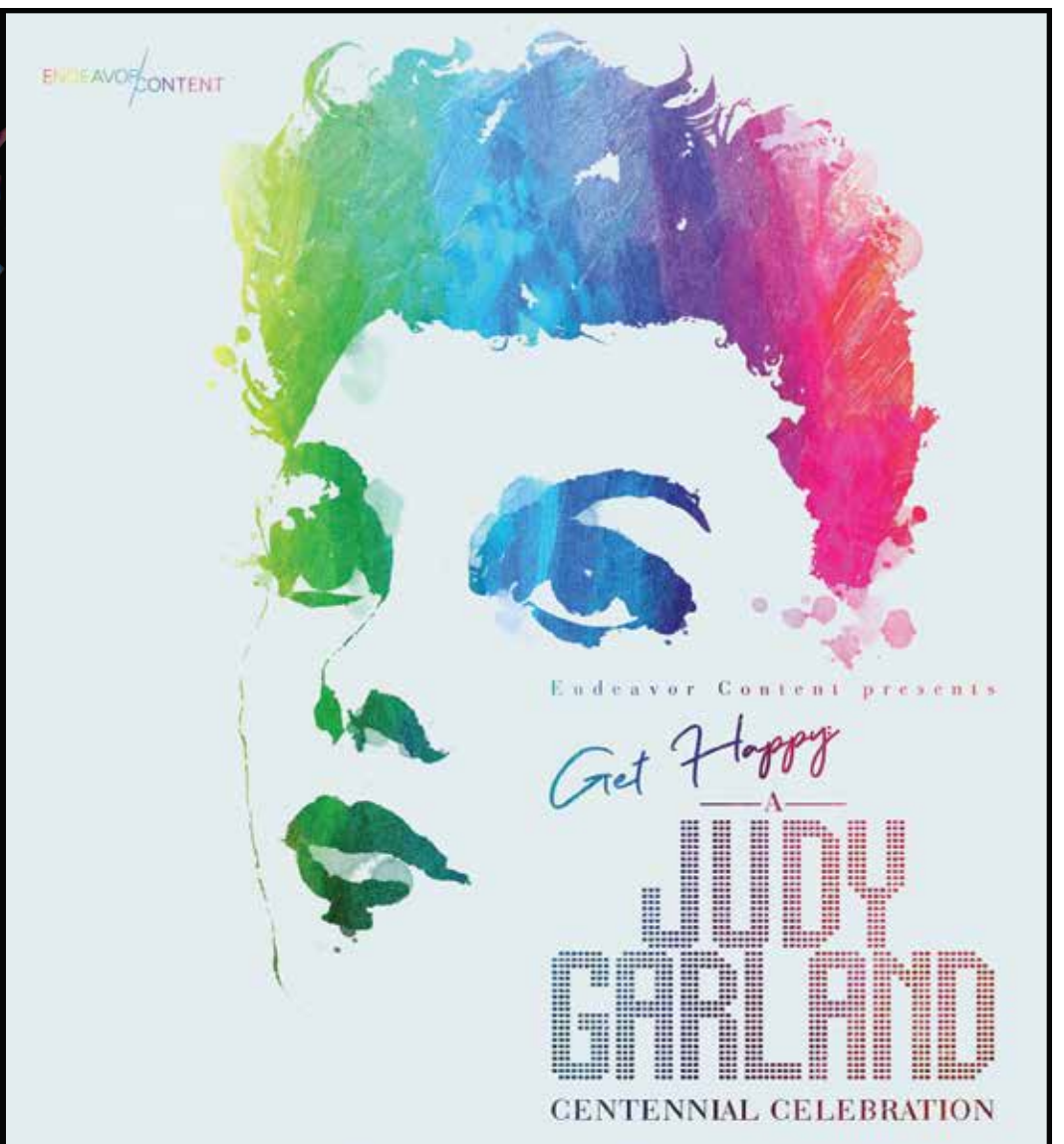
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CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION



Creating Holiday Cheer With a Sprinkling of Music

We might not always notice it's there... but when envisioning our perfect winter holiday celebration, the picture is just not complete without music.

Not sure where to begin with setting up your holiday soundtrack? Let's gather some inspiration for how you can enhance the holiday atmosphere and create the perfect mood, whether it's a quiet night in or an extravagant party with as many friends and family as could fit in the room.

Bring Up The Energy

Got a party planned? Need to entertain the kids? Decorating the tree? Just gotta get up and dance? It's time to find a Spotify playlist of party music (or create your own!) and connect it up to your speakers or TV.

You can also make a game out of music. Kids will love a game of musical statues with holiday tunes like 'Jingle Bells' or 'Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree' (though you'll need plenty of space for it). A family sing-along or karaoke session may also be a popular choice.

To test your music knowledge, you might like to play a variation of 'guess the song' from one of



the many websites on the internet. Remember the viral game 'Wordle' and its audio equivalent 'Heardle'? With this game, you must guess the song of the day from a short preview. There is now a Christmas music version which you can find here:

<https://christmas.heardledecades.com/>

Ambience and Nostalgia

Our childhood memories of the holidays are often fondly remembered when we hear a certain song, whether it is holi-

day-related or not. You might put together a playlist of music from the 'early days', or, if you're lucky enough, get the old vinyl player out of the attic and give it a spin. One of our students gives the example of 'Sleigh Ride' by Leroy Anderson, her favorite childhood song and one which her high school band played every year at the winter concert. Songs like these we can never get bored of, as they remind us of the childlike wonder and excitement of the holiday season.

To get all cozy, a YouTube video with a crackling fireplace is perfect to stream to the TV, and saves cleaning up the mess of a real fire. Soundscapes are very popular on YouTube to create the ultimate cozy atmosphere, for example this one with old-fashioned music muffled as though coming from another room, the sound of people chatting and a fireplace crackling. Lovely! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tfQCcnyUr0>

The Holiday Message

There are all kinds of religious tunes out there to take your pick from: peaceful Christian hymns like Silent Night, upbeat contemporary versions like Canadian rock band Downhere's 'How Many Kings: Songs for Christmas' album, traditional Yiddish songs like 'Oy Chanukah' (with a wonderful classic rendition by the renowned Klezmer Conservatory Band) or even sweetly romantic synth-pop like Buzzy Lee's 'Give You Everything'.

These are perfect for a family sing-along, or perhaps to make sitting around the dinner table all the more sentimental and filled with praise.

We hope you all have a fantastic holiday season and can't wait to see you all in the new year!

Studio 237 Music Lessons will help you find your beat. Call 850.231.3199 to schedule a visit of the studio. We offer lessons on piano, guitar (acoustic, bass, electric, classical), voice, ukulele, Drumming and song writing. Visit www.Studio237Music.com.

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Business

Emerald Coast Energy Solutions: **Resolutions**



By CHRIS BALZER

Welcome 2023! A recent survey of 531 US adults showed the top resolutions are; exercise more, eat healthier, and save money. A look back twenty years, CNN's poll showed the top resolutions were; get out of debt, lose weight and develop a healthy habit (quit smoking). It's not surprising that the top resolutions are similar year after year because they all have great intentions and actually go hand and hand. Let's

look at eating healthier and exercising. Eating healthy can mean cooking more at home, which saves money. Eating healthy also could cause fewer medications or doctor visits, which saves money. The same with exercising, developing a good exercise plan will make you healthier and could cause fewer medications or doctor visits saving you money. My grandmother once said, it's better to spend money at the grocery store on healthy foods than for doctor's visits.

Another way to save money which is always on the top of my mind and typically not on most is to increase efficiency and tighten the envelope of our homes. Tightening the envelope is not a phrase from Tom Wolfe's novel the Right Stuff but a term used to describe a system. The Building envelope is the physical barrier between the exterior and interior environments enclosing a structure (your home). Generally

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by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions

the building envelope consists of a series of components and systems like, a roof, walls, windows and a foundation. These systems protect the interior from the effects of the environment like precipitation, wind, temperature, humidity and ultraviolet radiation. One function of the building envelope is to control these effects between the interior and exterior of the building. When there is missing or compacted insulation or unsealed windows, doors and attic penetrations, your building envelope is compromised and wasting energy and comfort.

If your home is older than 15 years, you most likely don't

have enough insulation to meet today's guidelines. Prior insulation code for this area was R-19 (roughly 6.5" of insulation), now the new code is R-30 (roughly 10.5" of insulation). That's a 61% increase. Why the increase? Because we know that R-19 insulation has trouble keeping our homes comfortable and the only solution was to add more insulation. We recommend R-38 (14.5" of insulation). More states are requiring the use of reflective radiant barrier insulation installed on the inside of the attic roof lin . Reflective radiant barriers reflect 97% of radiant heat in your attic, lowering the attic temperature by 40 to 50 degrees

in the summer, allowing your insulation and ductwork to perform better, saving you money and increasing your comfort. It's all about tightening the envelope to increase efficiency and comfort. If one of your resolutions is to save money this year, schedule an inspection to know exactly where your home could improve its envelope.

May success knock on your door; all your joys multiply and you and your loved ones stay healthy. Happy 2023!

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions which is a Smile Provider Company. We provide smiles to our customers after installing our high energy efficient products, increasing comfort and lowering energy bills. For more information on how to save and become energy efficient schedule an inspection by calling (850) 588-2870, visit www.trusteces.com or email wecare@trusteces.com and Beat the Heat.

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Can You Paint Over Mold?

By JEREMY NEEL

Not only is mold potentially dangerous but it can be ugly to look at, too. Luckily, when you have mold buildup on a wall that is an eye sore, you have options. Painting is a great way to hide the stains left behind from mold, however, it's important to carry out all the necessary steps prior to painting over the molded area.

First Step:

You must find the source of the mold. Whether that be a leak or a spill, once you find the source you need to fix the leak or clean the area. Next you need to ensure proper ventilation through ceiling fans, portable fans and cracked windows.

Second Step:

After you locate the source of the mold, it's important to

ASK APEX Your Local Disaster Specialists



classify whether the mold is hazardous or non-hazardous before moving forward with the painting process. If the mold is non-toxic, it's safe and effective to paint over the mold. The best way to find out if the mold is hazardous is to get it tested by an Air Quality Assessor company.

Third Step:

The next step is to remove the mold, clean and prime the area for painting. In rooms with high levels of humidity such as bathrooms, basements, and the

kitchen, it's important to use paint, primer, and a sealant that works well in areas of the house with more moisture. We recommended that the mold cleaning procedure is performed by an IICRC Certified technician.

If you have experienced any of the above following a flood in your home, seek medical attention immediately. To learn more about hurricane prevention and repair, please call APEX Disaster Specialists at 850-660-6900.

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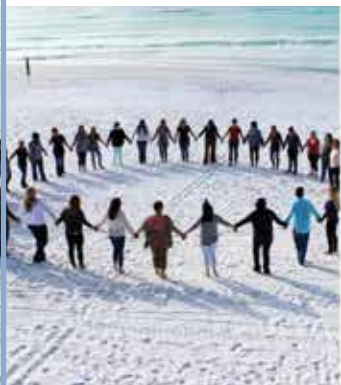
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The Gift of a Sound Personal Insurance Portfolio?



By JOE CAPERS,
INSURANCE ZONE

In a recent edition we focused on the details of a sound Business Insurance Program. Similar parallels can be established for your equally important Personal Insurance Program. Personal lines insurance is designed to offer protection for individuals and families rather than organizations and businesses. The most common types of personal insurance are property and ca-

sualty insurance which includes homeowners, condo, renters and auto insurance. The rates of insurance vary depending on geographic locations and the level of risk that an individual may have.

In our state of Florida, some types of personal lines insurance are required while others are strongly recommended. All Florida residences must have auto insurance which covers drivers while commuting to work, running errands and for other personal reasons and while used in business pursuits. On the other hand, homeowners, condo unit owners and renters insurance protect against damage to residences and personal assets.

Ultimately, insurance is about safeguarding one's family from life's uncertainties – and life does indeed have uncertain

and unexpected events. Personal insurance adds that extra layer of protection that can give you peace of mind in today's world.

Below is a sampling of personal insurance coverage that are recommended for you and your family:

Homeowners & Homes Under Renovation or Construction – Protects your home the way it protects you by choosing the proper coverage that meets your needs.

Condo Unit Owners - Your condo association may have insurance, but your individual unit has its own coverage needs. Condo insurance protects your dwelling elements, personal property and liability.

Renters Insurance – Can be structured to cover more than just your personal property, and personal liability is just one example.



Rental Property or Landlord Insurance – Protects your property investment for you as a rental property owner.

Auto Insurance – Protection that gives peace of mind when on the road.

Flood Insurance – Homeowners does not cover flooding so flood insurance will protect against floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact our area.

Boat and Yacht Insurance – Know that you, your guests and vessel are protected so you can enjoy your time on the water.

Umbrella – This high limit coverage goes above your personal and auto liability policies to protect you from unexpected and catastrophic events.

Jewelry and Collections – For those special items and valuables that your homeowners coverage will have severe limitations.

Motorcycle and RV Insurance – Provides liability protection for you and your machine.

Home Office Liability – As more individuals are now working from home, make sure you have protection for this often-overlooked exposure.

Life Insurance – Whether term or permanent, life insurance can provide income, final expenses, transfer an inheritance and business continuation.

Pet Insurance – You know

I would not leave off this vital protection to cover the health for our precious animals.

There are many choices in the marketplace when it comes to your personal insurance program – especially automobile and homeowner coverage. We recommend you work with an agent and agency that will take the time to get to know you, your family, and your insurance needs. One that can search the marketplace for the correct combination of coverage and price to meet the insurance requirements of you and your family.

You've worked hard to attain your assets and this is a great time of the year. Let a personal lines specialist provide you with the gift of a Personal Insurance Program that will protect you with sound insurance products.



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Chef Jim Shirley Receives Prestigious FRLA Torch Award

2022 for Outstanding Innovation and Education Practices in Hospitality

Nationally recognized restaurateur and South Walton resident Chef Jim Shirley is the owner of the Great Southern Café, The Meltdown on 30A, The Bay, Farm & Fire, North Beach Social, and The Chicken Shack in South Walton, Florida. He is also the co-owner of Great Southern Restaurants, which owns The Fish House, The Atlas Oyster House, The Fish House Deck Bar, and more in Pensacola, Florida. Chef Jim uses Southern accents with great skill and spirit, traveling far afield to graze and glean, absorb culinary ideas, select fine wines, and look for pockets of sustainable farming practices. As a Pensacola native, Chef Jim uses his knowledge of local waters and family farming histories to promote “New Ruralism,” a movement to champion sustainable agriculture at the urban edge. Jim is chair of the state board of directors of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association and a past president of the

association’s Northwest Florida Chapter, founder and president of the Society of Great Southern Chefs, and a member of the Southern Foodways Alliance. He is also one of the five distinguished Celebrity Chefs of Pensacola and has cooked at the James Beard House numerous times.

Chef Jim received the 2022 Torch Award presented by the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA) and is bestowed each year at the organization’s Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show in Orlando. The award was presented during the FRLA fall board meeting on November 3 at the Caribe Royale Resort.

“I am deeply humbled and honored to have been presented with the Torch Award at this year’s Florida Restaurant & Lodging Show,” Chef Jim shared after the event. “To join the ranks of previous recipients, including Thomas Keller, Geoffrey Zakarian, Curtis Stone,



tenth year on the list honoring restaurants with extraordinary wine programs. Great Southern Café was also recently named the winner of the Best Mojito in the 2022 Best of the Emerald Coast awards by Emerald Coast Magazine, while Chef Jim Shirley’s North Beach Social won the title for Best Outdoor Bar.

The Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA) is Florida’s premier non-profit hospitality industry trade association with over 10,000 members, including independent hoteliers and restaurateurs, household name franchises, theme parks and suppliers. The association’s mission is to protect, educate and promote Florida’s \$111.7 billion hospitality industry which represents 1.5 million employees. Dedicated to safeguarding the needs of the membership, FRLA provides legislative advocacy to ensure the voices of its members are heard and their interests are protected. The association offers regulatory compliance and food safety training through SafeStaff® and FRLA’s subsidiary, RCS Training. The FRLA Educational Foundation provides industry-developed, career-building high school programs throughout the state. Visit FRLA.org to learn more.

Michelle Bernstein and more, is a great privilege. I am in good company and can’t thank the FRLA enough.”

FRLA created the Torch Award to honor outstanding chefs and restaurateurs who embody “illumination, energy, joy, victory, enlightenment, hope, and education.” These traits may be embodied through exceptional knowledge and leadership, philanthropic and community efforts, extraordinary

talent and creativity, innovation and inspiration.

“I don’t know if you can apply all that to me,” Chef Jim laughed. “I’m just a man trying to do good with good grits, but I am honored to be a representative for a strong cause.”

This award comes on the heels of Chef Jim’s Great Southern Café’s naming as a recipient of the 2022 Wine Spectator Grand Awards—the iconic Seaside, Florida, restaurant’s

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