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SOWAL Life

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Lakeside Songwriters Concerts Feature Renowned Country Songwriters and Performers

Fridays | March 22-May 3 | Old Florida Fish House on 30A

BY LORI LEATH SMITH

Over the past few years, our area has become known as one of the best for songwriters to gather and perform some of their heartfelt lyrics and amazing vocals. Each has a story with a passion to tell it in song to their listeners. How blessed we are to have this most beautiful and unique coastal backdrop, impeccable dining and magnificent musical mecca. As music lovers, we crave it – no experience is better!

That's why Old Florida Fish House, already known as an acclaimed, exceptional dining and live entertainment venue, is bringing a brand-new concert series to your door—the Lakeside Songwriters Concert Series! Each Friday this spring from March 22 through May 3, this intimate concert series, set against the picturesque backdrop of Eastern Lake and



30A, will showcase creators and performers of some of the best-known music of our time.

“Our new Lakeside Songwriters Concert Series prom-

ises to be an extraordinary experience for music enthusiasts, offering them a unique opportunity to engage with acclaimed artists in an intimate

setting,” said Old Florida Fish House owner Keith O’Leary. Locals and visitors alike will not only have the chance to enjoy captivating musical performances, but also get to know them by participating in pre-show meet and greets with the artists themselves. “We are thrilled to provide a platform for these incredibly talented artists to share their creations and connect with their fans in a more intimate way,” he said.

Featuring a lineup of top-notch, popular talent, the Lakeside Songwriters Concert Series kicks off with Craig Campbell on March 22nd, followed by Keith Stegall and Bradley Gaskin on March 29th, Michael Morgan on April 5th, Charles Esten on April 12th, Leslie Satcher and Kevin Mac on April 19th and

LAKESIDE
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South Walton County Tax-Aide Program

Free Federal Income Tax
Preparation Available in
South Walton County

Free Federal income tax preparation is being offered in South Walton County for low to middle-income families and individuals, with special attention to senior citizens. Tax Preparation service will be available from Feb. 6 to April 11, 2024, at A Simple Faith Church in Santa Rosa Beach (new location this year). The church is at 360 WRM Circle Blvd in the Blue Mountain Beach Industrial Park, north of Hwy 98.

Taxpayers must make appointments online at tinyurl.com/yryz-b5mt or by calling (850) 275-9104.

The site will be open Tuesdays and

TAX-AIDE
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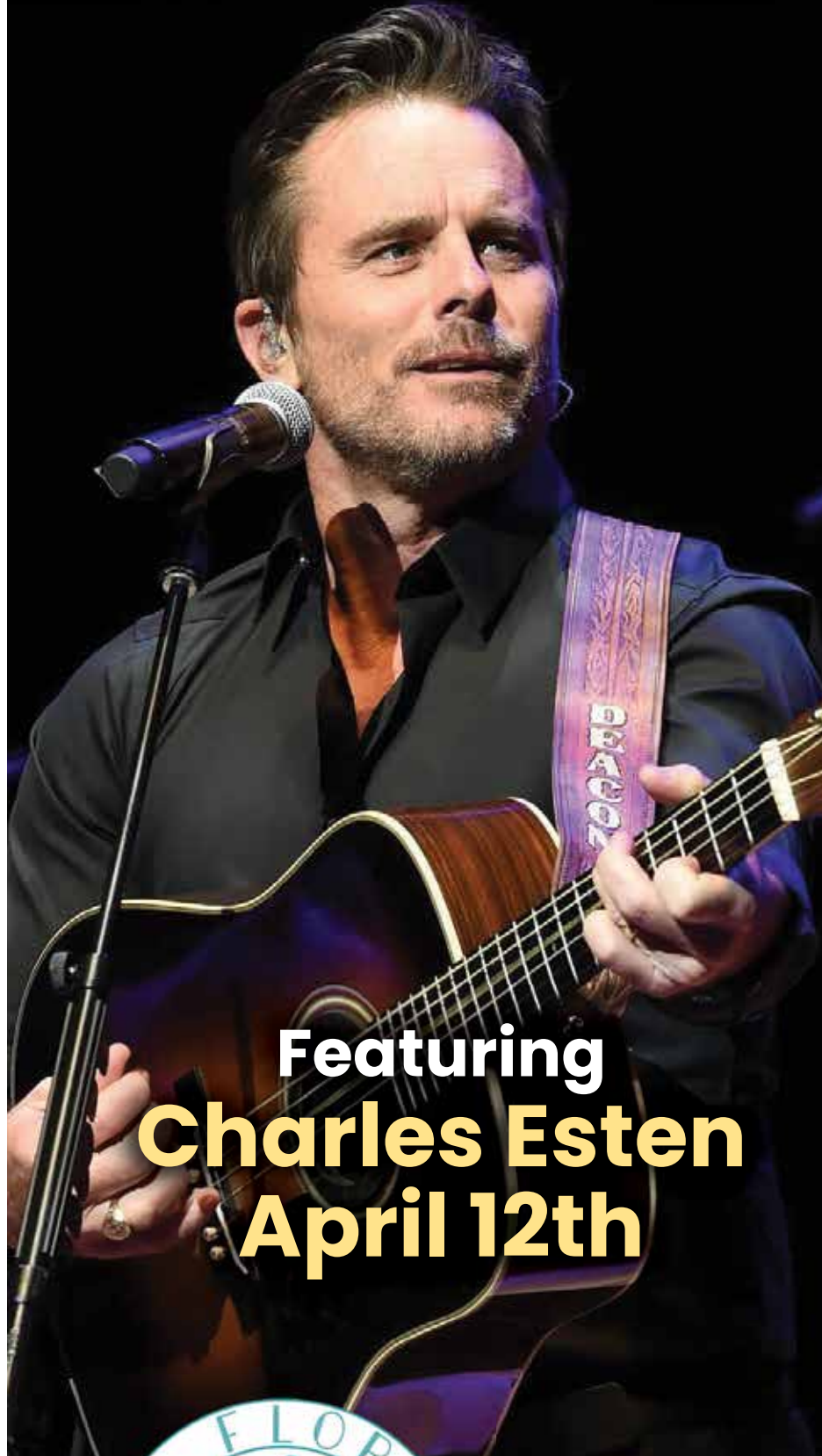
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Sanctuary Under the Sun

BY HEATHER BENNETT EYE

It's getting to be that time of year again. The sun is out just a little longer. The breeze is just a little warmer. Soon, spring break will be upon us, the time of the year when the area is bustling with tourists, many young adults, and a few families, seeking what The Emerald Coast has to share. In addition to sugar white sand, turquoise waters, local eateries and Southern hospitality, visitors

will find peace of mind through the Word of God.

Katie Campbell and 30A Prays, a nonprofit organization, is gearing up for another outreach season this spring break. You may have seen their red prayer tents along the beach last year. Katie said fall outreach was their biggest attendance yet. "We did five full days out in the tents and we prayed for close to 1,000 young people. The tents were constantly busy."

It may be a preconceived notion that Generation Z is standoffish when it comes to religion or prayer, but 30A Prays' fall outreach team observed just the opposite. Katie explained that several young people came to ask for prayer because they were addicted to alcohol, drugs or self harm. Some of them visited the prayer tents multiple times where the team could pray with them, encourage them and give them hope. "What stood out to the team, is how desperate these young people are to have people listen to their stories. They wanted to tell us these things. They wanted to open up and say, 'I'm struggling,'" stated Katie. "They just want to be loved and listened to, and what we're doing matters in their lives."

Katie and the team at 30A Prays are looking forward to making a difference in the lives of many more young people this Spring Break. There will be two prayer outreaches, March 12 - 15 and March 19 - 22. During these two weeks, five prayer tents will be available between Seaside, Watercolor and Seagrave from



10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Sunset worship and baptisms will be held on March 15 and March 22 starting at 6 p.m. at Dogwood Beach

Access near Seaside (2566 E County Hwy 30A, Santa Rosa

30A PRAYS
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Community

Winter Action-Packed for Walton County Schools



Superintendent A. Russell Hughes

The Walton County School District is proud to have A. Russell Hughes, Florida's 2024 Superintendent of the Year at the helm! FADSS (Florida Association of District School Superintendents) President Sherrie Raulerson commented, "Russell leads with compassion and conviction, driven by a work ethic grounded in servant leadership and a commitment to educational excellence." Congratulations, Superintendent Hughes!

The characteristics of outstanding leadership and service don't fall far from the tree, as

evident in the naming of Walton County School District Principal of the Year (POY), Assistant Principal of the Year (APOY), Teacher of the Year (TOY) and Educational Support Personnel (ESP). These staff members have been cited as phenomenal leaders and have earned their colleagues' respect on campus. POY is Jason Campbell, principal of Walton Middle School, APOY is Dr. Laurie Edwards, assistant principal at Freeport Elementary School, TOY is Ms. Heather Stewart of Paxton School, and ESPY is Randall Messer, Plant Manager at West DeFuniak Elementary School. Congratulations to each of you; thank you for being EPIC in all you do for our district!

The month of February was busy for our academic and extracurricular student programs. We hope our community had an opportunity to support our students in these events, which allow them to grow and cultivate their creative

abilities. On Saturday, February 24, 2024, the All County Chorus and Ensemble and the ORFF Ensemble presented a musical show. The students showed great talent and poise as they serenaded their audience! In addition, the regional Lego League competitions were held on February 10 at Freeport High School. This program is full of STEM work, and our students show incredible ingenuity during these events. If you haven't seen a competition, add visiting to your list of things to do!

Then, on February 13 our Walton County Students, who placed in the district science fair competition, went on to Regionals hosted at the Okaloosa-Walton Regional Science Fair on the Okaloosa County Fairgrounds in Ft. Walton Beach, FL. Congratulations to all of the District winners and Regional awardees.

Our community partners help us challenge our students academically and provide opportunities

for critical thinking. The Walton County VFW 4437 hosted an essay contest on several topics related to social studies. Three winners from local schools emerged from this competition; Estefania Gama, a 12th grader from Freeport High School, is the winner of the "Voice of Democracy" entries, John Hale, a 6th grader at Seaside School, was the winner of the "Patriots Pen" entries. Matt McCown, a South Walton High School instructor, was the teacher contest winner. Thank you to our community partners for the opportunity, and congratulations to the winners!

Our schools are incredible institutions of learning, and our district is proud of every one of them. Just recently, the College Board (a non-profit agency that connects students to college success and opportunity) recognized Freeport High School as the 20-23 AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award for a suc-

cessful program.

Our student-athletes continue to make EPIC accomplishments across the district and region. The South Walton High School soccer team won the district championship, moved forward to the quarter-regional competition, and took home the winning title there! Seahawks Boys and Girls Basketball teams in addition to Walton High School Boys Basketball and Paxton School's Boys and Girls Basketball teams made it to regional competition. We are very proud of the effort and excellence these teams exhibited to move them to the regional level of competition. Congratulations Seahawks, Braves and Bobcats!

The Walton County School District is currently accepting applications for Summer VPK registration. Parents may register their young children February

WCSDS

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TAX-AIDE

continued from page 1

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Tax-Aide is also available in DeFuniak Springs. Call (850) 892-8746 for an appointment.

AARP Tax-Aide is a nationwide service, with information available at other nearby locations at https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/lo-

[cations.html](#).

This service is sponsored by the AARP Foundation and the IRS. There are no age restrictions and AARP membership is not required.

Taxpayers must bring their 2022 tax return, Social Security cards for taxpayer(s) and all dependents, picture IDs, and all tax documents received. Bring checking or savings account in-

formation if direct deposit of refunds or direct debit of amounts due is desired. If applicable, bring Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) for each individual. Taxpayers who wish to itemize deductions must bring appropriate information. Note that complicated tax returns involving rental properties, inventories, depreciation, etc. cannot be prepared.

30A PRAYS

continued from page 3

Beach). 30A Prays is non-denominational, and not affiliated with a particular church. Everyone is welcome to visit and learn more. "I'm excited," said Katie. "I never know what to expect."

Volunteers are always appreciated, and if you're interested in serving in a tent, you will be required to attend prayer training. Training will be held Tuesday, March 12, from 6-8 p.m. and Tuesday, March 19 from 6-8 p.m. at 1598 S County Hwy 393 Ste #101, Santa Rosa Beach.

If you are interested in learning more about 30A Prays, you can visit <https://30aprays.com> or check them out on Instagram @30APrays. You can also join them in prayer at The Chapel at Seaside every Thursday from 12-1 p.m. in April and May starting April 4.



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Coastal Seniors Update for March

COASTAL SENIORS

OF SOUTH WALTON

Chair Yoga Classes at the Blake in Miramar Beach – Tuesdays, March 5, 19, and April 2 at 9:45 am. RSVP at (850) 650-5000

Cultural Arts Alliance Painting Class – Join us Monday, March 11 at 10 a.m. for Shells on the Beach painting class at the Cultural Arts Alliances located at 105 Hogtown Bayou Lane, Santa Rosa Beach. Instructor Barbara Suhadolnik will show how to use tinted epoxy resin and crushed glass to embellish paintings. All supplies are included. Email coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com to reserve your spot.

2024 Seelight Festival – Friday, March 22 at 6:30 p.m. – Coastal Seniors can attend this 45-minute luminescent night walk with more than 1,000 lanterns. Tickets are \$20.99 but Coastal Seniors can purchase discounted tickets by going to seelightfestival.com. Contact Sonia at (850) 280-534 or coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com. to receive a special discount coupon code. The

festival is at Seascapes Resort, 100 Seascapes Dr. in Miramar Beach.

Game Day at Somerby on Wednesdays – Wednesdays, March 6, 13, 22, 27 and April 3 from 2-4 p.m. Somerby of Santa Rosa Beach is located at 164 W. Hewett Rd., Santa Rosa Beach. Melissa Bailey, CSSW member will host game day. Melissa teaches and plays many games such as Hand & Foot, 5 Crowns, Euchre, Mexican Train Dominoes, and more. Refresh your skills or learn a new game. Local seniors and Walton County snowbirds are welcome! Call/text Sonia at 850-280-5342 or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com if you have questions.

Art Classes – Watercolor Painting Class – Tuesdays, March 5, 12, 19, 26 and April 2 8:30 am – Noon. Karen Peter-

son will lead the class. \$15 for CSSW members and \$30 for non-members. Space is limited so call 850-280-5342 to reserve your spot, or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com. All supplies are included.

Monthly Meeting – Friday, March 15 - 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Guest speaker is Nancy Brown of Dog Harmony, a volunteer-run organization dedicated to reducing the dog shelter population and educating people about support dogs. Call 850-280-5342 or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com to reserve your spot. Held at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach and a light lunch will be served.

Exercise Classes – Angela Gibson will lead classes on Tuesdays, March 5, 12, 26 and April 2 at 1:00 p.m. and Thursdays, March 7, 14, 21, 28 and April 4 at 10:00 a.m., at 70 Logan Lane

in Grayton Beach. Cost is \$5 per session. R.S.V.P. to coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Tai Chi Classes – Thursdays, March 7, 14, 21, 28 and April 4 at 1 p.m. Antony Bartlett will lead the classes. Cost is \$10 per class. Held at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Space is limited so call (850) 280-5342 to reserve your spot, or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Pickleball – Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex courts Wednesdays, March 13, and 27 at 6:00 p.m. Registration required. Register for one date only at www.waltonrec.com by choosing field and court rentals. Open to Walton County residents only. Email Sandy Gulak at sowalpickleball@gmail.com for more info and with questions. Also join us at the Boys and Girls

Club on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Cost is \$5 per day and an initial \$35 waiver fee. Please join the SoWal 30A Pickleball Association on Facebook for more information and weekly updates and check the CSSW calendar at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org.

Seniors 50 years of age and up residing in or visiting Walton County are invited to join CSSW. Membership is \$30 for individuals, \$40 for family, and \$75 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 Facebook at Coastal Seniors of South Walton. Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization for active adults and we are looking for dedicated, enthusiastic persons to join our Board of Directors.



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Community

Beach Safety is Back! SWFD Ramps up Lifeguard Services for Busy Year Ahead

By: MACKENZIE MCCLINTOCK,
SWFD PUBLIC INFORMATION
OFFICER

visitors in town means South
Walton Fire District (SWFD)
lifeguards are headed back onto
the beach. The official 2024

Beach Safety Season is underway
March 1 – October 31 in South
Walton.

Lifeguards staff 15 towers

Another wave of spring break



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across the 26 miles of South Walton's beaches, which stretch from Inlet Beach to Miramar Beach. These surf rescue professionals can respond to emergencies on the beach, as well as within proximity to the beach such as County Highway 30A and Scenic Gulf Drive.

"We've spent the last few months training up all of our full-

time staff," said SWFD Beach Safety Director David Vaughan. "At this point, we have more than 20 full-time personnel who are certified EMTs, we've made advancements to our medical equipment, improved our fleet of response vehicles, and trained

SWFD
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Psalm 18:28
"It is you who lights a lamp for me. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness."

LAKESIDE

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Bryan White on May 3rd.

Each artist brings their own distinct style and expertise, promising an array of musical genres and captivating tunes. As the first in the series, Craig Campbell is a renowned country singer and songwriter from Georgia known for his distinctive voice and heartfelt lyrics. Developing a passion for music at an early age and influenced by classic country legends, his career spans over two decades and Craig has established himself as a talented artist with a genuine connection to his audience. His debut self-titled album, "Craig Campbell," released in 2011, features hit singles like "Family Man" and "Fish," earning him recognition and praise within the country music community.

Craig's music is characterized by its authenticity, often drawing inspiration from personal experiences and relatable themes. He has a knack for crafting songs that resonate with listeners, blending traditional country sounds with a modern twist. In addition to his success

as a solo artist, Craig has also contributed his songwriting talents by penning hits for other artists. Whether performing on the Grand Ole Opry stage or connecting with audiences during live shows, he continues to leave a lasting impression with his soulful performances and relatable storytelling.

On March 29th, Keith Stegall and Bradley Gaskin take the stage. Keith is a Grammy award winning producer and writer of multiple #1 hits including "I hate everything" by George Strait, "Don't Rock The Jukebox" by Alan Jackson, and "I Do (Cherish You)" by 98 Degrees. Keith Stegall is one of Nashville's most celebrated men behind the scenes. As Alan Jackson's longtime producer, the pairing has sold over 60 million records. With the Zac Brown band, Stegall produced the group's first three albums, resulting in the group's first nine singles to reach #1 on the country charts. Stegall is currently president of Dreamlined Entertainment Group, a Nashville-based production and publishing company specializing in songwriter/artist development.



Singer-songwriter Bradley Gaskin signed with Columbia Nashville in 2010 and released his debut single, "Mr. Bartender," which he wrote solely by himself. Bradley's single charted on coun-

try radio for 20 weeks that led him to a Top 40 country hit. Soon after his immediate success, Sony shelved the artist along with the rest of the music. The spotlight for Bradley slowly faded, so he decided to take a break and focus on other options for a career. The artist put down his Gibson J45 and went back to a life he'd known before his music stardom, being a normal working man. He filled his days hanging sheetrock and later worked as a full-time janitor at an elementary school. Bradley could have settled into a normal life, but he knew that wasn't what he was supposed to do. There were plenty of others cheering him on when Jack Cole, a seasoned friend, offered him a deal of a lifetime. "Why don't we record the music you want to write?" Jack said. Jack started 30A Life Records sealing the deal with Bradley Gaskin as his very first signed artist. Bradley is currently tracking his first full-length record in over a decade with Grammy Award winning producer Keith Stegall. The first single will be released this summer.

The Lakeside Songwriters Concert Series not only offers an exceptional musical experience,

but also provides an opportunity for attendees to indulge in a delectable dining experience. For those looking to enhance their evening, the Dinner and Show VIP Package offers premium seating, a delicious five-course dinner during the show, and a glass of beer, wine or champagne.

Tickets are available for purchase at www.oldflfishhouse.com/lakesidesongwritersconcert. Early booking is recommended to secure the best seats for this highly anticipated event. The artist meet and greet will begin at 6 p.m., with the show starting at 7 p.m.

Located at 33 Heron's Watch Way in Santa Rosa Beach, Old Florida Fish House is a renowned dining and entertainment destination offering exceptional food, live music and unique experiences in Santa Rosa Beach. With a commitment to providing unforgettable moments for guests, Old Florida Fish House continues to be the go-to destination for food and entertainment enthusiasts on 30A and the Emerald Coast. For more information, visit OldFloridaFishHouse.com.



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Community

WCSD

continued from page 4

20 through 29, 2024, at Freeport Elementary, WISE, and Bay schools. For more information regarding registration visit https://wit.walton.k12.fl.us/article/1431871

If you are interested in enrolling your youngster in the VPK program for the upcoming 2023-24 school year, take note that registration for the new school year begins February 25, 2024, and continues through April 5, 2024. Students may register for VPK

on WISE, Mossy Head, Paxton School, Freeport Elementary School, and Bay School. If your child will turn four (4) before September 1, 2024, they are eligible to participate in the program.

Walton County School District wants to hear from you! You may always ask questions through the Let's Talk platform. This community digital tool automatically delivers your text questions to the appropriate personnel for a speedy reply. Text (850) 204-9667 or click "contact us" on the WCSD webpage.

SWFD

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very hard physically to be the best we can be."

From responding to medical events to performing water rescues to locating missing people, to answering everyday questions about the area, lifeguards serve not only as first responders, but



community stewards for visitors and locals alike.

SWFD's Beach Safety and Surf Rescue program first began in 2006 and has since grown to encompass more than 50 to 60 staff members every summer. Some of these lifeguards serve in a seasonal role, while others work full-time, year-round to provide coverage across the beach.

The agency continues looking for any qualified individuals to join the team as a lifeguard in 2024, but hopes are high for the year thanks to the endless com-

munity support.

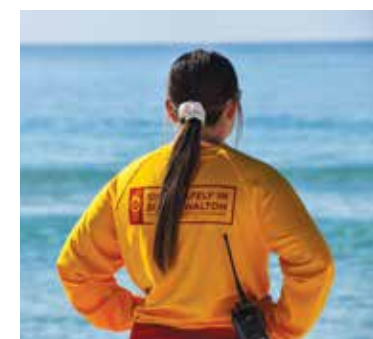
"We have been backed by our locals and longtime visitors since the inception of the program," Vaughan said. "We need their help educating others this year about the importance of following the beach flag system and swimming near one of our lifeguards. We're most effective when we can physically see swimmers and prevent any emergency from occurring before it's too late."

For more information about rip current safety, drowning prevention, swimming near a life-

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guard, or applying for a job with SWFD Beach Safety, visit SWFD on social media at @swfdinfo or its website, www.swfd.org.

For daily updates about the beach flags and surf conditions, text SAFETY to 31279.

South Walton Fire District is an independent, fire control district that provides beach safety and lifeguard services through funding from the Walton County Tourism Department, as well as contractual agreements with Sandestin Owners Association and Rosemary Beach Property Owners Association. SWFD is also responsible for fire suppression, emergency medical services transport, technical rescue, and emergency dispatching across the 84-square miles of South Walton County, Florida.

Walton County Snowbirds Give Back to the Community They Love!

BY CINDY ARMSTRONG

The Walton County Snowbirds (WCS) held their annual meeting on February 22 at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Destin. Co-Presidents Jim Smith and Coleen Haas Smith announced that as of February 21, we have 724 members. That membership represents 36 states, 107 Canadians, and 212 new members.

At the meeting, Kevin Maloney, President and CEO of Children in Crisis, was presented with a check for \$2,630, monies raised by the WCS from the sale of FundRazs coupon books. Children in Crisis, Inc., is a 501c3 non-profit organization of caring people working together to provide homes and keep brothers and sisters together. They give a home to the abused, neglected, and abandoned children of the community.

Additionally, two local area



students, Avery Villa and Jacklyn Roe, were awarded \$1,000 in educational scholarships from the WCS. Teacher Barbara Stratton and Avery Villa both spoke to the group and expressed their gratitude to the snowbirds. Jacklyn Roe could not attend the meet-

ing as she was participating in the state finals with her soccer team.

Lastly, the WCS held a Blood Drive on February 21, where thirty-eight participants donated 45 units of blood to the local community.

The WCS would like to thank



the entire community for your continuous support and for welcoming the snowbirds to your area this year. Your community is beautiful, peaceful, and kind. Everywhere we go we find excellent customer service and friendly faces, great restaurants, shopping centers, entertainment facilities, schools, etc. It is our

home away from home, and we look forward to returning next snowbird season!

For more information on registration and all the activities and events the club has to offer, go to the website at www.walton-countysnowbirds.com or join the group's Facebook page "Walton County Snowbirds."

Dog-Harmony Hosts the 9th Annual Doggie EGGstravaganza on March 29th at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

Dog-Harmony presents the 9th Annual Doggie EGGstravaganza, a canine-only Easter egg hunt and doggie social, at Grand Boulevard at Sandestin's Grand Park on Friday, March 29th from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Hundreds of dogs and their "furrless" friends will trample the North Lawn while hunting for colorful treat-filled eggs and enjoying live music, libations and lite bites.

This event is free to the public, with a \$15 donation or \$20 day of the event, to participate in the egg hunt. Each participant will receive a souvenir bag to collect eggs and a professional digital photo. Puppy-friendly treats will be hidden in over 800 colorful eggs scattered throughout the lawn. Two designated areas for pets over and under 25 pounds will be available. All dogs must be leashed and no prong, choke or shock collars are permitted. Tickets to participate in the egg hunt are available in advance at <https://events.humanitix.com/9th-annual-doggie-eggstravaganza>.

"My dog Finn and I have been attending EGGstravaganza every year since my husband and I adopted him six years ago," said



Janie Schmidt, Dog-Harmony supporter. I love that this event supports such a great cause, and Finn truly wouldn't be the dog he is today without Dog-Harmony. We get to spend time together at this fun event while supporting an organization which does much for our community and our family."

During the EGGstravaganza, guests can enjoy delicious appetizers from JC's Gourmet, beer and wine, music by Diamond Dan DJ Services, pet photos by Rescues Animal Photography, family-friendly games, great prizes and more.

This event is presented as part of the Coastal Culture Series made possible by the Grand



Boulevard Arts and Entertainment Program. Doggie EGGstravaganza is also sponsored by Gulfshore Air Conditioning and Heating Inc, Pure Collective Salon and Silver Sands Premium Outlets.

"For many years, Grand Boulevard has cherished our partnership with Dog-Harmony. We love the creativity they bring to their events and they make them so much fun for everyone. More importantly, we believe in the Dog-Harmony mission and appreciate the opportunity to support it," said Stacey Brady, Marketing and Communications Director for Grand Boulevard.

All proceeds from Dog-Harmony at Grand Boulevard events

will help support the pups and programs in our community. Dog Harmony's services include Animal Assisted Therapy, Children's Education and Community Education and Keeping Dogs Out of the Shelters. Last year, the dog therapy program touched the lives of over 200 people in local hospitals each week. They

also provided over 240 hours of education and training to families who were at risk of owner surrender situations. To learn more about these services, visit dog-harmony.org. To inquire about the various sponsorship opportunities or how you or your business can get involved, contact fundraising@dog-harmony.org.





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Community

The Emerald Bay Golf Club

Tucked away along a verdant stretch of bay on the east side of Destin, Emerald Bay Golf Club affords golf enthusiasts the perfect blend of challenging gameplay and serene coastal scenery.

Why Golfers Love Emerald Bay

This dynamic golf course is ranked as a "Best in Destin". High on playability, Emerald Bay's commitment to exceptional course conditions and attention to detail makes this a course that appeals to all skill levels. With lush green fairways, manicured greens, and meticulously maintained features, guests can expect a visually captivating and enjoyable round of golf every time they visit.

Emerald Bay Course Ratings

Featuring Bermuda Grass Fairways & TifEagle Bermuda Grass, This semi-private golf club boasts an impressive 18-hole, par 72 course with an extraordinary layout covering up to 7,050 yards from the back tees and a slope rating of 143 garnish, an overall rating of 73.9. The challenging yet fair design

entices avid golfers who consistently seek to push their skills to new heights.

A Bob Cupp Masterpiece Course

Emerald Bay's course is masterfully designed by renowned golf course architect Bob Cupp. Cupp created a course that effortlessly incorporates the natural beauty of Choctowhatee Bay while still presenting golfers with a challenging and exhilarating experience. Originally built in 1991, it underwent extensive renovations in 2014. Be sure to watch for stunning Bay views with holes 15,16 and 17.

Unique & Challenging Features

This golf club offers golfers a unique experience, with numerous water hazards, bunkers, and undulating greens that truly test their abilities. Players appreciate the risk-reward ratio, forcing them to carefully strategize to navigate the challenging holes and ever-changing winds that characterize Emerald Coast golfing. Change up your tee boxes for a challenge that will suit your play.



Emerald Bays Scenic Views

Immersed in Natural Coastal Beauty, Emerald Bay Golf Club's picturesque surroundings provide a visual feast that includes

tranquil ponds, marshes, and an abundance of native foliage. This enchanting backdrop enhances the overall golfing experience and keeps golfers coming back to soak in the breathtaking scenery.

Clubhouse Offerings

The fully-equipped, modern clubhouse offers the perfect place to unwind post-round. With a member's only locker room, a well-stocked pro shop, and friendly staff, guests feel at home from beginning to end. GPS Golf Carts provide for Tournament Style Play, and additional group services are available, including Golf Instruction, Group Clinics, and Playing Lessons.

Dining at its Finest

Finished your final hole? Savor a delicious meal at the on-site restaurant, The Emerald Bay Grille, open for lunch from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. With delectable dishes to suit any palate, an elegant atmosphere and exceptional service, it's the perfect place to relax and indulge after a round on the links.

Emerald Bay Golf Club is highly rated for the ultimate golfing experience garnering high praise for its challenging course, beautiful scenery, and superb amenities. Stop in for a round at The Emerald Bay Golf Club at 4781 Clubhouse Drive, Destin, Florida.



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"A Walk Down Magnolia Lane" Golf Soiree Tees Up Support For Embrace Florida Kids

Celebrate the World's Greatest Golf Tournament and Support Florida's Children in Need, Tickets and Sponsorships Now Available

Embrace Florida Kids, a non-profit faith-based organization dedicated to providing homes, healing and hope for vulnerable children across the Florida Panhandle, announced tickets and sponsorships are now available for its first-ever "A Walk Down Magnolia Lane" event. Presented by Shoreline Title, the inaugural event will take place on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 5 p.m.

A Walk Down Magnolia Lane is a golf-themed soiree celebrating the world's greatest golf tournament and benefiting vulnerable children in Northwest Florida. Hosted at the Emerald Coast's award-winning Regatta Bay Golf & Yacht Club, the event will feature a tournament-themed menu, golf-related activities, signature cocktails, outstanding company and music by Jacob Mohr.

"Shoreline Title loves being

a part of Embrace Florida Kids and their commitment to supporting families and helping those who are unable to help themselves," said Kirby Williams, manager of Shoreline Title and Embrace Florida Kids board member. "We are excited to celebrate and support their ministry with our great community at A Walk Down Magnolia Lane."

Shoreline Title is joined by Tiger Sponsor Jim Shirley Enterprises; Palmer Sponsors Liufau McCall Insurance Group and Warren Averett; and Hogan Sponsors Abrams & Franklin Families, Abbott Martin Group, Chicken Salad Chick, Coastal Abode, First United Methodist

Church of Port St. Joe, Florida Haus, Hancock Whitney, The Odd Pelican Beer Company, Tibbetts Family, Tallahassee

Orthopedic Clinic, and United Methodist Foundation of Alabama and West Florida.

Corporate sponsorships for A Walk Down Magnolia Lane are still available at the Nicklaus (\$10,000), Tiger (\$5,000), Palmer (\$2,500) and Hogan (\$1,000) levels. Sponsoring businesses will receive badges to the event, recognition on collateral and promotional materials, as well as a variety of other benefits. Visit embraceflkids.org/wdml for more information on sponsorships and individual tickets sales.

"There is a tremendous need in Northwest Florida for the variety of services we provide for vulnerable children and families," said Blake Horne, Ph.D., president and CEO, Embrace Florida Kids. "From group

homes, foster homes, family preservation and crisis prevention, events like A Walk Down Magnolia Lane help close a critical gap by providing homes, healing and hope."

Embrace Florida Kids' mission is to embrace and nurture vulnerable children and families by providing homes, healing and hope through foster care, family preservation and residential services. The organization meets kids experiencing neglect, abuse and abandonment where they are and provides them with an individualized support system to help them flourish.

To learn more about A Walk Down Magnolia Lane and Embrace Florida Kids, visit www.EmbraceFLKids.org or follow Embrace Florida Kids on social media at @EmbraceFLKids.



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Community

Path of Grace Announces Scheduled Events for 2024

Path of Grace is a local faith-based nonprofit and long-term sober living facility dedicated to helping women who struggle

with addiction to drugs and alcohol. Upcoming events in 2024 will allow the community to learn more and connect with this

life-changing program. March 30, 2-5 p.m. - Grace at Serenity Village is a family event that's part of the Building Lives

Campaign. Take a tour and enjoy live music, testimonials, a message of hope, and free food. Find Serenity Village at 941 S Church Street in Santa Rosa Beach. The Path of Grace's mission is to offer a structured and protected setting for women who

are ready to change their lives. The assistance they provide residents helps restore relationships, build self-confidence, and prepare for a successful future. At present, the program has helped several hundred women find lasting freedom from addiction.



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Fore Her's Second Annual Pink Walk and 5K Raises \$14,000

Over 175 walkers and runners laced up and "put on their pink" at Fore Her's Pink Walk & 5K, presented by Emerald Coast Hospice on January 27th at The Village of Baytowne Wharf. Over \$14,000 in funds was raised to support breast cancer patients along the Emerald Coast.

whole shows that we can expect it to continue growing in strides... and what a testament to these strong and courageous women. With that said, we are so grateful to our sponsors and donors, and blessed to live in such a compassionate community."

The Pink Walk and 5k, in its second year, is a celebration of breast cancer survivors along with their families and friends who want to do something significant to show their support and admiration. The walk benefits Fore Her, a nonprofit organization offering financial assistance, resources, hope, compassion and education to all who are affected by breast cancer.

The annual Pink Walk & 5k is a timed race. All participants enjoyed an after-party with breakfast compliments of Ruby Slipper, music by Diamond DJ, cold-pressed juices by Formula Fresh, chair massages from Serenity by the Sea, sweet treats from Charlie's doughnuts and a commemorative medal.

"We were amazed by the turnout for our event, only in its second year," says Amy Walsh, Fore Her Founder. "This level of support from not only the participants but the community as a

Breast cancer survivors had the opportunity to participate in a Survivors' Stroll free of charge and also received a discounted entry fee to the 5K. The Survivors Lounge, sponsored by Rum Runners, was open for survivors to enjoy hand massages, party favors and free tee shirts.

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Rise of the "Bro-tique": Redefining Men's Retail Experience in South Walton

The world of men's fashion has witnessed a significant transformation in recent years, and with it, a new term has emerged to describe a unique breed of stores: the "Brotique." Combining the words "bro" and "boutique," this catchy nickname perfectly encapsulates the essence of a new era in men's retail. These establishments are not merely stores; they are immersive spaces that cater to the modern man's evolving needs, preferences, and sense of style.

Gone are the days when men's shopping was limited to a few basic options. The emergence of the "brotique" concept marks a departure from the traditional and paves the way for an elevated and personalized shopping experience. These stores have become synonymous with a fresh take on men's fashion, grooming, and lifestyle, providing a haven where men can explore their individuality without compromise. So, what sets Captured Clothing apart

from conventional men's stores? It starts with the ambiance. Step into this brotique, and you'll find yourself in an atmosphere carefully crafted to radiate style, sophistication and masculine energy. The decor, lighting, and overall aesthetic are designed to create an inviting space that appeals to the sensibilities, making you right at home.

The selection of merchandise in Captured is equally distinctive. Curated with experience for the latest trends and timeless classics, offering a range of high-quality clothing, accessories, grooming products, and lifestyle essentials. Every item is handpicked to reflect the desires and aspirations of the discerning gentleman, ensuring that he can find everything he needs to express his unique style and personality.

Perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of the "brotique" phenomenon is the personalized attention provided to customers. Unlike their mass-market



belonging. Many of these stores host events, workshops, and collaborations, creating a platform for men to connect, network, and share their experiences and interests. As the popularity of the "brotique" continues to rise, it has become a game-changer in the retail industry. Its success can be attributed to its ability to adapt to the changing demands and expectations of the modern man. Individualized service, and a vibrant community atmosphere.

Here at Captured Clothing we are excited and proud to embrace this new era of mens retail and known as 30A's Bro-tique!

Stay tuned for father son workshops, the launch of the on-line store and much more!

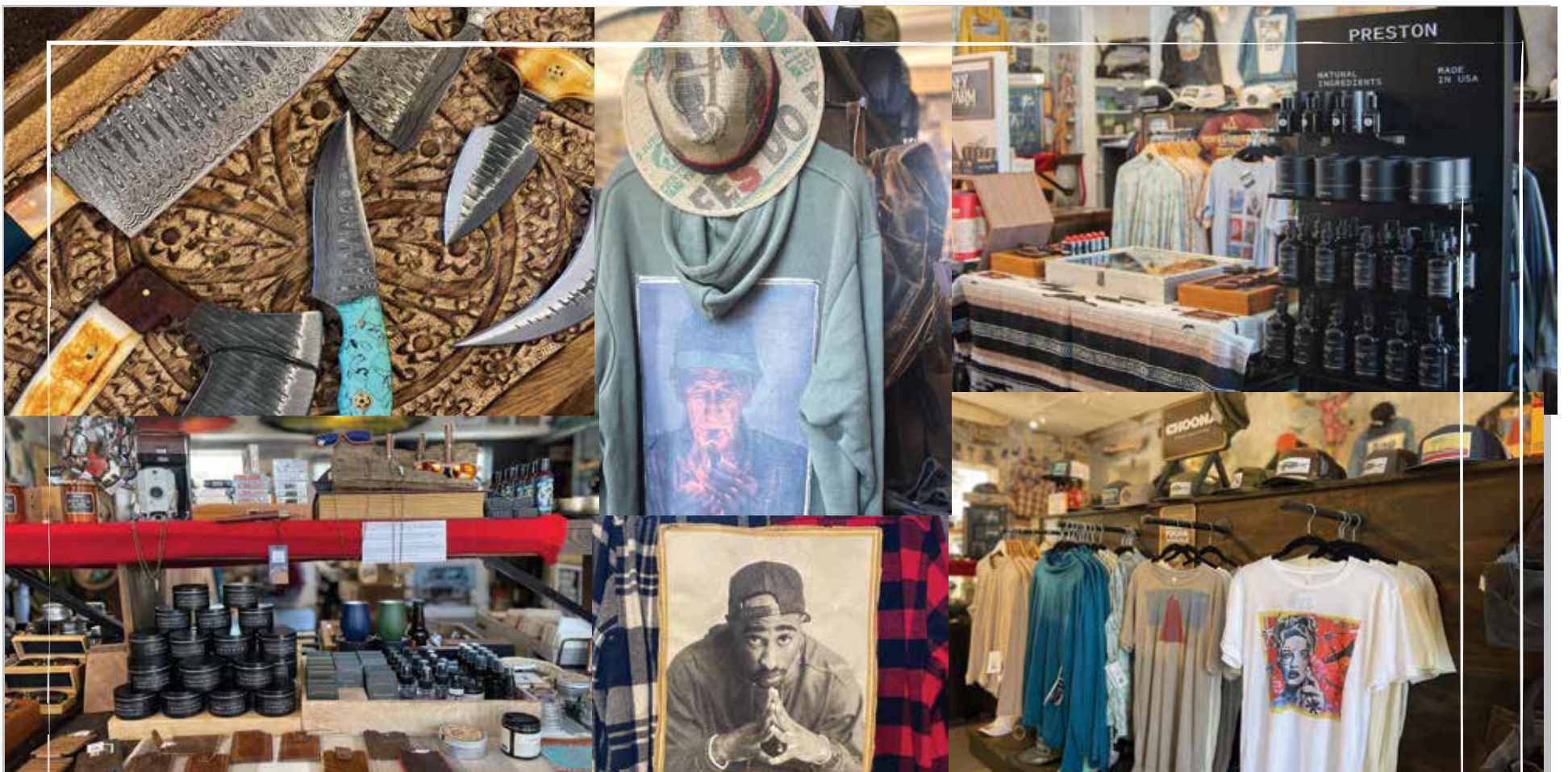
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counterparts, these stores prioritize individualized service, with knowledgeable staff members who are passionate about being able to help customers. The

"brotique" is more than just a place to buy clothes or grooming products; it has become a destination for men seeking inspiration, community, and a sense of



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Hurricane Season is Less Than 100 Days Away – Is Your Roof Ready??

Living in Florida comes with its own set of challenges, including hot summers, intense humidity, and the ever-present threat of hurricanes. As we count down to the start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season on June 1, it's crucial to be mindful of the potential activity in the Atlantic this year. While we are in no rush for the season to begin, let's look at some signs that may paint a picture of what activity in the Gulf may be like this year.



Water Temperatures While water temperatures will always change depending on how the regional and global weather patterns behave, it is important to note that we are seeing warmer-than-average water temperatures already across a good chunk of the Atlantic Basin. If water temperatures stay above average, the extra warmth can always be a good source of energy for potential and developing tropical cyclones.

La Niña? Additionally, the possibility of a La Niña event developing during the upcoming summer season is on the rise. La Niña, characterized by cooler equatorial waters in the Pacific, tends to reduce wind shear across the Atlantic, creating more favorable atmospheric conditions for tropical storms and hurricanes to enter the Gulf. In contrast, El Niño, marked by warming eastern Pacific waters, typically increases wind shear in the Atlantic, hindering storm development or steering them into the Atlantic as we saw last year. La Niña's influence on global weather patterns is significant. It leads to less wind shear across the Atlantic, meaning atmospheric conditions are more favorable for tropical storms and hurricanes in the basin. La Niña events also contribute to cooler equatorial waters in the Pacific, impacting global weather patterns. While there are currently no official forecasts from CSU, NOAA, or other outlets, considering the potential influence of La Niña and the continuation of warmer-than-average ocean temperatures, an above-average season in terms of named storms is plausible.

With hurricane season loom-



ing, homeowners need to prepare their homes and families for potential storms. Now is the time to ensure your home is prepared for any hurricanes that may come our way this year. Ensuring your roof is prepared for hurricane season is paramount to safeguarding your home and loved ones against the destructive forces of severe weather.

Here's a breakdown of essential steps every homeowner should consider:

Early Preparation: Start preparing your roof well in advance of hurricane season to alleviate stress when storms approach. Document everything before the storm hits. Documenting and photographing your roof before the storm hits could be invaluable for insurance purposes. In the event of damage, thorough documentation streamlines the insurance claims process, enabling quicker repairs. Keep records of maintenance and pre-storm conditions to facilitate a smoother resolution with your insurance provider.

Professional Inspection: opt for a professional roof inspection to identify and address any issues before they escalate during a storm. This proactive approach not only saves money but also ensures your roof is in optimal condition to withstand hurricane-force winds and rain.

Roof Maintenance Plan: Consider enrolling in a comprehen-

sive maintenance plan. These plans include licensed contractor inspections, early problem detection, routine maintenance and a stress-free experience when a storm damages your home. The RoofPro Roofing Maintenance Plan offers an industry-first protection plan, putting you first on the list for emergency tarping after a storm. No need to call around to find a roofer to protect your home, they

will be there as soon as the wind dies to tarp the roof at no charge to you. They will then assist you in the claims process to get your roof repaired in a timely manner.

Clean Surroundings: Trim trees and clean gutters to prevent debris from becoming projectiles during high winds and to ensure proper water drainage, mitigating potential roof damage.

Roof Type Consideration: Understand the specific maintenance needs of your roof type. Whether it's asphalt shingles or metal roofing, address issues like loose or missing shingles to fortify your roof's resilience against hurricanes. Metal and tile roofs have stronger resistance to high winds than shingle roofs. A new shingle roof will hold much better than a shingle roof over 10 years old. This better wind resistance is due to the adhesives within the shingles. If your carrier has told you to change your roof soon or they will drop you, it's because of this – a new shingle roof will hold on through high winds better than an older shingle roof. If this is the case with your roof, it may be time to replace the roof before storm season.

Post-Storm Inspection: Following a storm, promptly schedule a thorough roof inspection by professionals to detect any hidden damage. Timely repairs are crucial to prevent water intrusion and further structural deterioration. If you have any damage to your roof, it's best to get it repaired as soon as possible! During a hurricane, your home can experience winds up to 155 mph. Damage to your roof could be from wind, rain, debris, or all three.

By prioritizing these measures, you can fortify your roof

against the formidable forces of hurricanes, ensuring your home remains safe and secure during storm season.

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Insights for Investors: Don't Forget about Capital Preservation



BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

Investors and their advisors often talk about sleeping well at night. We were recently reminded of the acronym of SWAN – Sleep Well at Night. We have seen consistently over time that nothing is more important to savers and investors – when considering their wealth – nothing trumps the ability or opportunity to sleep well at night.

We also think it important to point out to investors, when making an investment decision, to not lose sight of preserving capital, for at least a portion of their assets. That might be SWAN money.

What about Black Swans? Have you ever heard of that term before? Most swans are ivory colored and when gazing upon them, nothing stands out, unless you spot a black swan. In the world of investing and the economy, a black swan is an event that no one sees coming, however is always on the horizon. It may not always be visible, particularly when things are going well. Ned Johnson, for many years was the Chairman and CEO of Fidelity Investments. He was heard many times saying just that: “We are most vulnerable when things are going well.”

What do we, along with a lot of other people, see as black swans on the horizon? We will start with China. For many years the growth and ascent of China was seen as remarkable; plus, it attracted a lot of investor interest. China now, however, is experiencing a significant economic downturn. Some expect this to last and that government measures may not be enough to stop the decline. The term “Japanification” is

being heard and seen lately. Japan, in the 90s on onward continued decline in demand and has yet to recover. We think that China’s impact on the world is significant enough that it is now a black swan.

Commercial Real Estate. Many U.S. banks have made substantial loans for the construction and purchase of real estate throughout the country. This expansion of lending was substantial over the past decade and accelerated with the accommodating Federal Reserve action on rates and the money supply. Many of those loans are coming due in the next few years and perhaps will renew at much higher rates. And the underlying properties might not carry the same value. Office buildings have somewhat lower occupancy now and that could add for lower values. It is not possible to know for sure if this will have an impact (from defaults, for example) on the banking sector as well as the economy. Nonetheless, we see it as a black swan on the horizon.

Third, is the so-called shadow banking system. There are a lot of examples in the system: Hedge Funds, Private Equity funds but also money market funds, exchange traded funds as well as securities broker dealers. The existence of this system is critical to the ongoing function of the economy. However, it did play a role, as did the banking system in the financial crisis in 2008. According to Business Insider, “U.S. banks have given out \$1 trillion of loans to non-regulated “shadow banks.” We understand that a substantial amount of that was to hedge funds and private equity funds. Market volatility can have an impact on many of the borrowers in this system. So, we see that as risk on the horizon.

The mere existence of black swans is nothing new. It is part of the reality and experience in investing. That is why we also encourage our readers and investors to always have a plan to preserve capital. In other words, have a plan and strategy for asset allocation base upon goals, time frame and, ultimately, risk tolerance.

How do you go about



preserving capital? One way to is to have your emergency and opportunity money in a bank account, a CD or perhaps a money market account or fund. When it comes to your overall investments and time horizon, bonds might play a role in future capital preservation. While bonds can and do fluctuate on the open market every day (and are reflected in your statement value) they have a maturity and ultimate value. It is a way of knowing what you have and when you will have it. The return of capital, of course, is based upon the issuer. U.S. Treasuries and U.S. government agency bonds would be considered the most conservative. However, investors should also consider municipal bonds. Corporate bonds would follow next.

Some might wonder if it is the right time to invest in bonds or if they make sense if you are trying to grow your assets. Warren Buffet has always suggested that investors not be in a hurry. He was talking about stocks probably, but the lesson can be the same for a long-term plan for your investments. Many investors build their portfolio not only to be time, risk and goal appropriate, but age appropriate as well.

Maurice Stouse is a Financial Advisor and the branch manager of The First Wealth Management/ Raymond James. Main office located at The First Bank, 2000 98 Palms Blvd., Destin, FL 32451. Phone 850.654.8124. Raymond James advisors do not offer -tax advice. Please see your tax professionals. Email: Maurice.stouse@raymond-james.com.

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Seahawks Close Season with Region 1-4A Title

BY LATOYA JOHNSON

The South Walton High School girls' soccer team finished the season with an impressive 16-2 record earning them the 10th spot in the Florida state rankings and 19th nationally. The Seahawks won the Region 1-4A tournament, 4-2, against the Stanton Blue Devils out of Jacksonville on February 14, 2024. It marked the team's sixth straight home win. Senior Macy Chambers and junior Maiya Bowers scored all four of the team's goals, with Chambers notching her 21st goal of the season and contributing to the team's two of four assists.

Despite operating under a demanding schedule and losing key players before and during the season, the Seahawks entered the state semifinals with a 16-1 standing. Bowers, reflecting on the team's journey, was initially apprehensive about their success "We lost ten, eleven seniors last year. It was a big blow to the program," she says. However, their initial victories boosted morale and instilled confidence in the team. "Oh, wow, maybe we got

this!" Bowers later exclaimed. The mid-season loss of top goal scorer Aliza Mannon required adjustments to the lineup, with Chambers transitioning from goalie to a different position. "I had to transfer over into playing attack, so it was a really big difference. I had to change my mindset and make sure I was doing what was right for the team."

Sophomore Jayden Lo Bue-Holzer recalls, "We did lose a really valuable player in the season, [and] we definitely had to adjust to that in order to keep going. We all had positive attitudes the whole year [and] it kept going."

Freshman Chloe Davis believes it all worked out for the Seahawks, "We got to be more of a team and know one another better." Their journey included competing against and beating a formidable lineup of 5A and 6A teams, showcasing their resilience and skill. In late fall, they pummeled Choctawhatchee, 7-0, and Fort Walton Beach, 8-0, in their first and sixth games, respectively. Subsequently, they rolled over Navarre (4-1), Niceville (3-2), and Gulf Breeze (2-1) before heading to the playoffs in



late January. Assistant Coach Jud Boulware attributes their success to the close-knit bond among the 30-member team, many of whom have played together since childhood. Head Coach Frank Casillo emphasizes the importance of trust and collaboration

on the field, contributing to their achievements, "Everybody supports each other, and you see it on the field."

Despite their best efforts, the Seahawks fell short in the state semifinals on February 22, 2024 against Academy of the

Holy Names, 0-3, ending their quest for a state championship title. "That last game, I kind of had to settle in my heart, 'okay, it's over,' but I knew I did all I could," reflects Chambers, who will be going on to play soccer for Southern Union Community College in Alabama next year. "Knowing it was my last season, I really wanted to leave everything out there."

As the team bids farewell to its graduating seniors, the Seahawks prepare themselves for the upcoming season. Davis anticipates her sophomore year on the team, aiming to maintain strong communication with her teammates, while Lo Bue-Holzer "hopes to be more of an asset." Coach Casillo has expressed excitement about the growth and development of the players, pushing them to reach new heights in the coming season. Bowers looks forward to stepping up as a team leader in her senior year and continuing to build on the program's success, "I feel so excited. I'm going to miss the seniors; they've helped build an incredible program, and I'm excited to help carry it forward."



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Community

Green Thumb Garden Club Announces Events and Programs Through May 2024

By KATHLEEN EDGE, PUBLICITY & WEBSITE CHAIR

Green Thumb Garden Club is concluding its 2023-2024 year with many exciting events and programs.

Wednesday, March 20, 9:30 a.m. Camp Longleaf in Freeport, Florida is the destination! That's right, GTGC is going to Camp! Green Thumb Garden Club provides scholarship support to Camp Longleaf summer participants. GTGC members will tour the grounds and hear about their programs and experiences. A catered lunch in

their dining hall will be served. The address is 4956 Highway 20 East, Freeport, FL. Check-in begins at 9 a.m. and the tour begins promptly at 10 a.m. Carpooling and comfy shoes are recommended.

Wednesday to Friday, April 10-12 Jacksonville, FL, 100th Anniversary Celebration of FFGC: District 1 is hosting this event with many great activities. Additional information and registration forms can be found at www.greenthumbgardenclubinc.org.

Wednesday, April 17, 9:30

a.m. This month, in association with Earth Day, GTGC is "Going Green". Master Gardener, Bill Kuenstler, with the UF/IAFS Northwest Florida Extension will be the speaker. The venue is Westwinds Conference Center, 4700 Westwinds Drive, Miramar Beach, FL 32550.

Wednesday, May 15, 9:30 a.m. is the final meeting of the 2023-2024 event year and a grand celebration. You can join your Green Thumb friends for the presentation of Scholarship Awards and Landscape




Awards dubbed "Petals, Pearls, and Prosecco". The fete is the culmination of a year of dedication, hard work and shared fun with our valued members. The 2024-2025 GTGC Board of Directors will be installed at the May meeting.

The Green Thumb Garden Club welcomes new members. The 2024-2025 meeting and program year begins in Sep-


tember 2024. The GTGC website www.greenthumbgardenclubinc.org contains detailed information about how to join the Club and details on meetings, activities, and events. For additional information, please visit the website or email greenthumbgardenclubinc@gmail.com. The Walton County community is encouraged to join the Green Thumb Garden Club to support its charitable mission while connecting with other members and having fun.

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Lucky Day! Celebrate St. Patrick's Day the Local Way

St. Patrick's Day Party at Ara Rooftop Pool & Lounge

Get your green on for a lucky St. Patrick's Day bash at Ara Rooftop Pool & Lounge, perched atop the luxurious Hotel Effie Sandestin. The shenanigans begin at 6 p.m. on Saturday, March 16 with live DJ beats, drink specials and charming vistas of the Emerald

Coast. Guests can enjoy half-off Irish Whiskey drinks when they wear green, and the most




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festive has the chance to score a \$100 bar credit!

Add a touch of Irish flair to your weekend brunch plans with enticing St. Patrick's Day specials at Ovide, the signature restaurant at Hotel Effie Sandestin offering a refined approach to coastal flavors and upscale design. Toast to good fortune and good company with Green Boody Marys and exclusive Shepherd's Pie offerings created by Executive Chef Juan Bochenski and his team.

St. Paddy's Day Delight at The Village of Baytowne Wharf

Celebrate the luck of the Irish as The Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort is painted green, from the lagoon to the lights, during the St. Paddy's Day Delight. The free event on Sunday, March 17 from 6-9 p.m., will feature the Carpenter Academy of Irish Dance, live music, and more for guests to shamrock and roll!

Local Groups Celebrate Black History With Parade

Several local groups joined together on February 17 for a Black History celebration that ended with a parade. It rained, but the Walton County Women's Democratic Club showed up, bundled up with smiles on their faces as they braved the wet conditions and helped the Black citizens of Walton County celebrate.

Despite the rain, there were over 50 cars in the line-up. The spirit of joy overrode the dampness. In addition to the WCDWC other sponsors included The NAACP of Northwest Florida, the Walton County Democratic Black Caucus, The Tivoli Historical Society, and the Ladies of Distinction.



Cultural Arts Alliance Of Walton County Announces Foster Gallery's Spring Rotation Artists

The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA) is proud to announce the regional artists recently chosen to exhibit their original work in The Foster Gallery's Spring Rotation, which runs February 21 through June 22, 2024 in its Miramar Beach Creative Campus location at 13370 Emerald Coast Parkway (US Highway 98).

The selected featured artists are Wanda Azzario-Goldberg, Carol Babington, Pam Barnard, Dorothea Berkhout, Stephanie Bloyd, Melody Bogle, Kathleen Broderick, Gayle Campbell, Bill Chambers, Kim Cleveland, Renee Cohn, Marlene East,

Kim Eifrid, Elena Filshinska, Capri Jones, Nicole Hemmerly, Brett Hewitt, Linda Kernick, Sue Carol Knight, Bonita Loman, Susan Lucas, Janis Mars Wunderlich, Robyn Martins, Natalie Maxted, Mindy McClendon, Sherri McKendree, Theresia McInnis, Lennon Michalski, Lynnette Moody, Jenny Nix, Patti Overholt, Michelle Puckett, Mary Redmann, Kaitlyn Roig, Andi Scruto, Nicolaus Seegel, Kristine Senft, Blair Supplee, Laura Tuvyana, and Karen Williams.

FOSTER GALLERY

continued on page 21



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South Walton Family Friendly Events

Adventures in Alys March 4 - April 1

Proudly presented by the Alys Foundation, Adventures in Alys, a completely original storytelling experience for children of all ages, takes place Monday & Thursday at 10 a.m., March 4 - April 1, in the Amphitheatre. Watch as The REP Theatre actors perform a masterfully improvised story based on audience suggestions.

The Repertory Theatre is Northwest Florida's premier professional theatre company. Visit LoveTheRep.com for main stage performances and concerts throughout the year for music and theater lovers.

Rapunzel at Alys Beach Amphitheatre March 5 - April 2

Join The REP as they perform Rapunzel on Tuesday evenings at 6 p.m. at the Alys Beach Amphitheatre. This twist on the beloved storybook is a complimentary event proudly presented by the Alys Foundation.

Get ready to untangle your imagination with this hair-raising rendition of Rapunzel that's full of fun and adventure for the whole family. Join Rapunzel, a girl with impossibly long hair, as she yearns for a life beyond her tower. When a daring young Prince and his trusty horse arrive on the scene, their worlds collide in a cascade of events packed with zany slapstick and action-packed humor. For more information, visit LoveTheRep.com.

Alys Improv Hour Wednesdays March 6 - April 3

Alys Improv Hour takes place Wednesdays at 10 a.m. in the Alys Beach Amphitheatre, March 6 - April 3. Join The REP's improv troupe, The Awkward Oxen, as they play improv games, and make up scenes and songs on the spot based on audience suggestions. Don't worry, if you suffer from a bit of stage fright you're free to hang out and watch and get some laughs.

Mad Hatter's Tea Party at Alys Beach March 30

Join Alys, the White Rabbit, and the Mad Hatter at Central Park for a Mad Hatter Tea Party on Saturday, March 30 from 10 a.m. - noon. Reservations will not be taken for this event - available on a first-come, first-serve basis and open to the public. Learn more at www.AlysBeach.com.

Rosemary Beach Easter Celebration & Egg Hunt March 31

The Easter Celebration & Annual Egg Hunt takes place on Sunday, March 31 in Rosemary Beach. The annual egg hunt kicks off at 9:45 a.m. Enjoy a complimentary mimosa from Summer Kitchen Café and get your photos taken with the Easter Bunny at Gigi's immediately following the egg hunt. Remember to BYOB... Bring Your Own Basket!

Seaside Easter Celebration March 31

Come out to Seaside for the annual Easter Celebration on

Sunday, March 31 from 11 a.m. til 2 p.m. Visit with the Easter Bunny and enjoy the egg hunt in the Amphitheatre. Plus: fun activities for guests of all ages. Free and open to all.

Dust Off Your Boots and Get Ready to Rodeo! March 22-23

The 5th Annual Westonwood Ranch Pro Rodeo returns March 22-23 to the City of Freeport Sports Complex. The professionally sanctioned rodeo benefits Westonwood Ranch, an organization whose mission and programs serve teens and young adults with Autism and related developmental disorders.

Come watch some of the nation's top cowgirls and cowboys compete. Contestants will compete in events including bareback riding, calf roping, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, breakaway roping, barrel racing, team roping and bull riding. Rodeo gates open at 6 p.m. with a 7:30 p.m. each

night. Come early to enjoy live pre-rodeo entertainment at 6:30 by David Gautreau, food vendors, children's inflatable play area and more! Tickets for the Westonwood Ranch PCA Rodeo are sold at the gate: \$20 adults; \$15 children 12 years and younger. Free admission for children ages 2 and under. No ticket presales. Want to become a business sponsor? Email admin@westonwood.org or visit westonwood.org.

Watersound Block Party April 13

Spend an afternoon outside exploring Watersound Town Center at the Watersound Block Party on Saturday, April 23 from 2-6 p.m. Enjoy live music, face painters, balloon artists, a photo booth, lawn games, giveaways and more. This family-friendly event is free & open to the public. Bring a lawn chair or blanket.

Other Upcoming Events (Leave the Kids at Home)

Foster Gallery Fête April 4

Come out for the Foster Gallery Fête on Thursday, April 4 from 5 - 7 p.m. at the Miramar Beach Creative Campus, home to The Foster Gallery and J. Leon Studio. Meet the featured artists as you enjoy light bites while strolling the gallery to view incredible

works on display and available for purchase. Learn more and get the latest CAA news at culturalartsalliance.com

Sandestin Wine Festival April 11-14

The 37th Annual Sandestin Wine Festival at the Village of

Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort will take place April 11 - 14, 2024. Topping area polls as a must-experience event, this beloved festival offers four full days of unique events including wine dinners with celebrity chefs, yoga, live music, interactive experiences,

culinary tents, and of course wine tastings.

Wine novices can learn more about wines and sample a comprehensive selection in all varieties, styles, and price ranges. Wine aficionados enjoy meeting winemakers, asking detailed questions, and acquiring hard-to-get

selections. Everyone gets to enjoy the live music, interactive experiences at the Culinary tents, and shops and dining of the Village of Baytowne Wharf. This event is rain or shine! Tickets, schedule and more information: www.sandestiniwinefestival.com.

It's Almost Time for the Wildly Popular Concerts In The Village!

The 10-concert live music series on Thursdays, April 4 to June 6, will feature premier musicians and bands performing everything from classic rock, disco and modern pop to full-length Grammy Award-winning iconic albums.

Hear the entire Grammy Award-winning Purple Rain album performed live, reminisce with Fleetwood Mac classics, dance to funky disco beats and discover new pop vocalists from The Voice - all in the diverse lineup of the 2024 Concerts presented by Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation, offering something for every music lover.

The area's first live concert series is held each spring on Thursday evenings at the MKAF Dugas Pavilion in Destin. This year's 29th annual family-friendly series will run from April 4 to June 6. The 10-concert live music series will feature premier regional and national musicians and bands per-

forming everything from classic rock, rhythm & blues, and disco to modern pop.

The series kicks off on Thursday, April 4, 2024, with must-not-miss entertainers Post Modern Jukebox promising an unforgettable trip back in time to celebrate vintage music and pop culture.

The highly anticipated season features a range of local, regional and national musicians and bands including rhythm & blues sensation Wendy Moten from The Voice, full-length rendition of Prince's iconic album Purple Rain by Black Jacket Symphony and the chill sounds of Yacht Rock Revue. Kicking off May are local fan favorites The Mulligans, the Fleetwood Mac tribute band Rumours ATL, party starters Gotta Groove Band, rock god Mitch Malloy and gifted pop/jazz/blues and soul songstress Haley Reinhart. The series caps on Thursday, June 6 with crowd pleasing Adam Ezra Group, sure to fuse



rock energy and soul power.

"This is a great lineup of live music performed in a beautiful venue at an affordable price for a great cause" says MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller. "When you purchase a concert ticket, you are enabling us to provide the highest quality of arts education and community engagement throughout Okaloosa, Walton and Bay Counties. If you are a MKAF regular, welcome back, if you're not yet a MKAF member, please consider joining. We have a great time and as we like to say, your support keeps the arts FUN-ded."

Gates open at 6 p.m. with concerts beginning at 7 p.m. for this

come-as-you-are family-friendly outdoor concert series. Bring a lawn chair, picnic, wine, or purchase food and beverages on-site prepared by featured restaurants and food trucks.

The 2024 Concerts in the Village schedule is as follows:

April 4 | Post Modern Jukebox
April 11 | Wendy Moten
April 18 | Black Jacket Symphony
April 25 | Yacht Rock Revue
May 2 | The Mulligans
May 9 | Rumours ATL:

A Tribute to Fleetwood Mac
May 16 | Gotta Groove Band
May 23 | Mitch Malloy
May 30 | Haley Reinhart

Thursday, June 6 | Adam Ezra Group
General admission varies per concert. Prices range from \$20 to \$35 for adults. Discounts offered for active-duty military (must show ID). Purchase tickets in advance of concert day and save \$5 per ticket at the door. Children (12 and

under) are free. A limited number of VIP tables (reserved table for eight guests for the entire season) are available for \$2,250. Purchase tickets online at MKAF.org/events.

MKAF members enjoy early entry and free admission to every concert as well as discounted pricing to other MKAF events. For more information on MKAF membership, visit MKAF.org.

Concert lineup is subject to change. All sales are final; sorry, no refunds. Pets, tables larger than two feet, and drones are not permitted. Children 17 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. To learn more about sponsoring the 2024 MKAF season, call (850) 650-2226. For the latest news and information, visit www.MKAF.org, and follow the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Facebook and Instagram pages for dates, information, and inspiring arts and culture-related posts.



FOSTER GALLERY

continued from page 19

All rotation artists are members of the Cultural Arts Alliance. All works exhibited in the gallery are for sale, many works will also be online soon for viewing and purchase on the CAA website at CulturalArtsAlliance.com/foster-gallery.

Nicole Hemmerly, pictured, is a contemporary fiber artisan based in Niceville, Florida. Rooted in Nicole's love of nature, MossHouse Designs is driven by a commitment to sus-

tainable practices. They source the highest quality organic materials from familial and local small-batch suppliers to produce one-of-a-kind handmade wall hangings and installation art.

The Foster Gallery is located at 13370 Emerald Coast Parkway (US Hwy 98) and is part of the Miramar Beach Creative Campus featuring regional artist rotations on a quarterly basis as well as special exhibitions. The Foster Gallery at the Miramar Beach Creative Campus will also host artist receptions



and openings, workshops in J. Leon Studio, events, and serve as a community gathering point symbolizing the support the CAA strives to give artists in our community, including those who are members of the CAA.

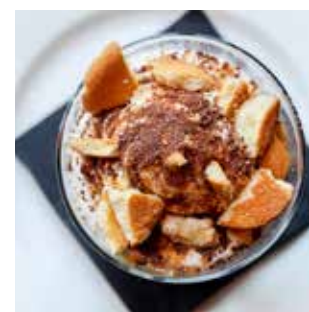
The gallery is open Tuesday

- Saturday from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. For more information, including class schedule, ceramics services and space rental of the Miramar Beach Creative Campus for private events, call (850) 842-3051 or visit CulturalArtsAlliance.com.

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Saturday, March 23 | 7:30 pm
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Recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Young Concert Artist prize, saxophonist Steven Banks pushes boundaries, expanding the instrument's repertoire while showcasing its vast capabilities. Hear this newly commissioned work for saxophone and orchestra by award-winning composer Billy Childs: *Diaspora*, *Motherland* and *If We Must Die* — three compelling pieces inspired by African American poems that chronicle the black American journey from mournful suppression to joyful empowerment. Mussorgsky's riveting *Pictures at an Exhibition* completes this compelling program.

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Featured Seaside Prize Artist Kenn Kotara Charts New Cartographies

Hosted by the town of Seaside, Florida, the non-profit Escape to Create (E2C) has been bringing creative talent from around the globe to enjoy month-long artist residencies since 1993. For this season, their 31st, the residency featured the work of contemporary abstract artist Kenn Kotara as part of Seaside Prize weekend events.

Currently based in Asheville, North Carolina, Kotara's practice has evolved along a multi-disciplinary path. Following undergraduate studies in architecture at Louisiana Tech, Kotara traveled the world before returning to earn a BFA in Graphic Design and an MFA in Studio Art. His artistic output over more than three decades exhibits a vigorous curiosity about space and form, innovative architecture and structural design, and an evolving multi-dimensional application of core geometric and organic forms. Much of his artwork, widely exhibited and held in corporate collections across the U.S., is rooted in the fertile



GA.ATL, 2023, acrylic, pencil & pen on printed paper map, 8.75 x 7



FL.ORK, 2024, acrylic, pencil & pen on printed paper map, 8.25 x 6.75



VA.RCH, 2023, acrylic, pencil & pen on printed paper map, 9.5 x 8



TN.NVL, 2023, acrylic, pencil & pen on printed paper map, 8.25 x 7.25

Southern environment of his native Louisiana with its rivers, marshlands, and lush vegetation. Kotara's architectural background and southern roots permeate the abstract paintings of his recent series, *barbe espagnole* (Spanish moss) with works on canvas, paper, and suspended screens.

Recently retired from full-time teaching at the college level in Asheville, Kotara, a 2008 E2C Fellow, returned to Seaside in February to advance a new body of work, "you Are here Are you" based on his lifelong fascination with traditional cartography. With this work, Kotara metaphorically investigates the connection between cities and living organisms as dynamic and interconnected systems. Pencil, pen, and acrylic paint overlay informative details, while the addition and subtraction of material layers not only obscures recognizable features but also reveals biomorphic forms connoting anatomical, biological, and cosmological elements. Continuing a

practice into how space is interpreted and manipulated, paper maps from cities in each U.S. state

are transformed into topographical surfaces that visually convey the complexity of infrastructure, urban planning, and geographic features.

"We are all from somewhere or someplace. How we perceive and define these places, connotes an interconnectedness of variable forces that make up human settlements," explains Kotara.

Delving into the legacy of cartography and the visual organization of space, "you Are here Are You" highlights how mapping, originally used for geographical purposes, has expanded to describe various systems beyond physical geography, including brain functions, politics, climate, and more. This exploration invites viewers to contemplate the intricate relationships of mapping between distinct elements within a system and how they collectively function.

Escape to Create (E2C) is a volunteer-managed non-profit organization that represents the unique character of a community deeply invested in the arts. Residencies are made possible through the generosity of Seaside homeowners, merchants, and donors. Contributions directly support artist residencies, educational outreach, and cultural programs.

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Thursday, March 28 | 6-9PM

Immerse yourself in the glamour of 19th-century Parisian cabaret at La Vie En Rouge, presented by Emerald Coast Theatre Company on Thursday, March 28th at 6 p.m. This exclusive signature event will feature exhilarating live performances, dazzling costumes and a vibrant atmosphere for guests 21+.

Get ready to indulge yourself in an evening of elegance, as you're transported to the iconic Moulin Rouge for a night of delightful cuisine, dancing, cocktails entertainment, silent auction, and many more unforgettable moments. A plethora of local restaurants and caterers including AJs 30A, Amavida Coffee,

Marrow Private Chefs, Ruby Slipper Cafe, Swiftly Catered, Tommy Bahamas, and more will be serving heavy, gourmet hors d'oeuvres throughout the evening along with an open bar filled with libations from local purveyors to toast to the evening! Cozy into the cabaret or get up and dance to the surprise performances throughout the evening. Tickets and sponsorships are on sale now – don't miss out on an exciting night supporting ECTC and the local arts in our community!

\$150 Per Person | \$300 Per Couple

To purchase tickets, visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org.



Seaside Prize™ 2024 Recap

BY KIMBERLY STANLEY,
SEASIDE INSTITUTE™

The Seaside Prize™ is an annual event that celebrates the trailblazers who have dedicated their careers through innovative design and creative planning by using the principles of New Urbanism. This year's 30th celebration, February 2-4, extended its embrace to include the sister towns of Rosemary Beach and Alys Beach, making it an extra special occasion. The weekend filled with symposia, town tours, and an awards ceremony brought together a diverse ensemble of innovators, architects, urban planners, community leaders, and supporters to celebrate progress and gain inspiration for the future.

Commencing in Rosemary Beach, attendees took a stroll through SOWAL house while sipping on a signature cocktail, sponsored by Distillery 98 and Odd Pelican Brewing Co., before touring the town. Andrés Duany, one of New Urbanism's original visionaries, was on hand to lead the tour and speak about specific elements of design integral to the function and aesthetics of the town. The evening unfolded with a reception at The Pearl, followed by a keynote address in Rosemary Beach Town Hall by Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk with DPZ CoDesign.

Saturday's festivities took place in Seaside® with a host of notable speakers for a day filled with symposia on topics ranging from historical preservation to sustainable urban development. Symposia speakers were Bernice Radle (Buffalove Development), Allan Branch (Panama City entrepreneur), Dr. Philip Stoddard (former mayor of South Miami), John



Simmerman (Active Towns podcast), John Massengale (former Seaside® town architect), Victor Dover, and Joe Kohl (of Dover, Kohl, and Partners). These discussions ignited the imagination, offering innovative solutions to contemporary and often difficult challenges.

Attendees embarked on guided walking tours of the town, led by Robert Davis, Micah Davis, and Larry Davis. They gained firsthand knowledge of the town's architectural and cultural richness. The afternoon also provided an opportunity to procure signed books by Daryl Davis (The Seaside Style), Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (The New Civic Art and Suburban Nation), John Massengale and Victor Dover (Street Design coauthors).

The pinnacle of the weekend arrived with the Awards Ceremony in the serene setting of the Seaside® Chapel, where Victor Dover and Joe Kohl were lauded for their exemplary contributions, particularly their leadership in revitalizing Panama City post-Hurricane Michael. Robert Davis, Seaside® Town Founder, presented each recipient with a symbolic key to the town, a token of appreciation for their enduring impact. Each key was housed in a handcrafted wooden box made

by E.F. San Juan. The evening celebration ended with a dinner hosted by Bud & Alley's Waterfront Dining.

Sunday's celebration began with a leisurely brunch at Caliza to commemorate Alys Beach's 20th Anniversary before Marieanne Khoury-Vogt led a guided tour of the town. Anne Hunter hosted an Escape to Create Exhibit in Seaside® afterward, marking the end of a captivating weekend.

Beyond the revelry, the Seaside Prize™ serves as a reminder of the enduring legacy of those who dare to envision a brighter future for our urban landscapes. By upholding the tenets of New Urbanism, this annual celebration encourages us all to strive for inclusive, sustainable, and vibrant communities. It also allows us to reflect on how the built environment shapes our world as we know it.

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Lee Campbell

Wellness

Medicare: The Nitty Gritty



By CHRISTIAN REGALADO

Whether you are just aging into Medicare, or have been receiving this benefit for years,

deciding if Medicare Advantage or a Supplement plan is best for your needs may come up many times. However, one thing is abundantly clear. It is very important to choose one of them. I've spoken with many seniors who didn't understand the importance of choosing a plan. It can not only save many thousands on medical costs but also allows you to afford you to the best care possible. This is why I write these articles. It is my job to help as many people as possible

learn all about their options for coverage.

Generally, the immediate importance of choosing a plan is to ensure maximum out-of-pocket costs for any possible medical issues you may experience. The co-insurance on Medicare A and B can add up to many thousands or even tens of thousands of dollars without a Supplement Plan or Advantage Plan attached. Many Medicare Advantage plans do not have a premium. So there is no extra cost to enroll, you just need to know to enroll. There are also many extra perks with Advantage plans including dental coverage, vision, free gym memberships, Prescription Drug Plans and more. Supplement plans are the most comprehensive medical coverage with a higher premium but very low out-of-pocket costs for medical care. However, Supplement plans do not include prescription drug or dental coverage like most Advantage plans cover.

If choosing a Supplement plan, it is important to remember to choose a Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) during the Initial Enrollment Period. There is a penalty added to PDP premiums, which increases every month a recipient delays purchasing the plan. PDP plans can run from \$0 to about \$100 depending on the drugs the plan covers. If you

miss enrollment during your Initial Enrollment Period, you will need to wait until Annual Election Period before enrolling in a new plan unless you qualify for a Special Enrollment Period.

What did I learn this last Annual Enrollment Period? It seems that advertising works, especially the constant ads that feature "free stuff." I had a few clients that were on Original Medicare with a great Supplement plan, and I received notice that they canceled their Supplement plans. Medicare laws prohibit me from calling, so I can only guess why.

My guess is some of them saw one of the thousands of ads promoting Medicare Advantage plans and called the 800 number. A well-trained sales agent then told them they could save money by switching off their Supplement plan and on to an Advantage plan. Premium-wise, that's true.

They will save money, but they won't have the same level of protection they had with their Supplement plan.

A significant difference between Supplement and Advantage plans is one's healthcare "gatekeeper". If you're on a Supplement plan, it's your physician who decides the treatment you receive, not your insurance carrier. If a procedure or treatment is covered by Medicare, ad-

ditional approval is not required. On a Medicare Advantage plan, the insurance company requires prior approval, and your plan can deny treatment recommended by your doctor.

On a Plan G, after the \$240 Part B deductible is paid in 2024, everything insured by Medicare is covered at 100% for the rest of the calendar year.

Advantage Plans often have Out of Pocket Maximums of \$3,500 - \$5,000, and as high as \$8,000.

Advantage plans are affordable plans that work well for most people; When people choose a Supplement plan, it's often because they want the strongest medical coverage available, and that's what Medicare Supplement plans offer. Which plan is best for you? That depends on your anticipated medical expenses and your budget. If you are thinking of changing coverage, give us a call to discuss what your options are and when you can make any changes.

If you'll be turning 65 soon or will qualify for new coverage for any reason, we can help. We work with many insurance carriers and are always happy to help educate you on your best options. Give us a call! Reach Christian Regalado at (850) 687-7606 or email christian@evergreenhealthins.com.



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Emotionally Charged Conversations



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

Are you ever moving through life and find yourself feeling very angry or hurt by someone? Maybe you are experiencing anger or hurt at a level 10 intensity and you are noticing the situation intensity level seems to be much lower than your feeling. You might then realize you're making up a story in your head about the negative, insensitive intentions of the other person. As a result, you may find yourself withdrawing, putting up walls or being confrontational in ways that compromise connection.

Emotionally charged conversations are complex to navigate and often result in people not showing up as their best version of self. Intense feelings can fuel reactivity, shutting down, harsh words, judgment, unkindness, shame and condescending tone. While you know it feels bad to experience someone's emotional reaction, you may still find yourself reacting

at times. Intense emotions are inevitable but, with practice, you can create a healthy pattern of working through your own and others' reactions.

10 Ways to Approach Emotionally Charged Conversations

- 1. Notice when you are triggered.** Pay attention to your feelings and your body. Notice changes in body temperature, stomach, chest, feeling shaky, clenching fists, grinding teeth, tears, change in heart rate. Name feelings if you are able. "I feel embarrassed, ashamed, humiliated, angry, hurt, sad, unsafe."
- 2. Calm your nervous system.** Take 10-20 deep breaths, step away from the situation, journal, take a walk, nurture your pet. Engage in healthy calming skills to help your body move out of fight, flight or freeze so you can think more clearly.
- 3. Notice the negative intention story you are making up in your head.** She didn't text me back because I'm not important. He didn't make eye contact so he must not care. My child is selfish, disrespectful and trying to irritate me. Challenge the story in your head. Is it possible their behavior has another meaning than intent to hurt you?
- 4. Sort past and present feelings.** Intense feelings are often a



sign that the present situation has triggered past wounds. Reflect on whether you are bringing memories from past interactions into the current situation. Acknowledge

and allow past feelings to exist in a space separate from the current situation/relationship.

5. Remember the humanity of and your history with the person. Try remembering you do not have negative intentions toward others when you emotionally react. You also do not intentionally emotionally react. Perhaps the other person had a difficult emotional moment and did not have negative intentions toward you. Remember the ongoing character of your relationship with this person. Are their intentions and behavior toward you typically positive?

6. Approach with compassionate curiosity instead of shame. Instead of, "You don't get to talk to me that way and you are being so rude and out of line," try, "You seem really overwhelmed. What's happening for you right now?" People often feel bad inside about reacting poorly. What helps them move forward is compassionate understanding rather than judgmental correction. When people feel understood with compassion, they will often apologize and

move toward change.

7. Validate and support. Communicate understanding of the other's emotional state. Ask what support might be helpful on your end.

8. Own your part. Humbly seek to understand whether you contributed an unhelpful part in the relationship dynamic. Take responsibility by naming and apologizing for your part.

9. Address boundaries with vulnerability. Communicate kindly and directly how you were hurt and what would work better for you in the future. "When you snapped at me, that hurt my feelings and felt like you were blaming me. Now that we've talked, I understand that you were snapping because you were overwhelmed

and it was not about me. I get overwhelmed, too. When you are getting overwhelmed, it would help me if you would let me know what you need rather than snapping at me. I will be able to support you better and that will help us stay connected."

10. Listen and repeat. Listen with an open mind to the other person's experience and repeat this process regularly when you feel triggered in relationships. Emotionally charged conversations are difficult and can also be some of our most connecting and trust building moments when navigated with intention. Try practicing these tools and connect with us along your journey for counseling and coaching at Journeybravely.com.



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Wellness

6 Ways to Improve Your Heart Health in 2024

MARIA LAHTI, M.D., AND
LAUREN STIPP, M.D., SACRED
HEART EMERALD COAST

Every year, we set great resolutions for our health. Unfortunately, we usually forget them quickly. This year, don't miss the opportunity to reprioritize your heart health. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women according to the CDC, but many cardiac events are preventable. There are no quick fixes, but there are some easy steps you can take to make a difference.

Follow these tips to take control of your heart health in 2024.

Tip 1: See Your Doctor for Annual Screening

Your risk of developing heart disease increases as you age. According to research published by the Journal of the American Heart Association, people over age 40 have a 1-in-4 lifetime risk of developing AFib, or atrial fibrillation, a common heart rhythm condition. Scheduling regular visits with your primary care doctor and any specialists you see can help catch problems sooner rather than later, which can be lifesaving in some cases.

Especially if you experience high blood pressure or high cholesterol, make doctor's visits a priority to keep a close eye on

your heart health. At Ascension St. Vincent's, our teams of primary care doctors and cardiologists, including those at our hospital in St. Johns County, can provide you with the most effective screening methods to check for heart disease and other conditions.

Tip 2: Monitor Your Heart Health

Many of our patients use personal technology, like portable medical-grade EKG devices, to help monitor their hearts from home. These devices can help doctors detect heart rhythm irregularities sooner, which can sometimes help make a diagnosis or even prevent a stroke. But not all technology is created equal. For example, a less complex heart rate monitor and one that is built to be an EKG-grade device may show differing results.

Tip 3: Avoid Excessive Stress

We all experience stress, but excessive and prolonged stress can contribute to heart issues like blood vessel constriction and high blood pressure, elevating the risk of a heart attack and stroke. Regular exercise is a key stress reducer. Whether it's a brisk walk, yoga, or a fit-



ness class, physical activity benefits both the heart and mental health.

Tip 4: Focus on Moderation

Alcohol is often linked to heart problems, notably increasing the risk of AFib. An observational study in the European Heart Journal found that even one daily glass of wine or beer led to a 16 percent higher risk of developing AFib (compared to not drinking). AFib, in turn, increases the risk of stroke, heart failure, and cardiac arrest. While enjoying a glass of wine is fine, moderation is key. Exceeding two drinks in a day is never heart-healthy.

Tip 5: Stick to Healthy Eating Habits

Try to limit salty foods, such as canned or processed foods. Also limit high-fat foods, such as red meat, cheese, and baked goods. When it comes to a heart-healthy diet, the important thing is to maintain balance. A Mediterranean-style diet high in vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, and whole grains has been shown to promote weight loss and reduce

heart disease risk.

Tip 6: Know the Signs of Stroke and Don't Delay Treatment

Recognizing the warning signs of stroke can protect both yourself and your loved ones. The important acronym to remember for identifying a stroke is B.E. F.A.S.T. That stands for balance, eyes/vision loss, face drooping, arm weakness, speech difficulty, and time to call 911. It's common to mistake or minimize the signs of stroke, but don't delay treatment. Call 911.

Dr. Maria Lathi is a cardiologist at Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. Dr. Lauren Stipp is a cardiologist specializing in cardiac imaging at Sacred Heart Emerald Coast. For more information, visit Healthcare.ascension.org

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What About Church



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The sun peaked above the horizon on Sunday morning and cast its brilliant yellow rays through a crease in the clouds offering a grand statement of “This is the day the Lord has made. Rejoice and be glad in it.” It was not a question or a suggestion. It was a statement. We had been on the road about an hour and a half when the Sabbath sunrise statement was made. Interstate 40 cleared its way through the wooded hills of western Arkansas. Lake Dardanelle lay peacefully in the valley with wispy

fingers of fog reaching toward the morning light. Just a hint of yellow and red signaled the beginning of the fall colors which would dress the hills in the glorious wonder of God’s creation in a week or two.

We stopped at the IHOP in Russellville, Ark. just ahead of the breakfast-before-church crowd. Crossing guards at the church up the street were ushering people across the road to the early church service, one of three services listed in their sign. Better hit the road, just thirteen more hours and we’ll be home after a whirlwind trip for a family wedding.

We left the Interstate highway at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and angled southwest across the Mississippi River bottom land of southeast Arkansas and western Mississippi. Cotton, ready to be harvested, covered the fields as far as you could see like a fluffy

white blanket lying on a freshly made bed. Had it been after a January snowfall, the scenery would have been the same.

As the clock made its way toward noon, the small churches that dotted the rural roadsides and main streets of small towns began to see activity. Faithful churchgoers in their “Sunday best” stepped out of their cars and made their way up the church steps for worship. Greeters (probably pastors) stood on the front steps to welcome people to worship. Some of the small roadside churches had only five or six cars in the grass or gravel parking areas while the town churches boasted paved parking and more cars. I am sure the town churches would be considered more successful and vital because we falsely measure church success by the number of cars in the parking lot.

As the car made its way

steadily south and east on Highway 65, I reflected on each of the churches we passed and the people gathering in each one. They made it a priority to be in church at the appointed hour. No matter how involved they might be at other times during the week, this time of the week was important. Setting aside time for worshipping God and gathering with His people was a needed part of the week. It was special. So they “dressed up.” It was special because they were going to meet God and His children there. It was special because the week would start in God’s house. It was special just because it was special.

The Scripture tells us, “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed pure with water.

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up on meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10: 22-25)

After a cloudy day of travel, the sun broke below the cloud bank to put a red, orange, and pink exclamation point to the day. The last beams of sun reflected off the Mobile skyline. Only three more hours to home.

Let us draw near to God, His church and His children. Let us encourage one another. But most of all, let us not give up on meeting together.

Pete Hyde is the former Pastor of the Santa Rosa Beach Community Church.

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Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

“Dear Sean, how can we save this country?” the email began.

The writer lives in Hartford, Connecticut. His name is Michael. I have no idea why Michael thinks a hayseed like me is qualified to answer this loaded question. I’m not a smart guy. Blondes tell jokes about me.

Still, I have an idea.

The way to save this country is to eat together. We don’t eat together anymore. We don’t eat

supper at the same table. When did that stop?

A recent study found that only 29 percent of Americans sit to eat supper with family each day. Fifty years ago, the statistic was nearly 99 percent.

On average about 50 percent of millennials admit to cooking their own suppers. Whereas the number was around 80 percent with baby boomers.

Something else. We need to put the Wurlitzer organ back in



Major League Baseball.

I don’t know if you’re aware, but baseball has undergone many changes since we were kids. Even the rules have changed. There is a pitch clock. No more cigar smoke.

But the biggest disappointment was losing the organ. I attended a game recently and all I heard was Lady Gaga blasting overhead.

This is an affront.

In 1941, organist Ray Nelson debuted at Wrigley Field. It was the first time organ music was heard in baseball. He played before 18,678 Cubs fans. He played “When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for T-U-L-S-A.”

A half century ago, each American ballpark had an organist. Today, there are only seven.

Another way to save this country is to bring back piano lessons. Five decades ago, 81 percent of American kids took piano lessons. Do you know what the percentage is now? Eight percent.

That’s not enough Americans to form a Rotary Club.

I took piano lessons. My teacher was Miss Betty, who smelled like bath powder and Icy Hot. She said if I played “Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Thee” without mistakes, she would give me fudge. I gained nine pounds.

We need dinner on the

grounds. Once upon a time, rural churches had outdoor dinners on the lawn. Often around Decoration Day. We did.

Our whole congregation would gather on the grass, eat copious amounts of sugar and cholesterol. Whereupon we would all sing “Bringing in the Sheaves” while receiving insulin injections from our neighbors.

This country needs Lawrence Welk, Roy Clark, and Buck Owens. We need Thomas and Richard Smothers. Bing Crosby. Nat Cole. Satchmo.

Our music sucks. We once had hit tunes like “Georgia,” “String of Pearls,” and “Hey Good Lookin’.” Now we have—these are actual song hit titles—“Me & Ur Ghost,” “Knockin’ the Boots,” and “ABCDEFU.”

More Andy Taylor; less Taylor Swift bashing. More Ray Charles, less Justin Bieber. More Clark Kent, less Beavis and Butt-head.

More rope swings on muddy creeks. More young men opening doors for females. More Norman Rockwell. More John Wayne. More Fred McFeely Rogers.

No, I don’t know how to save this country. I don’t know much about anything

But I know family dinners ain’t a bad place to start.



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Road to Redemption: Travis King – the Strength of Small Groups

By VICTORIA OSTROSKY

Small groups, or life groups, had their beginnings with the new church, as baby believers met in one another's homes, breaking bread together and encouraging each other. Those first home churches though were just that – small, intimate, home churches. Small groups today are quite different – they're typically comprised of members of a larger church who spend time together outside of the regular Sunday service, doing life together, and building each other up in their faith.

To get an idea of how our modern life groups, or small groups started up, we have to travel back a bit in time to Frankfurt, Germany. In 1669, a young minister named Philipp Jakob Spener had a burden for his congregation. He wanted them to have something more than just the Sunday sermon. His desire was for his flock to grow in their faith, living out their faith every day of the week. He called it a 'movement for piety'. John Wesley, impressed with the results of these small groups, some years later expanded on that idea, and here we are today.

Small groups and life groups are touted in almost every Protestant church now, offering a multitude of options for men, women, couples, new believers, specialty groups, and much more.

Travis King knows all about the immediate and eternal impact of small groups. He refers to his current faith walk as a "beautifully painful road," and describes himself a few years ago as "broken physically, emotionally and spiritually."

Travis has learned how being surrounded by other Godly men, learning from them and growing with them, has given him spiritual endurance.

In 2021, Travis was devastated and consumed by hurt. He lost his job, his wife divorced him, and his sons didn't want to have anything to do with him. Painful though it was, God used



it for good. As C.S. Lewis so beautifully articulated, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Travis knew he needed help. "We need hope, and where does that hope come from? God orchestrates things in your life.

Over time you get to where the things of earth – the daily fears and concerns – don't affect you the same. There's a peace and hope that the Lord will walk with you and help you."

But Travis also knows that it takes consistency in reading and studying God's Word, consistency in surrender, and consistency in attending his small group to experience the growth that only comes from the Holy Spirit. "Piece by piece God softened my heart and my sons' hearts. That made me feel valued and worthy. Now I can share what God has done. You have to lay it all down and surrender it. God has to orchestrate it and direct it."

Being part of a small group is a powerful thing. Meeting together weekly, reading the

Word, sharing struggles, praying for each other and being transparent with each other produces a feeling of safety and security. When you feel safe, it's much easier to grow. And then, as Jesus commanded us, we need to go – go and tell the world about forgiveness of sins in Him and eternal life.

Jesus is coming back very soon, and we still have much work to do, bringing in the lost sheep. So, get yourself plugged into a Bible-centered small group so you can be better equipped to go out into the harvest fields.

You can hear Travis King's entire interview and listen to many other incredible stories on the weekly Road to Redemption radio show and podcast at www.rtrdestiny.com.

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Cinematic Observations



BY KIRK MCCARLEY

There are two movie assignments I've often given some of my coaching clients, especially if they are preparing for job interviews.

One is "The King's Speech." Featuring Colin Firth in the role of the future king of Britain, George VI, the plot deals with the to-be king's predisposition towards a stammer. He consults with Lionel Logue, an Australian speech and language therapist after experiencing disaster after disaster in his ability to communicate. Through a series of exercises, some cringe-worthy, Lionel works with the king, to the point that in 1939 the king must broadcast a speech to the British citizenry following the declaration of war on Nazi Germany. Relying first on Logue's orchestration, he

begins delivering his speech, and at the end is speaking freely. For me, it is an outstanding illustration of how a coach mentors a client across a seemingly untenable pathway as they progress from point A to point B.

Another important movie (though less renowned) is "Akeelah and the Bee." This 2006 drama tells the story of 11-year-old Akeelah Anderson, who competes in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Akeelah attends Crenshaw Middle School, a predominantly black school in South L.A. Noting her special talent for spelling, the school's principal encourages her to sign up for the school-wide spelling bee, a request she initially rebuffs. After reconsidering and participating in the competition she is observed by a visiting English professor, Dr. Joshua Larabee (Laurence Fishburne) who decides she is good enough for Nationals and becomes her spelling coach. Making a connection between the rhythms of spelling and skipping rope, Akeelah eventually proceeds to capture her own "crown."

What is your memorable speech or academic contest moment? How did you go about determining your zone, the rhythm

in which you best function?

- In a job interview?
- When giving a presentation or speaking to a group?
- In how you go about your daily assignments?
- In the way you prepare a meal?
- With the manner in which you connect with and communicate with others?

Routine works well for many people, something those who grew up on a farm where livestock were raised might particularly understand. I knew some dairy farmers in Missouri. Dairy cattle require consistent milking, at least twice, and sometimes as often as three times daily. That requirement comes seven days a week, vacation time and holidays included. That routine is instilled at a young age, so much so that the learning curve is steep, if not impossible, for those seeking to try their hand at the dairy business who are not products of the multi-generational heritage.

Cadence can be variable in other occupations. A masterful storyteller incorporates pause, inflection, and hesitation to encourage emotion, reaction, and a feeling of suspense among those

listening. Dynamic preachers employ similar tactics.

Some succeed with a rhythm that is their brand. The chef, Emeril Lagasse, introduced flair, tempo, and passion for food prep viewership that "turned things up a notch" for that industry segment.

In setting your own pace, I've identified some keys, especially in interviewing and other interpersonal skills that are critical in attaining that delicate balance between being in control, without being "controlling."

Breathe. Seems counterintuitive, yet I'm continually amazed at how many of us stumble through speaking faster than we can think.

Condense it. Unless delivering a speech, a response of no more than 90 to 120 seconds seems about right in an "interlude."

Hesitate. Pause before answering. Even three seconds can give you the chance to organize your 90-second comment.

Eye contact. I have had seemingly distracted clients look away from or beyond me.

Question. Remember to ask good, open-ended questions of

the audience with which you're engaged.

Storytelling. A good storyteller builds in inflection and emphasis and varies the speed of their delivery.

Uniqueness. What differentiates and distinguishes you?

Countenance. A smile and positive, optimistic body language go a long way.

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Kirk McCarley is a Certified Professional Coach as well as a Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and SHRM-CP Certified. He also is a Production Assistant for both college football and basketball for ESPN and leads group cycling classes as a Certified Spinning instructor. Contact kirk@theseedsowercoach.com, theseedsowercoach.com, or call 314-677-8779.

Kirk McCarley



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Raise From Home New This Year for ECCAC's Gala

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) is adding something a little different for this year's 24th Annual Gala March 8th at the Sandestin Hilton. For those who are unable to attend the Gala, ECCAC is offering Raise from Home, a way one can help kids in need with a donation from home. Those who make a donation via Raise from Home will be exclusively entered into a drawing for prizes.

These are the donation amounts and a chance to win re-



spective prize drawings:

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Fudpucker's Fudtacular Events!

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill is not just any ordinary spot on the Destin map – it's the epicenter of Fudpuckin' Fantastic Festivities that have been keeping both locals and tourists coming back for over four decades! And guess what — we're just getting warmed up. We're on a mission to make the next 43 years even more outrageously fun than the last. Just so you don't miss out on the fun, here is a list of our upcoming events:

GatorFest 2024

Mark your calendars and set your alarms for May 4th, 2024, because GatorFest is sliding into town and it's going to be a snaptacular day you won't want to miss. Dive into the heart of Gator Beach for an extravaganza featuring gatorlicious cooking contests, jaw-dropping gator shows and sips and bites that will have you coming back for seconds. And it's not just about the thrills – we're on a mission to support the amazing work of the Alaqua Animal Refuge. So, come chomp, cheer and support this incredible wildlife charity with us from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m!

Teen Night

A non-stop dance-a-thon where teens can bust a move, sip on virgin cocktails and vie for awesome prizes - all in a safe, smoke-free and alcohol-free party zone. Parents, fear not! We've got an eagle-eyed crew and off-duty sheriff's deputies on hand to keep the fun on track. Watch your teens have fun from our viewing lounge and see why Teen Night is the hottest ticket for teens in Destin.

Live Music Featuring Local Musicians

Did you know that some of the best local musicians play at Fudpucker's? The music starts at 6:30 p.m. every night during the Spring and Summer seasons.

Fudnominals

Looking for some fun and kid friendly interactive entertainment? Then join us during Spring Break and every day in the Summer for our Fudnominals Dance Team on the Big Deck. Tons of fun starting at 1:30 p.m.

Emerald Coast Volleyball Spring Kickoff Party

This Kick-Off Event for the World's Largest 4-Player Beach Volleyball Event is one of the biggest gatherings of fun-loving volleyball players in the universe. Join us for a beachin' time featuring Live Music on the Big Deck and a Dance Party with our guest DJ from the Los Angeles Lakers Guest in the Down Under Bar.

FALL EVENTS

Cop's Rock

A special THANK YOU to our local heroes with a day packed with family fun and great food.

Emerald Coast Volleyball Fall Kickoff Party

Just when you think we couldn't pull off another massive volleyball event, Fudpucker's hosts the Emerald Coast Volleyball Fall Classic. We bring Live Music to the Big Deck and we a Fudnominal Dance Party to the Down Under Bar!

Jeepalooza Kickoff Party

This incredible event is a new function that Fudpucker's is hosting this year. We are looking forward to 1,000s of Jeeps descending on Destin and kick things into "high gear" with a blow-out bash at Fudpucker's featuring Live Music, Food and Fun!

Halloween Bash

Bring the Little Fudsters to Fudpucker's for a fun-filled afternoon with FREE Candy, a pumpkin decorating contest and more. Complete Father Fud's Scavenger Hunt and get a chance to spin the Fudpucker Prize Wheel to win Fudtacular Prizes.

Fudpucker's Brewery Collectible Show

It was inevitable that one of the owners drank so much beer that we eventually had to sponsor a Brewery Collectible Show. This event offers an awesome look at the incredible world of Brewery Collecting—you never know what you might find.

Noon Year's Eve Celebration

Counting down to the most epic Noon Year's Eve Bash at



Fudpucker's! Join us at the end of the year for a FREE family-friendly fiesta starting at 10 a.m. We'll have Live Entertainment, Face Painting, a DJ, Alligators and a Balloon Drop loaded with prizes at Noon!

Fudpucker's Jazz Dinner Shows

Get dressed up and head on over to the Down Under Bar at Fudpucker's for some of the best Jazz music by the Downbeat Jazz Orchestra. Be sure to check out our events calendar for specific dates and enjoy a

Fancy Dinner and Classic Libations a Fudpucker's Jazz Dinner Show.

Father Fud's Photo Scavenger Hunt

If you think your brave enough to scour Fudpucker's for Father Fud's hidden treasures, then we will award you with a spin of the Fudpucker Prize Wheel. Everyone is a winner and it is Fun for the entire family!

Gator Shows

FREE Gator Shows - Ev-

eryday at Noon, 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. during the Spring and Summer seasons. Different shows throughout the day!

Gator Tours

One of the best ways to get up close with Live Gators in a fun and entertaining way. Our Gator Beach Discovery Tour is a fun exploration of Gator Beach guided by one of our Gator Handlers. Our Gator Experience VIP Tour allows you help open up the park with the Gator Beach staff – this is an Educational, Fun and Interactive Adventure you don't want to miss.

Fudpucker's is more than a restaurant — it's a state of mind where food, fun and families come together for an unforgettable experience. Whether you're here for the fun, the memories or the sheer joy of it, one thing's for sure — "Ya Ain't Been Pucked, Till Ya Been Fudpucked." So, slap on a Fudpucker's World Famous T-Shirt and make every moment count at Fudpucker's. We can't wait to see you at our next Fudtacular event!

Visit Us in Destin at 20001 Emerald Coast Parkway, Destin, FL 32541. On the web: www.Fudpucker.com.

Dining

SoWal Live Music

Live Music @ Hotel Effie Thursdays - Saturdays at The Lobby Bar

Join Hotel Effie for live music at The Lobby Bar every Thursday, Friday & Saturday from 8-11 p.m. Sip hand-crafted cocktails as you listen to the local artist perform original and cover songs. Light bites from their menu are available.

DJ @ Hotel Effie Sandestin Ara Rooftop Fridays & Saturdays

Join Hotel Effie for drinks, music, and an amazing view at their Ara Rooftop Pool and Lounge. Get moving with the up-tempo beats by local DJs spinning live Friday & Saturday evenings from 7-11 p.m. Open to the public.

Old Florida Fish House Weekdays

For over a decade, Old Florida Fish House has proudly featured local live music. Catch artists playing inside the coveted bar and lounge area as well as in the large outdoor dining space situated among the palm and oak trees under the twinkling lights next to Eastern Lake.

FOOW Sunday Brunch & Live Music

Sunday Brunch at FOOW - Fish Out of Water in Water-Color means live music and bottomless mimosas. The Gulf front restaurant invites you to dine on brunch favorites from 8 a.m.- 2 p.m. paired with live music from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. March 17: Aaron Bostic, March 24: Brett Stafford

Smith, March 31: Christon Birge. Visit foow30a.com.

AJ's Grayton Brunch, Live Music & Crawfish Boil Sunday Funday

AJ's is the place to be to celebrate all things Sunday Funday in Grayton Beach! Come for brunch, stay for the music and dancing. Every Sunday from 11 a.m. til 3 p.m., AJ's brunch is not to be missed. Complete your meal with a mimosa or go all in with their famous Build Your Own Bloody Mary bar. Enjoy live music with Will & Linda 12-4 p.m. and Pickled Pickers on the Main Stage at 5 p.m. See menu: ajsgrayton.com.

The Bay

Come out to The Bay with family and friends every Wednesday night starting at 5 p.m. for dinner, cold drinks and a bonfire with various musicians on the beach of the Choctawhatchee Bay. It's a

midweek tradition in South Walton. Sunday Pickin' @ The Bay features The Sand Ole' Opry with Mike Whitty & Friends on stage from 4-8 p.m.

Blues, Tacos & Tequila Fest at Red Fish Taco March 16

Red Fish Taco and Blues Musicians Society present Blues, Tacos & Tequila March 16 and 17 from 3-9 p.m. This St. Paddy's Day Weekend, let the music take you on a journey with electrifying blues performances from multiple bands each day that will resonate in your soul. NO COVER! Indulge your taste buds on everything from Multiple Specialty Tacos and Street Tacos to Blackened Redfish tacos. Sip and savor expertly crafted tequila drinks that are sure to impress even the connoisseurs. Learn more: redfishtaco.com.

Sinfonia Gulf Coast Presents Classical Connections

Featuring Steven Banks, Saxophone, March 23

Sinfonia Gulf Coast "redefines the symphony experience" once again with Classical Connections featuring Steven Banks, saxophone. This Southeast U.S. premiere of Diaspora, described as "symphonic poems," is Saturday, March 23 at 7:30 p.m. at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center on Okaloosa Island in Fort Walton Beach.

Recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Young Concert Artist prize, saxophonist Steven Banks pushes boundaries, expanding the instrument's repertoire while showcasing its vast capabilities.

Hear this newly commissioned work for saxophone and orchestra by award-winning composer Billy Childs: Diaspora, Motherland, and If We Must Die and And Still I Rise — three compelling pieces inspired by African American poems that chronicle the black American journey from mournful suppression to joyful empowerment. Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky's riveting Pictures at an Exhibition, composed as a solo for piano in 1874, completes this compelling program. Tickets: \$35 per person. Discounts offered for students and active-duty military with valid ID. Purchase tickets at SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or call (850) 460-8800.

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Don Dirkin Jr.

Don Dirkin Jr loves playing lead guitar. He found his passion 20 years ago after taking lessons starting at 12. His father helped him remain dedicated to learning by introducing him to various styles of music. At the age of 13, Don began playing in local blues jams in the DC area. He gained experience from local bands and some national blues legends. He increased his ability to play solo and lead guitar playing the blues, rock and roll, funk, R&B, country, and fusion.

Since moving to Santa Rosa Beach, Don has been the lead guitar player in various local bands and is known for his unique voice and guitar ability. At Berklee College of Music, he is in his fourth semester of earning his bachelor's degree online in guitar performance. He has a passion for imparting his knowledge and ability to all his students.

To find out more about Lead Guitar lessons with Don call Ray Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons (850) 231-3199 and visit and read more info at Studio237Music.com/don-dirkin.



Gregg Shapiro

Gregg Shapiro began studying piano while in second grade, the start of his lifetime love of music. Gregg performed in middle school talent shows singing and playing the keyboard. In high school, playing bass guitar became his true passion.

As a seasoned performer, Gregg's many years of studying with various teachers on a variety of instruments shaped him to become a well-rounded, patient teacher with a big smile. You'll find that he loves teaching and developing the gift of music in people of all ages. Gregg has become an integral musician in our music community and is now a teacher here at Studio 237 Music Lessons.

We have seen Gregg play locally at a variety of venues and church events with different bands/groups. He is a confident bass player with a natural smooth, creative, and happy style. He truly enjoys performing. We are excited to have Gregg

Studio 237

Shapiro as a bass guitar teacher, and also as a beginner guitar or piano teacher.

Call Ray Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons (850) 231-3199 and see more information about Gregg's career at studio237music.com/gregg-shapiro-1

Scott Gilmore

Scott Gilmore is a talented performing guitarist. Scott has 25 years of experience and enjoys playing a variety of genres including classical, jazz and worship music. He teaches guitar, ukulele, beginner piano, and songwriting.

Scott's musical journey has been shaped by his studies with fine musicians and teachers over the years. Starting in the mid-1990s, he studied with Jimmy Chandler (Classical Guitar Professor at Northwest Florida State College) continuously for 25 years. This enabled Scott to develop his own teaching style using his skills in sight reading, live performance and songwriting.

Scott has been teaching at Studio 237 Music Lessons for over eight years. His goal is to patiently educate, encourage, equip, and inspire musicians of



all ages and abilities to find, develop, and ultimately fulfill their musical vision.

To find out more about Lessons with Scott, call Ray Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons (850) 231-3199 and visit our website for more info at Studio237Music.com/scott-gilmore



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By CHRIS BALZER, ECES

But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

*It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
— William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet*

With Spring comes warmer temperatures and possible heat emanating through our windows.

However, no one would dispute having the beauty of soft, warm, natural light shining through our windows that puts a smile on our face and warms our hearts. We have windows to let in light and give us views into our world, whether it's a lakefront, Gulf front, pool front or simply a view of the outside.

For a time when I worked in

a cubical, I often dreamed of having a view, even if it was of the parking lot, something to let in natural sunlight. Now, I am finding that many of us have windows that are letting in much more than soft natural light and have become a sore spot. We hunt for blinds and curtains or just quarantine the area from 1 to 7 p.m. We search for dark or mirrored tint to help against the heat while maintaining some of our views. We place towels and blankets over our furniture and wood floors to protect from fading and cracking. We even go to the ex-

treme of replacing our windows with expensive new ones.

Did you know there's a solution? It's called ERF (energy reflective film). I know what you are thinking, another tint—great—tried that, didn't work or my HOA won't allow it. ERF is not a typical window tint; in fact, it contains some of the most recent technological advances. Most tints use dyes and aluminum; ERF uses a proprietary technology to distribute tiny gold and silver particles allowing the film to be virtually clear and highly energy efficient. A client of ours in Inlet Beach built a home in 2017, but struggled with trying to keep the master suite cool because of all the windows facing direct sunlight.

We coated the windows two months ago and the couple recently contacted us and said,



“Thank you so much! We are very happy with the heat reduction we have noticed.”

The science behind the magic: Astronauts use a visor assembly coated with a thin layer of gold that filters out the sun's harmful rays and protects the spacewalker from extreme temperatures. This technology has been adopted and is now available to solve heat problems in our homes and offices.

One popular question I'm asked is, “Do I need to coat all my windows?” The answer is no. We want to address the problem windows—the windows that receive direct sunlight, the windows which you feel the heat radiating from or the room that won't stay cool. Because the film is virtually clear, the windows maintain architectural integrity.

What our ERF film won't do is block glare or shade a room. ERF blocks the heat, not the view. ERF also rejects 99% of Ultraviolet (UV) rays, protecting you, your animals, your floors and furniture. If you have been searching for a heat reduction solution, please contact us for an in-home demonstration and see for yourself how we can block the heat and not view.

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solution, a smile-provider company, and lives locally with his wife and three children. For more information on how to save this spring 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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Meet Local Pros Trevor and Tina Kasten of Beachside Sliding Glass Door Maintenance

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

If you are struggling with a sliding glass door, then you need Beachside Sliding Glass Door Maintenance, LLC. Starting in October 2023, it's owned and operated by long-time Destin residents and high school sweethearts, Trevor and Tina Kasten. "We have learned to work very well together in handling all business responsibilities and balance each other out. Our daughter, Samantha, even helps with the creative and social media aspects of the business and we have a great crew that helps us with the larger projects."

Having been in the automotive restoration business for more than 30 years, Trevor has be-

come an expert in metal repair. Wanting to retire from the fumes and chemicals, however, opened new opportunities. "I decided after all these years, it was the perfect time to make a change. My childhood friend owns and operates a very successful business similar to ours in central Florida. We immediately saw the need for this service in our area. I went down and trained with him, learned the business and the rest is history."

So, what is it about our area that makes this business so valuable? "Most people don't realize that sliding glass doors require routine maintenance, especially in our coastal area. Sand, salt water, salty air and chlorine cause excessive corrosion to the wheel



system underneath the door. The doors have to be lifted off and the bottom panels removed to see this damage.

Sliding doors are very heavy doors. They sit on a roller system that consists of a set of wheels that sit on a track. This system is designed to balance the weight of the doors and make them glide smoothly and easily. When this system starts to fail, the doors start to feel heavy.

Over time the wheels and bearings go bad and need to be changed. Once this occurs, almost everyone assumes they need new doors. The doors just keep getting heavier and harder to open with time. This progression eventually breaks handles and damages the track the rollers sit on. There are different levels of track damage, but the longer you let it go the more extensive and expensive the repairs can get.

We get stuck, noisy, difficult-to-open sliding glass doors rolling open like new again. This includes roller replacement, track repair, door handles, security

locks, alignment, and lubrication of the door."

During a time when everything has gone up in price, including brand-new sliding glass doors, repairs are a much more cost-effective alternative.

Trevor and Tina have lived in the same neighborhood in Destin for over 25 years and have seen a lot of changes. They know and love our coastal beach towns and

feel privileged to serve a community that gives so much. "Our neighbors look out for each other, and we love to be a part of that through our business as well. We've partnered with some fantastic property managers who immediately saw the value and skill in the work we provide."

Since opening, what has been the best part of starting their business? "We love the surprise homeowners experience once they see the functionality of their doors. You will be amazed by the peace you feel just by being able to stop fighting with your door daily."

Beachside Sliding Glass Door Maintenance currently offers services from Panama City to Pensacola. You can schedule a free estimate at www.beachsideslide.com or call 850-987-5433.

What's on 30A TV?

Stream for Free: How Local Now Became the Netflix of Local TV

Hey fellow TV enthusiasts! If you haven't already hooked into the world of Local Now, let me fill you in on this gem. Born from the innovative minds at The Weather Channel in 2016, Local Now started as our go-to for hyper-local weather and news updates. But guess what? It's transformed into a nationwide colossal free streaming haven, operated by Byron Allen's Allen Media Group. We're talking a lineup that's ballooned to over 450 free-to-watch live TV channels – a dream for cord-cutters.

Local Now isn't just about the weather anymore. There are many many local channels, so you can keep up on your home city, or of course this local area too. That brings us to the scoop that's got us excited: 30A Media (30a.tv) is adding some of our 20+ streaming TV channels to the national broadcasts on the Local Now Network. Talk about an upgrade! Local Now just keeps getting better, and we are honored to be part of it.

They've spiced things up with a variety of channels catering to literally every mood and interest. From the gripping tales on True Crime Now to the serene vibes on Omstars

TV, there's something for everyone. Sports fanatics have channels like VE Sports News and Adventure Sports TV – and now 30A.TV fishing, golf, auto racing and soccer. And let's not forget the fam with channels like Family Time and Hipster. The list is endless, and it's all free.

Local Now is making educational and public service content more accessible by planning to include all local PBS stations. This is a big win for families and anyone looking to expand their horizons without spending a dime.

Streaming Local Now is easy to find whether you're on Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, YouTube TV, or mobile devices. Just search Local Now TV. It's everywhere you are, ensuring you never miss out on your local scoop or favorite shows.

So, to my fellow TV aficionados, Local Now is our new playground. Whether you're into news, sports, lifestyle, or just need some background noise while you work, Local Now is one to watch, literally. Let's dive in and enjoy the endless stream of entertainment, shall we?



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The Urgent Need for Cybersecurity in Small to Medium Businesses:

Protecting Your Assets in an Evolving Threat Landscape

In today's digital age, the significance of cybersecurity cannot be emphasized enough. The alarming surge in cyber insurance costs, coupled with the prevalence of ransomware attacks targeting small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), underscores the critical need for prioritizing cybersecurity measures.

Consider the latest insights from The 13th edition of the NetDiligence® Cyber Claims Study, which revealed that the cost of cyber insurance in the U.S. spiked by a staggering 79% in the second quarter of 2022 alone. Shockingly, ransomware attacks accounted for a whopping 88% of cyber insurance claims among SMBs during the period of 2022-2033. Moreover, the average financial toll of a cyber incident borne by an insurance carrier stood at a staggering \$865,000 for SMBs, highlighting the substantial financial risks at stake.

Despite these alarming statistics, only a mere 14% of SMBs are adequately prepared to confront such cyber threats. While larger corporations typically allocate significant resources to cybersecurity, SMBs often lag behind in implementing robust cybersecurity measures. Many SMBs have yet to develop comprehensive cybersecurity solutions to safeguard their operations, particularly in regions with

stringent data privacy laws and regulations governing the collection and storage of personal identifiable information (PII).

Several factors contribute to SMBs neglecting cybersecurity:

Lack of Awareness: Many SMB owners and managers underestimate the importance of cybersecurity or the potential risks they face, erroneously assuming that cybercriminals target only larger enterprises. However, studies reveal that 63% of SMBs have experienced cyberattacks in the past two years, with data breaches costing an average of \$3.31 million per incident.

Overreliance on Managed Service Providers (MSPs): While MSPs play a crucial role in supporting software and applications, they often lack the expertise required to navigate the complexities of cybersecurity response and insurance coverage. Additionally, they may overlook the diverse legal and regulatory frameworks governing cybersecurity across different states and industries.

Dependence on Third-Party Applications: SMBs frequently rely on third-party cloud applications, assuming that these vendors bear sole responsibility for cybersecurity. However, cybersecurity is



a shared responsibility, necessitating proactive measures from both the business and its vendors.

Cost Concerns: SMBs often view investing in cybersecurity solutions as financially burdensome. However, the costs associated with recovering from a cyberattack far outweigh the initial investment in preventive measures.

Perceived Complexity: The intricacies of cybersecurity can appear daunting to SMBs, who may lack the necessary expertise to implement comprehensive cybersecurity solutions effectively.

Misconceptions about Cyber Insurance Coverage: SMBs may erroneously believe that their cyber insurance policy provides blanket coverage, failing to grasp the nuances of regulatory compliance and the importance of tailored policies and procedures.

Addressing these challenges requires proactive measures:

Education and Awareness: SMBs must prioritize cybersecurity education and awareness programs to understand the evolving threat landscape and their vulnerabilities.

Strategic Partnerships: Collaborating with a company that has expertise in cybersecurity solutions and insurers can help SMBs develop tailored solutions that align with their budget and requirements.

Compliance and Risk Management: SMBs must stay abreast of regulatory requirements and implement robust policies and procedures to mitigate risks effectively.

Integration of Cybersecurity and Insurance: Integrating cybersecurity solutions with insurance expertise can provide SMBs with comprehensive coverage and peace of mind.

In conclusion, the imperative for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) to prioritize cybersecurity measures has never been clearer. With cyber insurance costs surging and ransomware attacks on the rise, SMBs face significant financial risks and operational disruptions. Despite the alarming sta-

tistics revealing the prevalence of cyber threats, many SMBs remain ill-prepared due to factors such as lack of awareness, reliance on third-party providers, cost concerns, and misconceptions about insurance coverage.

However, by taking proactive steps to educate themselves, forge strategic partnerships, adhere to compliance requirements and integrate cybersecurity with insurance solutions, SMBs can effectively mitigate risks and safeguard their assets in an ever-evolving threat landscape. It is imperative for SMBs to recognize the importance of cybersecurity as a fundamental aspect of their business operations and take decisive action to protect themselves against cyber threats.

At Abora Insurance Group, we specialize in bridging the gap between cybersecurity solutions and insurance policies, offering affordable comprehensive solutions tailored to SMBs' needs. By fostering transparent communication and leveraging our network of insurers and cybersecurity solution providers, we empower SMBs to navigate the complexities of cybersecurity and secure their digital assets effectively. Protect your business today to safeguard against the growing threats of tomorrow.

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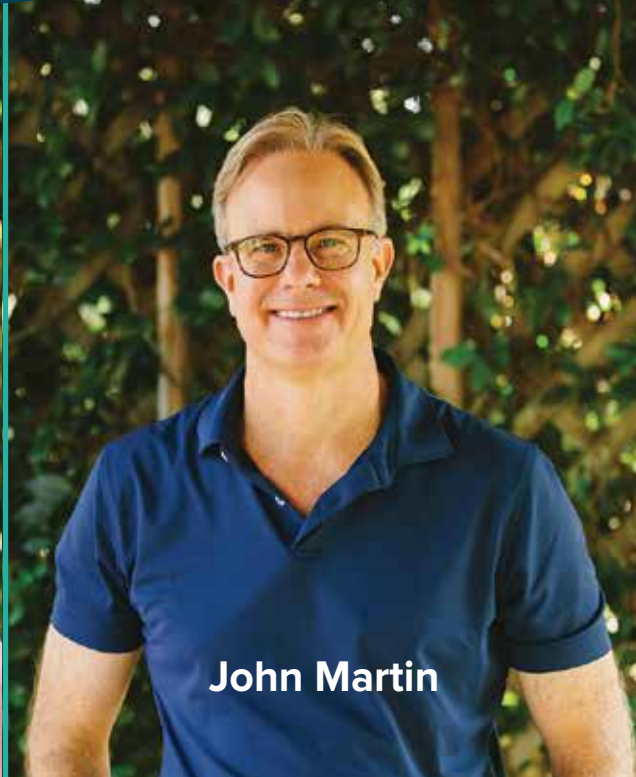


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