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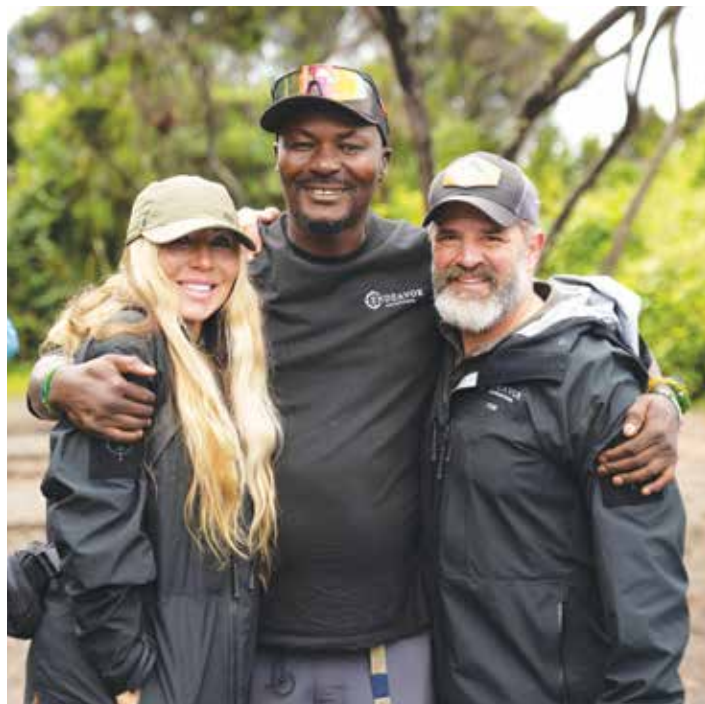
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Joyful Dedication to Education in Kilimanjaro

BY HEATHER BENNETT EYE

A life-changing tip following their Kilimanjaro summit not only impacted the guide who received the tip but also Jim and Kristi Sumpter, local Walton County residents and co-founders of Endeavor Expeditions. After learning that their tip would help put their guide's child through school for the year, they began taking steps to develop Kids of Kilimanjaro, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to help fund educational opportunities for the children of Kilimanjaro guides and porters.

Jim and Kristi have built partnerships with local guides across the globe, but it's been their years of traveling in Tanzania and the gratitude, generosity and genuine joy of the guides and porters of Kilimanjaro that inspired them to start their nonprofit organization. Both Jim and Kristi have summited Kilimanjaro multiple times with Jim leading teams to the summit. This winter, they invited local award-winning



photographer Chandler Williams of Modus Photography to join them on their Kilimanjaro and Safari expedition to not only create marketing content for Kids of Kilimanjaro but to experience for himself the joyful spirit of the guides, porters and their families.

You may be familiar with Chandler's photography, a mix of inspiring landscapes, people, and wildlife from 30A and around the world. Chandler has experience with international travel and is "comfortable in a lot of uncomfortable environments" with his cam-

era. He arrived in Arusha several days before the expedition to spend time with the families of the African team. There can be anywhere from four to ten porters for every one person making the climb. Chandler's expedition with Jim and Kristi had a total of 10 climbers, some local and some out of state. They had 40 members on their African team to assist them. Porters are expected to carry tents, propane tanks, cooking supplies, toilets and equipment with packs weighing up to 40 pounds each, up the mountain through five different ecological climate zones. Most of them have worn-out tennis shoes, and often lack rain gear, hats, gloves or proper clothing for climbing. They rely a lot on donations and tips. Some people donate their supplies and outdoor apparel at the end of an expedition.

"These guys that are carrying your gear, they're nothing

EDUCATION

continued on page 2

A Beach Within Reach: Access May Look Different, But Still Accessible

Walton County is widely regarded and celebrated for its 26 miles of sugar-white sand paired with incredible turquoise waters. It's truly a breathtaking sight and the reason that many of our residents were attracted here.

Our beaches are what draws visitors here as well, generating an economic impact of more than \$6 billion annually and supporting more than 40,000 jobs for our residents. Tourism is the No. 1 economic driver in Walton County.

Historically, Walton County has had a mix of public and private beaches. What does that look like today? In many ways, it looks the same. There are still portions of beach that remain private (think of our resort areas like Alys Beach, Rosemary Beach or Seaside) and there are condos, single-family homes and other developments that have deeded access to portions of beachfront.

With spring break upon us and the summer beach season rapidly approaching, it's important to acknowledge there have been some changes along the beach.

BEACH

continued on page 2



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 Community

EDUCATION

continued from page 1

but cheerful, singing, happy, and helpful. It's unbelievable," stated Chandler.

When Chandler found himself with his waterproof boots drenched from rain, the guide grabbed his boots and gave them to the cooks to dry over the propane tank when they were done cooking. "There's probably 10 people in a three-man tent. They're huddled and trying to dry them off for me, like just laughing and cheering. I almost broke down. It's just their willingness to help," Chandler said.

The guides make around \$25/day, while cooks make \$15/day and porters make between \$5-\$10/day. What Chandler observed is what Jim and Kristi also experienced. People who, although they are doing extremely physically demanding work in less



than ideal conditions, are doing it with a heart of humility and joy, singing and laughing throughout their journey. "They're doing this hard work and they're not making a lot of money. They're making the sacrifices for their children, but they're doing it happily you know."

In Tanzania, school is considered a privilege. Even though it's officially "free," education can cost around \$800 per year due to fees, uniform costs, books, food, and supplies. Transportation can also be costly due to long distances between schools in rural areas. With all these obstacles, getting a good education can be difficult, but finishing school means more opportunities and a



brighter future.

Kids of Kilimanjaro was created to help with tuition assistance to students of families of the Kilimanjaro communities. Opportunities for education lead to opportunities for better jobs, which in turn benefit families and communities. "Education is important," stated Chandler. "It can change everything for these families." He and his wife will be

funding one porter's son's education indefinitely.

If you are interested in learning more about Kids of Kilimanjaro and Chandler's experience, he is showcasing his "Journey Through Africa" from 6-9 p.m. on May 15 at 30a Studio Rental, 416 S County Hwy 393, Bldg 7, Unit 3 in Santa Rosa Beach. You can RSVP to the event through Modus Photography at www.modusphotography.com/rsvp.

"It's really hard to convey how genuine the experience was," said Chandler. "It's a life changing experience when you go on these trips with them. This is something, personally, I plan on being a part of the rest of my life. My wife and I now pay for one of the students, a porter's son. Modus Photography is going to pay for his education indefinitely."

If you can't attend the event, or are interested in learning more about Kids of Kilimanjaro, please visit <https://kidsokili.com>. For more information on Endeavor Expeditions, you can visit www.endeavorexpeditions.com.

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BEACH

continued from page 1

The most important change from a private beach standpoint is the ability for the public to now have access to beachfront that was inaccessible in many areas. Based on the county's settlement agreement, the public now has access to the area 20 feet landward of the wet-dry shoreline – known as the transitory zone – for walking, running, jogging and entry into the water for swimming and other activities. This only applies to beachfront parcels that were part of the county's customary use settlement agreement and summary judgment. The map we've created shows the changes: <https://www.visitsouthwalton.com/beach-bay-access-locations/>.

With this expansion, beachgoers are welcome to enjoy the transitory zone between 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. There are other restrictions that apply to these parcels, which can be found on the Visit South Walton website: <https://www.visitsouthwalton.com/>.

What remains unchanged is the ability for residents and visitors to enjoy county-owned beaches along the Gulf of Mexico, in addition to our state parks. The county's Regional Beach Accesses and Neighborhood

Beach Accesses provide opportunities for everyone to soak up some sunshine, while the state parks are perfect getaways and provide their own special experience.

Approximately two-thirds of Walton County's beaches are available for the public to enjoy. Additionally, from the Bay County line to the Okaloosa County line, both residents and visitors still have the ability to traverse the beach along the wet sand area for the entirety of Walton County's 26 miles of shoreline.

Walton County is also committed to securing additional beachfront. Since 2016, the Tourism Department has purchased more than \$76 million worth of property for beach access and parking expansion.


These purchases were made with TDT (Tourist Development Tax) funds or bed taxes as they are commonly referred to and

not taxpayer dollars – so visitors to Walton County are funding these acquisitions. Please know that expanding available beachfront has been and will continue to be a priority.

Whether resident or visitor, we all want the same thing - to enjoy our beautiful beaches and make lasting memories with family and friends. Current changes to the beaches don't prevent this from happening.

Understanding the dynamic of public and private beach usage is key to shaping the desired beach experience we seek individually. Creating this awareness is the goal of the tourism department, but sharing it is the responsibility of everyone in our community who wishes Walton County to thrive as a quality place to live, work and visit. Please join us in this vital undertaking.



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The "Bear" Necessities of Conservation

By HEATHER BENNETT EYE

Walton County has a few local celebrities that are familiar with the spotlight, but our woodland neighbors, the Florida Black Bear, are getting their time to shine. The Paper Bear, a nonprofit, is creating a soon-to-be-released feature film to bring awareness of the importance of biodiversity through the lives of the Florida Black Bears and a better understanding of how we can live in harmony with our environment. The film itself is a conservation movement.

"It's a love letter to the state of Florida, and specifically the panhandle of Florida," stated Co-Producer Arix Zalace on The Paper Bear Instagram. "It's one of the most important regions in North America." Besides the obvious, what makes the panhandle and Florida Black Bears so special that there's an entire film being made? Let's set the scene.

We know by the millions of people that flock to our sugar sand beaches and turquoise waters, that The Emerald Coast is a tourist hotspot, but did you know that we're also a biodiversity

hotspot? That's right! We're actually the epicenter of the North American Coastal Plain (NACP), which is 36th in the world, with The Florida Panhandle, home to rare coastal dune lakes and the Longleaf Pine ecosystem, being the 5th richest biodiverse spot in all of North America.

But what makes it a hotspot? The NACP has more than 1500 plant species not found anywhere else in the world and has lost more than 70% of its original surface area. In the Florida Panhandle, there are over 100 threatened or endangered species that live within the 57 different ecosystems in our area.

The key to conservation is the Florida Black Bear, known as an umbrella species. By focusing on the conservation of black bears and their habitats, we can also protect larger groups of species that share their home. "If you could pinpoint one animal specifically that essentially helps protect everything underneath it, the black bear is the largest most iconic species that we have here in the Florida Panhandle," said Co-

Producer Sean Couch in an interview with The 30A Company.

Many of you know someone who's encountered a black bear or has encountered one themselves. There's a lot of conversation around population control, food sources and why they're knocking down your trash can. However, most of it's not true. "There's so much misinformation about the black bear. The sooner we get rid of the misinformation, the better we can have an educated discussion about this," stated Arix in an interview with The 30A Company.

Black bears are actually self-regulating when it comes to their population. The gestation period for a female black bear is around seven months. However, there is a delayed implantation for the first five. The amount of food the female can find, or the amount of weight she can gain, will determine how many fertilized eggs will drop and develop into cubs.

Food sources are quite abundant within our forests. They eat around 73% plants, 22% insects and 5% meat. They'll feed on

nuts, seeds, berries, beetles, grubs and saw palmetto. They don't like to chase their food if they don't have to, so sometimes road kill is on the menu. "Just because you see bears coming into your community and getting in your trash means nothing about their population," said Arix in the same interview. "Doesn't mean they can't find food. They're opportunistic and you've got good food."

So what should you do if you come face to face with a Florida Black Bear? Stay calm, and don't go towards it. Remember it's probably just as scared of you and you are scared of it. Most of the noises they make, we mistake for aggression. They may huff, click their teeth, stomp their feet or even false charge. However, they are just anxious and trying to let us know not to come closer because they are uncomfortable, too.

The Paper Bear Film switches from live action to animation as it hopes to shed more light on this species that is key to the survival of so many others. The premise is a coming-of-age story about a young boy and his father, who

are working to track and research black bears in the Florida Panhandle, aiming to gain deeper insights into their behavior. Initially hesitant about the trip, the son undergoes a transformative journey as he develops his own understanding and appreciation for nature along the way. On a post from The Paper Bear's Instagram, Arix Zalace says, "It's a story you'll love, you'll laugh, you'll cry, and hopefully you'll want to protect when it's all said and done."

I'm proud to have our beautiful region highlighted on such a big stage for such an important reason. As The Paper Bear team works on finishing up the film, let's take a moment to consider our impact on the environment and the critical importance of our actions today, and how they shape our home for generations to come.

If you'd like to learn more or get involved, please visit www.thepaperbear.org. You can donate or sign up to join their ambassador program. There are also links to other local non-profits that benefit conservation.

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Community

Freeport High School Students Explore Aquaponics



Superintendent A. Russell Hughes

Freeport High School boasts an innovative aquaponics program that integrates culturing fish (aquaculture) and various crops (agriculture) using an array of growing systems, includ-

ing deep-water well, nutrient-film technique (NFT), Dutch buckets, and clay media beds. Spearheaded by the foresight of Walton County School District's Superintendent A. Russell Hughes and aided by a \$500,000 appropriations funding initiative from the Florida legislature in 2022, this program offers students a hands-on learning experience in sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, and equips students with invaluable career skills.

Students engage in the operation and maintenance of these aquaponic systems, learning

about the symbiotic relationship between fish, plants, and bacteria as they cultivate crops in water-efficient environments. The nutrient-rich water, which is created by fish, circulates through naturally occurring good bacteria systems that convert the fish waste to high nutrient water that then passes through various growing systems delivering essential nutrients to plants. The plants continue to filter the water so that it can then be returned to the fish. As students manage these systems, they learn to troubleshoot and overcome challenges that may arise in these aquaponic systems, developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities essential for any profession.

Moreover, Freeport High School's aquaponics program hopes to extend its reach beyond the classroom by offering students the opportunity to participate in restoration efforts within our local estuary, Choctawhatchee Bay. By partnering with esteemed organizations such as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Mote Laboratory, and the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance,



students can actively contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the Bay's ecosystem.

Through these unique partnerships, students gain firsthand experience in environmental conservation and scientific research, fostering a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between human activities and the natural world. As they engage in restoration projects, students not only apply their knowledge in practical settings but also develop a sense of responsibility and stewardship towards their local environment, leaving a lasting impact on their community and beyond.

Moreover, the collaborative nature of the program fosters teamwork and communication skills as students work together

to design, implement, and maintain their aquaponic setups. The program also cultivates leadership skills as students take on various roles and responsibilities within their teams. Whether leading project initiatives or mentoring peers, students learn to inspire and guide others, honing their leadership skills and achieving shared goals. These career-focused skills are integrated into the aquaponics program at Freeport High School not only to prepare students for success in fields related to agriculture, environmental science, and conservation but also to instill in them the confidence and competence to excel in any professional endeavor they pursue.



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Coastal Seniors Update for April



Chair Yoga Classes at the Blake in Miramar Beach – Tuesdays, April 16 and May 7 at 9:45 a.m. RSVP at (850) 650-5000

Game Day at Somerby on Wednesdays – Wednesdays, April 10, 17, 24, and May 1 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.

Justin Gaffrey Gallery Tours – Tours of the gallery are open to Coastal Seniors on Mondays at 1 p.m. Contact rebecca@justingaffrey.com. (850) 267-2022 to schedule. Justin Gaffrey is known as Scenic 30A's signature artist with his "sculpting with paint" technique. The gallery is located at 21 Blue Gulf Dr. in Blue Mountain Beach.

Monthly Meeting – Friday, April 19, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local Master Gardeners will provide information on growing herbs in the Panhandle. There will also be a plant swap so please bring your favorites. 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, April 9, 16, 23, 30 10 a.m. and Thursdays, April 11, 18, 25, and May 2 at 10 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, April 11, 18, 25 and May 2 at 1 p.m. Antony Barlett will lead the classes. Cost is \$10 per class. Held at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Call (850) 280-5342 to reserve your spot, or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Water Aerobics at Watersound Fountains – Join us Mondays and Wednesdays, beginning April 22 at 10 a.m. Mondays, April 22, 29 and May 6, and Wednesdays, April

24, May 1 and 8. Cost is \$5 per class, cash preferred. Call (850) 280-5342 for more information or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com to reserve your spot. Watersound Fountains is at 65 Origins Pkwy, Inlet Beach. Instructor is Patti Shannon.

Pickleball - Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex courts Wednesdays, April 10 and 17 at 6 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. The last day will be April 18 for this season. Please join the SoWal 30A Pickleball Association on Facebook for more information and weekly updates and check the CSSW calendar at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org.

Town Hall / Earth Day - Join Walton environmentalists at Padgett Park at 810 J.D. Miller Road on Saturday, April 20, from noon-3 p.m. for their 2nd Annual Earth Day event! This year, in addition to presentations on Florida-friendly landscapes, plant care, recycling tips, demos and giveaways, you will hear from Waste Management (WM) as they discuss their new single-stream recycling facility that will go online this year. Come and learn about this new option for curbside recycling in Walton County.

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 Se-

niors 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. Media Contact: Jim Wilson, Director, Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. T: 404-432-6037 Email: jim_wilson@bellsouth.net.

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 Community

Path of Grace Ministry Thrift Store Is Open

BY ED OFFLEY

A Florida Panhandle recovery program for women has reached a major milestone with the transformation of a former doctors' office building in Panama City to its third thrift store.

The Path of Grace Thrift Store is an 11,000-square-foot retail outlet featuring clothing, furniture and household goods, said store manager Brandee Anderson. It is located at 509 East 23rd Street in the

Home Depot shopping center. The store had a quiet launch last fall and is now fully operational.

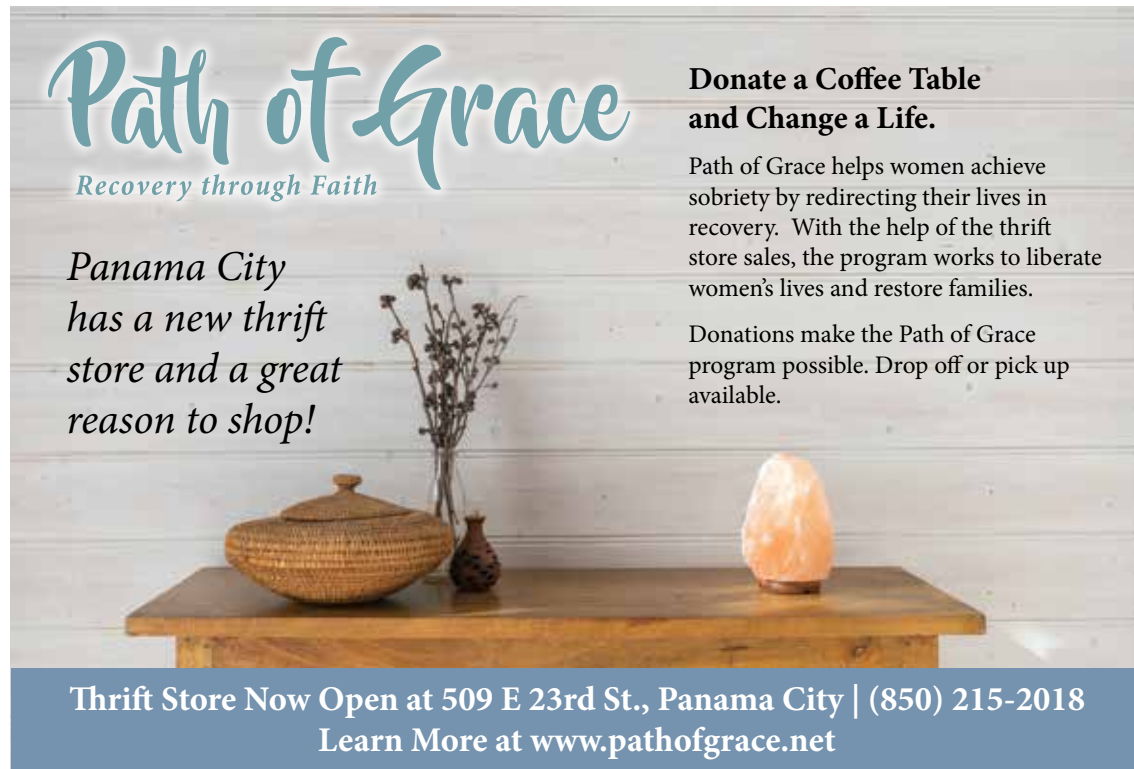
The outlet sells products donated by supporters of the program, and its staff are women going through the twenty-four-month recovery program, she said.

The mission of Path of Grace is simple, Anderson explained: "This program is to restore mothers with their children, and to help them get back on their feet."

Founded fifteen years ago as a

faith-based organization to assist women trapped in alcoholism and drug abuse, Path of Grace has expanded significantly since then. The Panama City outlet is the third run by the organization, which also has two thrift stores in Miramar Beach at 10916 and 10962 US 98.

The recovery program itself is based in several Panhandle communities. Women accepted into the program live in three residential homes in Bonifay. A parallel residential program called Crown of

Path of Grace
Recovery through Faith

Panama City has a new thrift store and a great reason to shop!

Donate a Coffee Table and Change a Life.

Path of Grace helps women achieve sobriety by redirecting their lives in recovery. With the help of the thrift store sales, the program works to liberate women's lives and restore families.

Donations make the Path of Grace program possible. Drop off or pick up available.

Thrift Store Now Open at 509 E 23rd St., Panama City | (850) 215-2018
Learn More at www.pathofgrace.net



Beauty opened there last year.

Those who successfully finish that phase of the program are eligible to stay in one of eight transition housing homes at Serenity Village located in Santa Rosa Beach.

"These 850-square-foot homes have been built to help single graduate mothers and children reunite, as well to help graduates who need a longer stay in a drug-free, protected environment," said Eddie Mansfield, managing director of Path of Grace.

Anderson said there currently are fifty-three women going through the recovery program, with another ten graduates living at Serenity Village.

Mansfield leads a staff of seven plus two therapists who guide the participants through their recovery.

While initially organized to serve Florida Panhandle residents – including Bay and Walton Counties – Path of Grace is open to women from anywhere if their situation matches the program services, Anderson said. "We've even had a person from Philadelphia go through," she said. Residents have ranged in age from eighteen (the minimum) to sixty.

Some participants have been referred to the program by the courts, while others have contacted Path of Grace directly seeking admission after learning about it from friends or family members, Anderson said.

All participants work at one of the Thrift Stores. Although they are not in salaried jobs, the residents receive monetary stipends to cover personal expenses. And upon successful completion, each graduate receives an \$8,100 check to begin the next phase of their life, she said.

Mansfield said he and his co-workers have been amazed at the program's success thus far. "It's so beautiful and rewarding to witness women going from down and out, in the gutter, with no self-esteem, to victorious and successful in every aspect of their lives," he said.

In addition to welcoming donations of furniture, clothing and household goods, Path of Grace as a nonprofit under IRS Section 501(c)3, welcomes direct financial donations, Anderson said. The store is also willing to pick up bulky or heavy objects like furniture at the donor's residence. Call (850) 654-8500 for furniture pickup.

For further information about the Path of Grace recovery program, or to make contributions to the program, contact Managing Director Eddie Mansfield at (850) 974-4573 or email recoverypathofgrace@gmail.com. Reach Assistant Managing Director Brandee Anderson at (850) 598-5542 or email brandee.pathofgrace@gmail.com.



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Forward DeFuniak, Inc. to Host 4th Annual Sprint Triathlon

The Sprint Triathlon, sponsored by Forward DeFuniak, Inc., will be held on May 4, 2024, from 6:30 to 11:30 a.m. in DeFuniak Springs. If you'd like to race, see dfstriathlon.com or runsignup.com for registration information. The swim and bike courses are the same as in 2023. The route for the 5K has been changed slightly. Registration will be capped at 200 this year.

Taylor Lathinghouse, Race Coordinator, reported that the race sign-up website shows 101 registrants with 4 weeks remaining for registration. This is a testament to the hard work of the board and all the volunteers and sponsors who helped to showcase our city in 2023.

Nadine Bacon, Event Coordinator, has details well in hand for 2024. Contestants have remarked that it was one of the best-organized events in their experience and that they never felt safer at a race. Our police, sheriff and emergency management agencies made a fabulous impression. The goal is to match or exceed all expectations for 2024.

A Walton County Tourism Development Committee grant has been received to cover some of the expenses. In addition, business sponsorships, to date include Triangle Chevrolet; Clark Partington Attorneys; Amy Heavlin, CPA; DeFuniak Landmarks with UWF Historic Trust; PlayTri, FWB; Aqua Techs; Tech Planet; and Clary-Glen Funeral Home. Last Stop Beer Vault



will host a

SPRINT TRIATHLON



in DeFuniak Springs, Florida
May 4, 2024 from 7 – 11 am

NEEDED:
Participants - See runsignup.com or dfstriathlon.com,
Sponsors - Contact mendych@aol.com

and Domino's Pizza are hosting an "after" party for the racers.

Proceeds in 2023 allowed small grants to be made to 10 local nonprofit organizations. Come as a spectator (bring a lawn chair and stay at a local bed and breakfast or hotel) and be amazed, not only with the race but with the surroundings. For more information, call (850) 830-7663. DeFuniak Springs is a small historic town, but great things are accomplished here!

Chillin' for Canines

A Wellness Day for Humans Benefits Dog-Harmony on May 7 at Ain't Life Cool

Ain't Life Cool, a cryotherapy and wellness center, is hosting Chillin' with Canines benefiting Dog-Harmony on Tuesday, May 7 at 8955 US-98, Suite 104 in Miramar Beach. 100% of the proceeds from clients visiting the center that day will be donated to Dog-Harmony, a 501(c)3 dedicated to enriching the lives of humans and their canine companions through community education and therapy dog programs.

Ain't Life Cool offers holistic therapies on a walk-in basis, including cryotherapy utilizing the most advanced technology avail-

able, red light therapy, compression therapy, and Himalayan salt aromatherapy. These targeted or whole-body therapies can help reduce inflammation and swelling, promote healing, and diminish pain.

Owner, Sam Vickroy, says the market for these therapies is not just limited to athletes. "Pain can be caused by anything, not just injuries. People recovering from opioid use disorder may also benefit from red light therapy and cryotherapy, for instance, or utilize localized or whole body cryotherapy as an alternative to opioids for pain management."

CANINES
continued on page 8

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Community

The Links Golf Club – A Miramar Beach Gem



cured fairways. With meticulous attention to detail and a commitment to providing a fantastic experience, it's no wonder that golfers flock to this course time and time again.

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The par 72 championship course at The Links stretches over 6,710 yards with slope ratings that range between 121 and 138. A mixture of course elevations and cleverly positioned hazards ensure that each round is a true test of strategy and skill. With four sets of tees, you will be challenged at all skill levels and delighted as you make shots in a sun-kissed golfers' paradise.

The Creative Mastermind

Designed by the renowned golf course architect Tom Jackson, The Links Golf Club showcases his signature style. This spectacular course weaves through sand dunes, rolling terrain, and native flora to create a golfing experience like no other. Accuracy and proper club selection are essential, making it a

true shot-maker's golf course.

Unique Challenges and Features

This masterpiece of a course is distinguished by its elevated greens, strategically placed bunkers, and risk-reward doglegs. These features encourage players to think critically about shot selection, making the course a stimulating and engaging playground.

A Welcoming Clubhouse

The spacious and inviting clubhouse provides top-notch amenities for post-round relaxation, including a pro shop, comfortable locker rooms, and a welcoming lounge area. Golfers can recount their experiences, discuss strategy, or simply unwind in this well-appointed space.

Delectable Dining Options

Tantalizing dining options await at The Links' onsite restaurants, which offer an assortment of delicious dishes and refreshing beverages. With a menu designed to cater to a variety of tastes,

golfers can look forward to a satisfying meal after a day on the course. See our Dining Guide for options like Beachfront Restaurants with sunset views and lovely places to relax and discuss your day on The Links.

Conclusion: A Remarkable Course Experience and Location

With its dazzling combination of a remarkable location, challenging yet enjoyable gameplay, and top-tier amenities, the Links Golf Club has truly earned its high praise as a gem along Highway 30A. **Unwavering dedication to excellence shines through every aspect of the club, making it a must-visit destination for golfers seeking the ultimate Emerald Coast experience.** Visit: www.sandestinlinks.com for more information.


Whether you're a seasoned golfer or just starting out, our **Golfers Paradise Guide** is your go-to resource for all the scenic golf course information you need to make the most of your golfing experience while visiting **The Emerald Coast and 30A.**

Nestled in the picturesque town of Miramar Beach on the shores of Choctawhatchee Bay, The Links Golf Club boasts a prime location at 158 Sandestin Blvd N, Miramar Beach, FL, just west of Highway 30A. It's a golfing gem with views that are hard to beat. Part of Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort, The Links

Golf Club offers visitors easy access to scenic shorelines and the vibrant local community, promising an unforgettable golf experience for all who visit.

A Highly Acclaimed Course


Players love The Links for its challenging yet enjoyable layout, pristine greens, and well-mani-



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Pairing and Sharing Wine Dinner Set for May 2nd

at Churchill Oaks to Benefit Caring and Sharing of South Walton



food, financial assistance, counseling, case management, and access to other local resources.

Tickets are \$250 per guest and available at caringandsharingsowal.org.

Pairing and Sharing is graciously made possible by The Gergel Foundation, Centennial Bank, Dry Farm Wines, and Swiftly Catered. Those interested in additional sponsorships for this event or ways to support Caring and Sharing, can visit the Caring & Sharing website www.caringandsharingsowal.org or contact carly@caringandsharingsowal.org.

of it,” says Dry Farms Wine founder Todd White. “So it was only natural to start a company that curated pure Natural Wines and then ship them directly to people who care about the way their wine is made, what they put in their bodies, and how their wine tastes. Six years later, our family business, Dry Farm Wines, continues to discover the world’s best and rarest wines and ship them right to the customer.”

All proceeds from the Pairing and Sharing Wine Dinner will help provide Walton County neighbors in need with access to



Sip, savor and share a glass among friends at the Second Annual Pairing and Sharing Wine Dinner at Churchill Oaks on Thursday, May 2 at 6 p.m. Proceeds from this event will directly benefit Caring & Sharing of Walton County.

Guests will begin the evening with cocktails, conversation, and

passed hors d'oeuvres followed by a four-course dinner from Swiftly Catered paired with Dry Farm Wines. A silent auction will be available throughout the evening for guests to bid on exclusive items.

“I started giving the wine that I sourced to my friends and family, and they couldn’t get enough

CANINES

continued from page 7

Vickroy’s love of all animals dates back to his college days when he rescued two kittens, one only days old. The two cats spent their lifetimes with Vickroy, who transitioned from a college stu-

dent to a tennis professional at Tops’l Beach & Racquet Resort. Today, Vickroy’s dog, Bella, is a regular fixture that provides her own specialized therapy services for clients at Ain’t Life Cool.

To participate in Chillin’ for Canines and support Dog-Har-

mony, visit Ain’t Life Cool in Miramar Beach on May 7 and select a variety of therapies, available to the public on a walk-in basis, to reduce pain and promote rejuvenation. Participants can also enjoy complimentary refreshments in between services.

Community

Celebrate Earth Day with 2nd Annual Event in Padgett Park

You are invited to come out on Saturday, April 20 from 12-3 p.m. to celebrate the second Annual Earth Day Town Hall event in Padgett Park at 810 JD Miller

Road, Santa Rosa Beach. This year the event is even bigger, with many more activities planned for children, and demos, displays and talks about how to protect our environ-

ment and Communities.

This year's Earth Day theme is Planet versus Plastics, and we will have many ways for you to minimize or eliminate single-use plastics.

Our featured speaker is Michael Beedie, Senior Manager of Government Affairs for Waste Management, with news about their new state-of-the-art single stream Recycling Facility opening soon in Fort Walton Beach. This facility will be able to process recycling across our region. We are excited to host their announcement of curbside recycling in Walton County!

We are partnering again with our friends at Cultivate Community Gardens. They will have the Garden open for tours and will provide information about the Community Garden at Padgett Park. Also, the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Coalition will return with their interactive display about protecting our Bay and Outstanding Florida Waters.

This year we are being joined by the Choctawhatchee Audubon Society. They have some exciting interactive displays planned for adults and children that will allow bird identification by sight and sound.

Also new this year, the Walton County Library "Words on Wheels" Bookmobile will be on site. In addition to checking out their books, there will be make-and-take projects around the theme of Earth Day.

We are excited to hear presentations from the Master Gardeners on Florida-Friendly Landscapes and learn tips about what gardeners can do to deal with our area's soil composition.

There will be demos about re-

ducing food and packaging waste, including recipes and reuseable products. And we are happy to announce that because of generous donations from Fresh Market, WalMart, Whole Foods and Lowe's, we will give away reuseable shopping bags to everyone who attends the event. Throughout the event there will be other cool give-aways like seedlings, reuseable stainless straws, a beautiful hand quilted table runner, and more.

The Second Annual Earth Day Town Hall is hosted by the Democratic Environmental Caucus of Walton County. Our focus has been on recycling, partnering with Walton County Solid Waste Department at Amnesty Day and creating a Recycling Flyer with locations to recycle items like glass, light bulbs and rechargeable batteries. You can download a copy here: <https://bit.ly/RecycleWalton>

Our next project is to work on passing a tree ordinance in Walton County. If you want to join these efforts, but are unable to attend the event, please send an email to: WaltonEnvironmentlists@gmail.com.

Co-hosting with us this year is the Walton County Democratic Women's Club. They have a tradition of working to protect our environment and beaches, and sharing information that connects interested parties. You can find updates about Environmentally friendly events at their website: <https://waltoncountydwc.org/environmental-news>



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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!

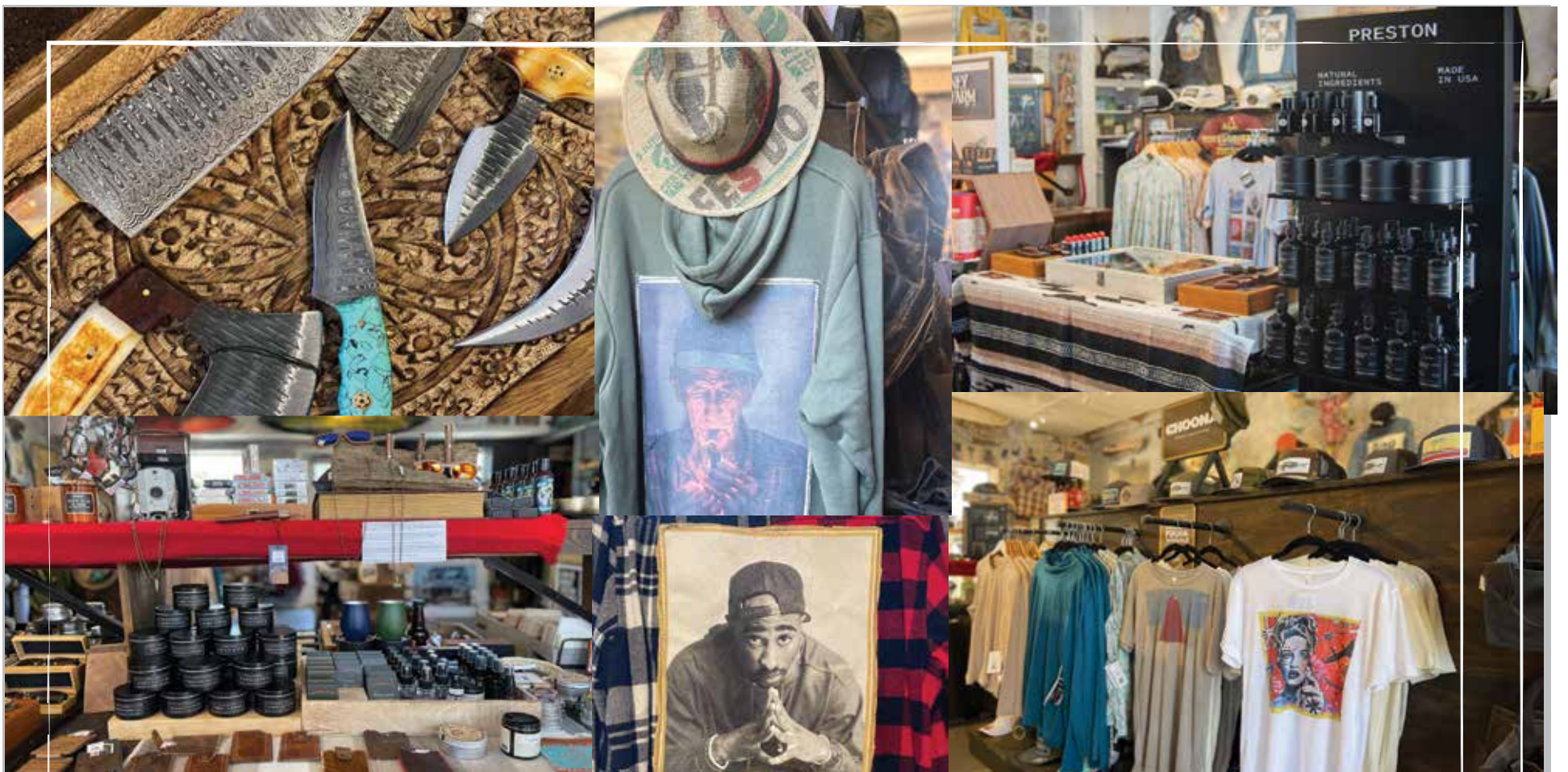
Captured Clothing has custom apparel and curated goods from all over the globe.

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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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Deadline for Green Thumb Garden Club Scholarship Applications is Approaching in April

By KATHLEEN EDGE, PUBLICITY & WEBSITE CHAIR

Green Thumb Garden Club has increased their 2024 Mercer Scholarship amount to \$4,000. The application form must be submitted no later than April 30, 2024, and additional information can be found on the Club's website, www.greenthumbgardenclubinc.org. Potential scholar-

ship recipients must be currently enrolled or accepted by a college, university, or technical school with a major in horticulture, floriculture, or a related field of study. Tuition will be paid directly to the student's school.

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

Wednesday, April 17, 9:30

a.m. In association with Earth Day, GTGC is "Going Green". Master Gardener, Bill Kuentler, 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. At the second annual "Petals, Pearls, and Prosecco", you can join your Green Thumb friends for the presentation of Scholarship Awards and Landscape Awards. 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 September 2024. The GTGC website www.greenthumbgardenclubinc.org contains the details about joining GTGC, meetings, activities, and events. Please visit the website or email greenthumbgardenclubinc@gmail.com.

Seagrove Garden Club Honors Grayton Institution

Seagrove Garden Club members Linda Romano, Marie Spafford and Tracy Bielamowicz hosted Flower Wave, a spontaneous public flower give-away, at Hibiscus Guesthouse in Grayton Beach in late February to help celebrate the 30th anniversary of the bed and breakfast. Hibiscus' original guest house once

belonged to the family of longtime garden club member Rose Rogers. In addition to repurposing donated flowers weekly into arrangements that brighten faces at a local hospital and assisted-living centers in Santa Rosa Beach, club members also share free flowers with passersby when they can.

School Districts Join Program to Integrate Produce into Cafeterias

Local school districts including Walton County School District, Liberty County Schools and Washington County School District will join 10 other schools across Florida in a pilot program that will integrate local produce into school cafeterias.

This is due to a 6.5 million dollar grant the Florida School Nutrition Association (FSNA)

just received from the USDA and FDACS.

The grant is aimed to further enhance the state's farm-to-school initiative to:

- Integrate local produce into public schools' meal programs
- Reduce barriers for local farmers to engage in schools' procurement process
- Develop stronger relationships

between the education and agriculture industry

- Diversify food sourcing channels
- Promote economic growth for small businesses and Florida farmers

If interested in learning more about this program and how it impacts local school districts please reach out to Lora Gilbert at loramsrd@gmail.com.



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Community

Yellow Fly Season! Are You Ready?

BY BERNADETTE CANUT, PUBLIC OUTREACH COORDINATOR AND AMY ANGUIANO, FIELD BIOLOGIST

If Florida mosquitoes weren't bad enough, yellow flies are here to steal their thunder.

These devilish insects will begin to arrive around mid-April and normally stick around for six weeks. They are quiet flyers and are hard to hear approaching. Once the female yellow fly decides you are the perfect meal,

she will gently land on you, and I am sure we are all very aware of what happens next. The female yellow fly is known as a fierce biter, and she will begin feeding on your blood by using her saw-like mouthparts to cut through the skin. I know it sounds horrible but just wait... there's more! Once the cut is made, she will begin to lacerate the skin with her two pairs of cutting "blades". This will allow the blood to flow out of the painful bite where she will then begin to "drink it up" with her sponge-like mouthparts. When this process is complete, the victim is left with a VERY painful welt which can take days and, worst case, weeks to go away.




You might be asking yourselves at this point, "Where are the male yellow flies?" Great question! The males are non-biters and keep busy as pollinators and nectar feeders. So surprisingly, male yellow flies help us out with their pollinating abilities.

Yellow flies are most active on cloudy days or in wet,

shaded areas near the edge of tree lines and avoid bright sunny, open areas unless they are extremely hungry. If you cannot avoid going outside, the best way to prevent bites is to stay covered. They are attracted to dark materials, so it is best to dress in bright clothing. Applying insect repellent containing DEET has had the best results.


Unfortunately, there does not seem to be an effective method to control populations, especially the larvae. Yellow fly kits can be used to reduce their presence in small areas or at least distract them from you but will not eliminate them. Beginning April 1, 2024, Yellow fly kits will be available only to South Walton Residents, (East County Line to West County Line and South of the Bay). One kit for your primary residence will be given out and proof of residency must be provided. You can find more information regarding the rules and times of distribution on our website at www.southwaltonmosquitocontrol.com.

Believe it or not, there is some good news when it comes to yellow flies! They do eventually disappear, and we can then turn our attention back to our dislike of mosquitoes!




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Insights for Investors: Financial News for the First Quarter

BY MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

The first quarter of 2024 is already behind us, and the markets have had some interesting results. The S&P 500 as of this writing was up over 10%; the Dow is up over 5%. Bonds, based upon the bellwether 10-year U.S. Treasury have declined in price (which means they increased in yield) by about 2.5%. The stock market is made up of 11 sectors and every sector was positive except for real estate (which is mainly real estate investment trusts and real estate firms). Communication Services was the leader, with an almost 16% return (examples of stocks in that sector are Google, Facebook, Netflix, Disney, the phone companies such as AT&T, Verizon and T Mobile among others). Technology, Industrials, Energy and Financials all had double digit returns for the quarter as well.

Oil prices were up over 13% and gold was up over 5%. The U.S. dollar, to the amazement of many was up over 2% after having a similar return for all of 2023. Japan was the leading international market with a re-

turn of over 11% year to date. A stronger dollar tends to work against international equities, but such was not the case for many international markets, Japan in particular.

Mortgage rates averaged close to 7% which is interesting because despite the perception that mortgage rates are quite high, that is less than the average rate for the past 50 years. Rates did reach an all-time low in the early 2020s. So, many homebuyers understandably have that concern. There has been so much liquidity (money available) for the past few years that it increased demand and thus prices substantially. The demand for housing, particularly first-time homebuyers continue to grow, and an outstanding question is if the current rate of construction is meeting the demand.

What about interest rates, particularly where the Federal Reserve is concerned? The Fed has held its short term (overnight rate) to 5.25-5.50% although pointed out in its March meeting that they foresee up to three rate cuts in 2024. Short term rates (one year or less CDs, money market mutual funds) continue to pay approximately 5%. By contrast the 10-year US Treasury pays approximately 4.25%. The longest-term U.S. Treasury pays approximately the same. The question on many minds is how long will the low

to no risk rate be in favor? Enter the Federal Reserve dot plot, or where rates are expected to be and by when. Currently the dot plot puts the overnight rate at 4.5 to 4.75% by year end. It is much harder to ascertain what long term rates will do so watching the 10-year US Treasury (which many banks use to price mortgages and other loans) makes most sense to us. There is a lot in the financial media regarding the longer-term dot plot, perhaps as low as 3.5% by 2025 as noted on Bloomberg Wall Street Week this past week.

When the market has a strong return, particularly over an increasing period, many people begin to think about valuations. In other words, is the market getting more expensive relative to earnings. That seems to be the case as the price of stocks to earnings is near an all-time high. Earnings have been growing year over with the S&P averaging close to 12%. Its 10-year average earnings growth rate has been about 8.4%. Stocks typically follow earnings. What might be fueling that? There are several things: Innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), the growth in energy demand, productivity gains, efficiency gains, a strong dollar and finally, the rate of inflation continued to decrease.

A few key points for investors bear repeating: Timing the market is next to impossible. They

don't ring a bell at the top and they don't ring a bell at the bottom. FOMO, or fear of missing out can consume anyone but it is not an emotion that serves investors. Know what you own, why you own it, where you own it and for how long do you need or want to own it. Asset allocation should be based upon the three keys of investment objection, risk tolerance and time frame.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA), commonly known as "The Dow," is an index representing 30 stocks of companies maintained and reviewed by the editors of the Wall Street Journal. The S&P 500 is an unmanaged index of 500 widely held stocks that is generally considered representative of the U.S. stock market. U.S. government bonds and treasury bills are guaranteed by the U.S. government and, if held to maturity, offer a fixed rate of return and guaranteed principal value. U.S. government bonds are issued and guaranteed as to the timely payment of principal and interest by the federal government. Investing in oil

involves special risks, including the potential adverse effects of state and federal regulation and may not be suitable for all investors. International investing involves special risks, including currency fluctuations, differing financial accounting standards, and possible political and economic volatility.

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ECAR Celebrates NAR® RPAC Hall of Fame Inductees

The National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) is honoring three Emerald Coast Association of REALTORS® (ECAR) past Presidents with membership in the 2023 REALTOR® Party (RPAC) Hall of Fame. Past ECAR Presidents Robert "Bob" Hudgens (2001), Mary Anne Windes (2010) and Cathy Alley (2016) will be inducted into the NAR 2023 RPAC Hall of Fame at the REALTORS® Legislative Meetings in Washington D.C. this May. The RPAC Hall of Fame recognizes dedicated members who have made a significant commitment to RPAC over the years by in-

vesting an aggregate lifetime amount of at least \$25,000. Among the Hall of Fame benefits are name plaques on the RPAC Hall of Fame wall located on NAR's Washington, D.C. building rooftop. "Cathy, Mary Anne, and Bob's unwavering commitment to RPAC underscores the vital role REALTORS® play in shaping policies that safeguard property interests and promote thriving communities," commented 2024 ECAR President Keith Wood. He continued, "This honor is a testament to their dedication and service to our industry and the communities we serve." RPAC is a volun-

tary political action committee whose membership consists of REALTORS® interested in actively and effectively protecting the real estate industry and the dream of homeownership by participating in government affairs at the local, state and federal levels. RPAC advances public policies and candidates that build strong communities, protect property interests, and promote a vibrant business environment—the only political action committee in the country that is organized by REALTORS® to promote and protect the dream of homeownership in America.



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Community

Walton County Talks About Advancing Resilience Efforts

BY KIMBERLY STANLEY, SEASIDE INSTITUTE™

Seaside Institute™ recently sponsored a pivotal resilience workshop in DeFuniak Springs, led by The Water Institute from New Orleans, Louisiana. This series of discussions focused on how to advance resilience efforts in Walton County. It also shed light on crucial strategies to fortify inland and coastal regions against threats posed by climate change, hurricanes, flash flooding, and other natural disasters.

The strength of a community lies in its ability to come together in times of crisis. Neighbor helping neighbor, volunteers step-

ping up, and local organizations mobilizing resources. All these actions form the backbone of effective disaster response. The resilience of a community is often measured by its capacity to withstand shocks, adapt, and recover swiftly.

Walton County encompasses almost 140,000 square miles. It includes forests, lakes, coastal dunes, creeks, bays, and miles of Gulf of Mexico shoreline. The county faces risks due to rising sea levels, intensifying storms, ecological problems, and other natural disasters. For communities in the county to thrive, the need for disaster preparedness is



Photo Credit: Jonathon Melville

of great importance. By bringing together stakeholders throughout both North and South Walton, the work-

shop facilitated a comprehensive dialogue on resilience strategies tailored to our county's unique challenges. One key takeaway from the discussion is the importance of approaches to encompass all parts of the county. Emphasis was placed on ecosystem restoration, land use planning, mitigation strategies, and community engagement. By integrating solutions such as stronger disaster preparedness, dune restoration, flood mitigation, and wetland preservation, the county can bolster its defenses while preserving its natural beauty.

The resilience workshop also highlighted the interconnectedness of communities. As changes in the local environment have no borders, collaboration among citizens throughout the county is imperative. The citizens of Walton County play a vital role in not only responding to crises, but also in fostering long-term adaptation and growth in whatever the future may bring. From providing immediate aid after a storm to implementing sustainable practices for a better future, the collective efforts of all citizens are indispensable.

Stakeholders felt the outcome of this workshop was beneficial and provided insight into how the county can move forward in a positive way. SEASIDE Institute™ aims to inspire livable communities and help facilitate discussions that lead to stronger bonds between all sectors of a community's population. To learn more about the Institute's mission or inquire about becoming a member, visit our website at seasideinstitute.org.

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Our Ad & Editorial Deadline is the 20th of each month for the following month's issue.

Cousin Curtiss To Headline "Dine + Dive" Fundraiser For Underwater Museum Of Art

May 1st Event Is Official Kickoff For Art Month Walton County

The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA) is excited to announce 30A Songwriters Festival favorite Cousin Curtiss will headline the "Dine + Dive" fundraiser for the Underwater Museum of Art. The event will take place on Wednesday, May 1, 6-9 p.m., in Grand Boulevard's Town Center and is the official kick-off party for Art Month Walton County, a month-long celebration of the Arts that includes many diverse cultural events throughout the month of May.



and now partnered up with the equally enigmatic and soulfully driven electric guitar prowess of Harrison B, these two road warriors are on a mission to electrify audiences everywhere with their two-man full-band sound. Think, "blues at bluegrass speeds." Imagine, "rock americana with a soulful drip." Experience rapid-fire acoustic guitar, incendiary harmonica, fiercely energized solos, all driven by a



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MUSEUM OF
ART

Mouth Restaurant Group. A few event and sculpture sponsorships are still available, and those interested can contact Gabby Callaway at Gabby@culturalartsalliance.com for more details.

Funds raised from "Dine + Dive" ticket sales

The CAA and South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA) are pleased to expand the former "Under the Sea" event to an immersive fusion of fine art, food, wine, and marine conservation igniting all of the senses featuring scores of incredible wines to sample, more than a

dozen restaurant tasting stations with special food menu items from some of South Walton's most popular restaurants and celebrated Chefs, along with a cash bar offering signature cocktails and beer.

Event headliner Cousin Curtiss brings to the stage a fiery dynamic rarely seen by a solo act

thunderous kick drum.

In addition to continuous live music, "Dine + Dive" partygoers will have an opportunity to meet UMA artists from current and previous installations as well as receive an exclusive preview of several of the original works created for the 2024 installation before the sculptures

are deployed to the UMA site over the summer. Tickets for this awe-inspiring experience are on sale now at CulturalArtsAlliance.com/upcoming-events for \$100 per person in advance and \$125 per person day of the event, if available.

The "Dine + Dive" event is produced by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County with support from Visit South Walton, Grand Boulevard Town Center, SWARA, and Word of

and sponsorships will benefit the sixth deployment of sculptures into the Underwater Museum of Art (UMA), a collaborative project with the South Walton Artificial Reef Association (SWARA) and the nation's first permanent dedicated sculpture museum, recognized as one of TIME magazine's 2018 100 World's Greatest Places as well as one of National Geographic's Best Trips 2019 and a 2023 CODA Award winner.

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Seacoast Collegiate High School Student to Attend World-Renowned Interlochen Arts Camp

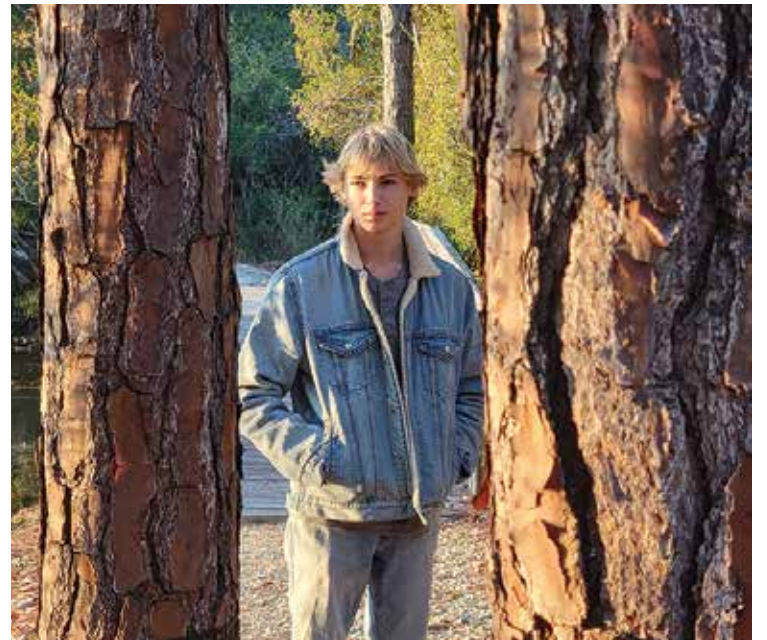
Keyboardist Solomon Miller will join students from around the globe, acclaimed faculty, and celebrated guest artists on Interlochen's scenic northern Michigan campus for a summer of artistic transformation.

Solomon Miller, 15, of Santa Rosa Beach will attend Interlochen Arts Camp, the nation's premier summer arts program for aspiring artists in grades 3-12, this summer. Solomon, the

son of Adam and Tracy Miller, will study keyboards as part of the Popular Music Performance camp at Interlochen.

Solomon is a freshman at Seacoast Collegiate High School and has been playing the piano for the past 2 years. He loved playing keyboard for the band program at the Seaside Neighborhood School and is currently part of the Jazz Ensemble at

South Walton High School. Solomon has been lucky to be instructed by local musicians Max McCann and Cam Ray and loves jamming anytime he gets an opportunity. His first original single, "Just Ignore It," will be released on Spotify on April 17. Music is his true passion and Solomon is looking forward to attending Interlochen this summer.



Artistic students ages 8-18 from around the world convene at Interlochen to expand their capacity in music, theatre, dance, creative writing, visual arts, interdisciplinary arts, and film. Through daily classes and frequent performance opportunities, Interlochen students explore the full breadth of the arts, pursue creative breakthroughs, and forge lifelong cross-cultural friendships. Immersed in a multidisciplinary artistic environment, young creatives find reflection, rejuvenation, and inspiration on Interlochen's pristine, 1,200-acre wooded campus.

alumni community encompasses creative leaders in the arts and many other fields, including singers Norah Jones, Josh Groban, and Rufus Wainwright; Martha Graham Dance Company Artistic Director Janet Eilber; painter Laura Owens; New York Times theatre critic Jesse Green; Google co-founder Larry Page; Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver; Olympic ice dancer Naomi Lang Strong; actor Anthony Rapp; and cartoonist Cathy Guisewite, among many others. Approximately 13% of the nation's professional orchestra musicians have roots at Interlochen, and alumni of Interlochen's programs have been awarded more than 140 Grammy Awards.

"We are excited to welcome students to the 97th season of Interlochen Arts Camp," said Trey Devey, President of Interlochen Center for the Arts. "It is truly thrilling to witness the remarkable growth that takes place at Interlochen as students discover their potential, take their talent to the next level, and share what they've learned with their family and friends."

Founded in 1928, Interlochen Arts Camp has been at the forefront of arts education for nearly a century. The Camp's global

In addition to hundreds of performances and presentations by young artists, Interlochen brings leading artists to its northern Michigan campus each summer as part of the Interlochen Arts Festival. Recent guests include Reba McEntire, Diana Ross, Chick Corea, The Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Lady Antebellum, Harry Connick Jr., and many more.

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ECTC Summer Camp Registration is Open

Emerald Coast Theatre Company (ECTC) is offering many summer camp options for children this summer. Dance, sing, act or be behind the scenes in one (or more) of these fantastic summer camps. Many are being held at ECTC in Grand Boulevard in Miramar Beach, but there are a few options in Seaside, Panama City and Defuniak Springs. Payment plans are always available. More information on the camps and registration is available at emeraldcoasttheatre.org/summer-camps.

The Mini Player Camps (Ages 5 - 7, rising Kindergarteners) are designed specifically for the youngest performers. These one-week camps are held Monday-Friday (with the exception of the Disney Dreams Camp which is Tuesday-Friday) from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. with a final performance on the last day of camp. Tuition is \$250. Mini Player Camps are held at ECTC in Grand boulevard.

May 28 - May 31 - Disney Dreams

June 3-7 - Treasure Island

June 10-14 - Trolls

June 17-21 - Aladdin's Lamp

June 24 - 28 - Cinderella's Slipper

There are four Summer Camps at ECTC in Grand Boulevard for 2nd - 5th graders. Tuition varies depending on camp. Payment plans are always available.

Camp Showtime: Disney Dreams

Let the rhythm get you! Come act, sing, and dance your heart out to popular Broadway Disney show tunes as we learn simple choreography to some of the most popular musical numbers ever recorded. Parents, this is the perfect camp for your first time performer!

Tuition \$325

MAY 28-31 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Treasure Island - Non Musical

This is a great opportunity for young performers to learn stage directions, the language of the theatre, and how to work together to bring a story to life! There will be treasure maps, gold, plunder, and plenty of mischief! Jim, Long John Silver, and a colorful cast of pirates set sail this summer! Will you join their crew?!

Monday-Friday with final performance on the last Friday of camp at 2 PM.

Tuition \$375

JUNE 3-7 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Camp Showtime: Rock and Pop!

Come act, sing, and dance your heart out to popular rock and pop songs as we learn simple choreography as an ensemble. We'll also play theatre games and work on our improv skills!

Monday-Friday; Tuition \$375

JUNE 10-14 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The Little Mermaid (two week camp)

Join us for this classic underwater adventure featuring all the characters you know and love—Ariel, Flounder, Sebastian and more! Everyone gets to sing, dance!

Monday-Friday for two weeks (skipping Saturday and Sunday) with final performance on the last Friday of camp.

Tuition \$675

JUNE 17-28 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The Final Performances will be held at ECTC - Friday, June 28 at 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.

There are five summer camp options for middle and high schoolers (Grades 6th - 12th) at ECTC in Grand Boulevard. Tuition varies depending on camp. Payment plans are always available.

Camp Broadway: Beetlejuice, Hamilton, & Hadestown

Sing, dance, and act the songs and scenes that are hot on Broadway right now! Come ready to move as you learn choreography. Join in group numbers or step up and take a solo. Camp ends in a sensational showcase for parents!

Tuesday-Friday; Tuition \$325

MAY 28-31 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Comedy Camp: Sketch, Stand-up, and Improv

We're going to fill our time with sketch comedy scenes, stand-up comedy sets, and good ol' improv games. It's going to be abstract. It's going to be absurd. Some might go so far as to say... It's going to be funny! Bring your talent, sharpen those comedy skills, and show off in our showcase on the final day of camp!

Monday-Friday; Tuition

\$375

JUNE 3-7 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The (One Act) Play that Goes Wrong



It's been called one of the funniest shows on Broadway—a true laugh a minute production! Come be a part of the Cornely Drama Society's unforgettable rendition of The Murder at Haversham Manor. What could possibly go wrong?!

Monday-Friday for two weeks (skipping Saturday and Sunday) with final performance on the last Friday of camp.

Tuition \$675

JUNE 10-22 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The Final Performances will be held at ECTC - Friday, June 21 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, June 22 at 7 p.m.

Combat Camp: The Art of Stage Combat

Throw a punch! Throw a

bottle! Swashbuckle and sword fight! But—safely! There is an art to stage combat. How do actors make fights look believable onstage? The secret is all in the choreography! Come learn those skills that will help to make you an efficient and marketable actor, and have no fear for physicality. Onstage it's always: Safety first!

Monday-Friday; Tuition \$375 (payment plans available)

JUNE 24-28 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

There is one summer camp option exclusively for Grades 8th - 12th. Tuition varies depending on camp. Payment plans are always available.

High School Musical! Musical Theatre Intensive

(Grades 6th - 12th)

This three week camp will stretch your students' theatre skills and grow them as performers. Get the full Musical Theatre Experience with this Intensive. We'll work on our acting, voice, makeup, and dance in the compact structure and schedule of the professionals. Students will also have the opportunity to work with some of ECTC's theatre professionals! This camp is offered July 8 - 28, Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at ECTC. Tuition is \$1,125 (payment plans available)

The Final Performances will be Friday, July 26 at 7 p.m., Saturday, July 27 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, July 28 at 2 p.m.

ON STAGE
APRIL 4TH - 7TH

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ON STAGE
MAY 3RD - 19TH

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Community

Upcoming Festivals and Celebrations on Tap!

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

Sandestin Wine Festival takes place every April in South Walton, Florida. The event is the most established and continuously running wine festival on the Gulf coast and known as the "Kentucky Derby of Wine Festivals."

Always a picture perfect event complete with white tents, grand wine tastings, culinary experiences and live music.

Tickets, schedule and more information: www.sandestinwinefestival.com.

Celebrate Walton County's Bicentennial at North Beach Social April 21

The 200th Anniversary Jubilee, an all-day party features live music, face painting, a low country boil and paella, and good times. Spend the day with friends and family on the bayside with cold drinks, delicious eats and live entertainment. Learn more at northbeach.social.

The Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction Returns April 26-28

Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation (DCWAF) will present the 19th Annual Destin Charity Wine Auction April 26-28 to benefit children in need in Northwest Florida through the Foundation's 17 partner children's charities. In 2023, DCWAF donated \$3.4 million to charity following one of its most successful auctions to date.

This year's auction will feature an impressive line-up of celebrity chefs and vintners from throughout the world, hosted by philanthropic couples within the local community.

Patrons attending the Destin Charity Wine Auction presented by the Jumonville Family can expect a weekend filled with exclusive wines and excellent food from a variety of celebrity chefs beginning Friday, April 26 with the patron dinner experience. Each dinner features a nationally recognized chef paired with world-class vintners.

The Destin Charity Wine Auction is the main event of the weekend at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 27 held under an air-conditioned tent at Grand Boulevard Sandestin Town Center and will feature distinctive wines from internationally acclaimed vintners poured and paired with cuisine curated by a selection of the area's top restaurants. The event culminates with a high-energy, live auction boasting rare and distinctive wines, spectacular trips and other incredible one-of-a-kind items.

Hosted in conjunction with the South Walton Beaches Wine and Food Festival in Grand Boulevard

Sandestin Town Center the same weekend, the Festival will showcase hundreds of premium wines along with a diverse selection of spirits and culinary creations. Auction attendees also have access to South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival's Grand Tasting on Sunday, April 30 at 1 p.m. For sponsorship: info@dcwaf.org, Patron packages: dcwaf.org/tickets.

ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival! May 4-5

In its 36th year, ArtsQuest Fine Arts Festival will be held May 4th-5th! Produced by the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County and presented by Grand Boulevard Town Center, ArtsQuest provides an opportunity to view and purchase original art from over 100 artists from throughout the country. ArtsQuest is a juried show that includes artists in the categories of Ceramics, Fiber, Glass, Jewelry, Metal, Mixed Media, Oils & Acrylics, Original Digital Art, Photography, Sculpture, Wood and Works on Paper (Watercolor, Printmaking, Pastels, Pencils, Ink). ArtsQuest awards \$10,000 in cash prizes. The rain or shine event also features live performances,

artist demonstrations, hands-on learning opportunities, student exhibits, ImagiNation: where kids rule, food, beverages and more! Join us in the Town Center of Grand Boulevard, from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 4th and again on Sunday, May 5th, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. A \$5 donation will be accepted at the entrance gate.

11th Annual Tequila & Taco Fest May 10-12

Get ready to indulge in the ultimate fiesta experience as the 11th Annual Tequila & Taco Fest returns for another unforgettable celebration of Tequila Love! Established as the second longest running Tequila & Taco Fest in the U.S., Tequila & Taco Fest promises an unparalleled culinary adventure coupled with live music, family-friendly activities and thrilling competitions. Spanning across three exciting days from May 10-12, Tequila & Taco Fest offers a diverse array of attractions to delight attendees of all ages.

Don't miss out on the 11th Annual Tequila & Taco Fest,

EVENTS

continued to page 21



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La Luna Children's Boutique Hosts Second Annual Mommy and Me Picnic to Benefit Caring and Sharing of South Walton

La Luna Children's Boutique will host their second annual Mommy and Me Picnic on April 14 from 2-4 p.m. at Grand Bou-



levard's Grand Park. This special afternoon picnic for mothers and their children will benefit a worthy cause with all proceeds benefiting Caring and Sharing of South Walton.

"Caring and Sharing is thrilled to be a part of this sweet event again in its second year," says Carly Barnes, Executive Director, Caring and Sharing of South Walton. "With the support of generous local businesses and organizations like La Luna Children's Boutique, we can keep up with the growing needs of our community."



Mothers and their children will enjoy a delightful afternoon with a picnic experience curated by Salty Girls Beach Setups featuring: Light picnic fare by Let's Say Graze, sweet treats, complimentary Sparkling Rosé for mommies by Good Clean Wine, live music by Mari Gleason, face painting, and an art & crafts activity by Estelle Studio

Gallery. Jenny Kayne Photog-

raphy will offer Mommy & Me photo ops to capture memories from the day. A special thank you to our event sponsors Watersound Closings & Escrow, Beau Interiors, and Blush Beauty Lounge.

Guests are encouraged to call La Luna Boutique to schedule a special appointment for their "mommy and me" attire at (850) 368-5654. La Luna will work with moms to select the perfect styles to wear for the day...matching or coordinating but unique to each family.

A limited number of tickets will be available for the Mommy and Me Picnic at <https://square.link/u/mqmuvtu> for \$100 which includes Mom plus one child. Each additional child is only \$15.

Sponsorship opportunities are still available for local businesses who would like to support this event by emailing Laluna4kids@gmail.com. All proceeds will directly benefit Caring & Sharing of South Walton. Learn more about their impactful work in our

community at www.caringand-sharingssowal.org. #MommyAn-

dMePicnic #CaringAndSharing #CommunityLove.



EVENTS

continued from page 20

a celebration of flavor, culture and community in the heart of Sandestin® Secure your spot today! Purchase tickets online at www.efestevents.com. A portion of the proceeds will benefit two worthy causes: the Fisher House of the Emerald Coast and the Sandestin® Foundation for Kids, making every taco and tequila sip count towards a greater good.



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Wellness

Small Business Connect Hosts "Encompassing Health: Minimal Essential Coverage Hospital Indemnity Plan, Wednesday, April 24th

The Small Business Connect Business Networking will host a Health Insurance program presented by Breanna Becker, CEO of the Ignite Collective Agency on Wednesday, April 24th beginning at Noon at the Destiny Worship Center in Miramar Beach. The program is free and open to the public.



The Ignite Collective Agency is a marketing agency passionately advocating for businesses of all sizes to thrive through strategic

connections and impactful initiatives. At the heart of their mission lies a dedication to optimizing bottom-line profits and maximizing sales through innovative solutions. Spearheading their current endeavor is the promotion of Encompassing Health's, Minimal Essential Coverage Hospital Indemnity

Plan. With a steadfast commitment to empowering W2 employees, Ignite Collective Agency ensures access to this transformative program, designed to bolster the employee's healthcare coverage.

They facilitate enrollment for businesses with a minimum of 20 employees, fostering inclusivity and wellness within the workforce. Notably, this initiative seamlessly integrates with existing benefits and payroll systems, operating alongside established frameworks without disruption. This streamlined process alleviates concerns of compatibility, offering a frictionless transition to enhance employee benefits.

Ignite Collective Agency's promotion of this Minimal Essential Coverage Hospital Indemnity Plan comes at no upfront cost to the employer, epitomizing their dedication to accessible and equitable solutions.

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Benefits subject to employee qualification. Employer/Employee tax savings are estimates only.

The meeting will run from noon till 1:15 pm. Small Business Connect is a Free business networking group meeting each Wednesday at Destiny Worship Center in Miramar Beach. The group has been meeting for the past 9 years, sharing referrals and offering small business support in a Christian environment.. The group meets at noon-time for Lunch, which can be purchased at the DWC café for only \$8 (includes salads, delicious sandwiches, a side and a drink). You need not be a member of the church to attend.

Small Business Connect has no fees or extensive requirements and is a non-exclusive type group. If you are interested in attending please contact Dave White, Dave@Southwalton.life or or call Minh Nguyen at (850) 376-3412 for more information.

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Meet Our Local Wellness Pro: **Dr. Jake Hawkins!**

By MICHELLE RUSCHMAN

Two criteria that are invaluable in looking for a healthcare provider are their investment in the community and what drives their care. Dr. Jake Hawkins, an orthopaedic surgeon with Orthopaedic Associates, grew up in the Destin area and knows it well. He and his wife, Caroline, were high school sweethearts at South Walton High School. After graduation, Dr. Hawkins pursued his bachelor's degree at Florida State University and received his Doctor of Medicine degree at the Florida State University College of Medicine. He then completed his orthopaedic surgery residency training at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and rounded out his training with a fellowship in hip and knee replacement and revision surgery at the University of Florida.

Years later, the couple is raising their three children, Noah (5), Asher (2), and Lainey (10 months) among the people they love. "We live in one of the most beautiful areas in the country,

surrounded by friends and family, and I am proud to call North Florida home. Outside of orthopaedic surgery, my hobbies include playing golf, fishing, exercising, going to the beach, boating, hunting, traveling and spending time with my family."

Dr. Hawkins also feels blessed that his professional life is fulfilling and rewarding. "Orthopaedic Associates is an amazing group. My favorite thing about my work is helping patients with hip and knee pain. Seeing my patients experience pain relief, restoration of function and resumption of their hobbies and activities is very gratifying.

I could not ask for a better group of practice partners and leadership. The entire staff is supportive, friendly, and attentive. We are humbled and honored to have the opportunity to come alongside people in the community to restore their health."

Dr. Hawkins also attributes his calling to the field of orthopaedic surgery to his love for Jesus. "I have a strong faith. The



Lord has blessed me with the ability to help people who are injured, hurting, suffering or in pain. I love praying with my patients and impacting them not just physically, but spiritually as well. It is by His mercy and grace that I have the opportunity to impact people in my work. I strive to do everything unto the Lord in all aspects of my life—marriage, parenting, family, my job, relationships, etc."

Dr. Hawkins specializes in hip and knee replacement surgery utilizing cutting-edge

technology and surgical techniques that allow his patients to recover as quickly as possible. This includes outpatient total hip and knee replacement surgery, anterior approach total hip replacement, minimally invasive surgery, robotic-assisted total knee, and hip replacement surgery, and computer-navigated joint replacement. He also specializes in complex revision

total knee and hip replacement. Dr. Hawkins also cares for patients with fractures (broken bones) utilizing both operative and nonoperative techniques. The course of action is based on the patient's injury and situation.

Dr. Hawkins is a fellowship-trained orthopaedic surgeon which means that he opted for one additional year of training in hip and knee replacement and revision surgery. Becoming an orthopaedic surgeon requires four years of medical

school, five years of orthopaedic surgery residency training, and added one year of fellowship training to study hip and knee replacement and revision surgery. His decision to work so hard in his field came from being a patient himself. "My interest in orthopaedic surgery began after I suffered a femur fracture while playing football at Destin Middle School. I was treated by Dr. Thackeray, who is now one of my senior partners. My experience with him and Orthopaedic Associates had a lasting impression on me and motivated me to pursue a career in medicine and, ultimately, orthopaedic surgery."

Not only does Dr. Hawkins have an office in Destin, but you can also find him in Fort Walton Beach, Niceville and Crestview. If you need his help, you can call 850-344-1646 to make an appointment for any of the area offices. He is ready to serve you. To learn more about Orthopaedic Associates, visit www.orthoassociates.net.



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Wellness

Dealing With Difficult People



By STEPHENIE CRAIG

When did you last interact with a difficult person? Maybe the difficult person has anger problems, behaves with superiority, doesn't treat others the way they expect to be treated or is generally unkind, mean or rude. Sometimes you might label people as difficult when they have different values, opinions, religious views, political leanings or personalities than you.

When are differences just different rather than difficult? When do you invest energy in making space for different ways of moving through the world vs. investing energy in addressing boundary crossings by people who seem to disrespect you or others?

While easy to overlook, sometimes you might be the difficult person. Self-awareness is a skill developed through uncomfortable practice. Noticing when you may tend towards being judgmental, short-fused, selfish or unkind can go a long way in helping you sort interactions with others. Noticing your capability of being difficult and your need for grace when you aren't your best self can inspire increased humility when address-

ing difficulty in others.

A common way to deal with difficult people is to become difficult yourself. When someone is rude, you may feel the invitation to match the rudeness. When someone is mean, you may spend time brainstorming ways to inflict vengeance. While these approaches can bring short term satisfaction and a false sense of justice, you end up giving up healthy emotional control and compromising your character. Over time, matching others' difficult behavior leads to bitterness, resentment, drama, shame and poor character habits. So, how do you address difficult behavior in healthy ways?

7 Ways to Navigate Interactions with Difficult People

1. Evaluate. Determine what is happening in a situation. What is bothering you and why? What is tough or feels like a boundary crossing?

2. Sort past emotion from present. Notice if something about this situation is bringing up feelings from past events/relationships that may be intensifying your emotions in the present. If so, take time to process past feelings separately to give you an accurate perspective in the current situation.

3. Sort differences from difficulty. Ask yourself if the other person is showing poor



character vs. has different opinions, values, perspective than you. Make space for difference. Address poor character.

4. Set boundaries. Use kind, direct words and tone to clearly state how the other party is crossing a boundary, how it impacts the relationship, what you will do differently and what you would like for them to do differently. "When you belittle me in front of others, I feel disrespected and emotionally unsafe in our relationship. I won't participate in conversations where I am belittled and disrespected. When talking to me, please use respect." If the other party respects your boundary and makes a change, that is an indicator of movement toward health. If the other party continues to cross boundaries or responds poorly to your boundary setting, that is information you need to understand the low value the other party places on the relationship.

5. Speak up for those whose voices are hard to hear. Sometimes difficult people

cross boundaries resulting in negativity, abuse, or injustice for those who are vulnerable. Try using your voice and boundary setting for the sake of others.

6. Distance. Once a person has established an ongoing pattern of crossing boundaries and poor character they are unwilling to address, it's appropriate to create various forms of distance including limiting conversational topics, time, space, emotional energy/investment, and financial involvement. You have power to give your energy and resources to life-giving relationships and to withhold energy from life-draining relationships.

7. Disengage. Try practicing forgiveness toward difficult people for the sake of your own peace and character. Release your right to vengeance and let the relationship go. You have the power to discern when relationships need to end. Disengaging is not defeat. In fact, you win by sustaining good character and recapturing energy to invest in pursuits that bring positive meaning to your life and those around you.

Navigating relationships with difficult people is challenging but inevitable. Practicing boundaries will grow your confidence. As you seek support along your journey, connect with us at Journeybravely.com for counseling and coaching.



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Don't Be An April Fool



By CHRISTIAN REGALADO

Every day, another 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65. If you'll be one this year and wonder, "What do I do next?", one of the first things you'll want to handle is enrolling in Medicare Parts A and B. If you're receiving Social Security benefits, you will automatically get your Medicare card, but if you don't plan to collect Social Security benefits until a later date, you'll have to request it. This process can be easy for some and challenging for others.

More and more people now

have a Social Security account set up online at ssa.gov. Do you? I've helped many seniors with this process, and it's getting easier. If you haven't already, you'll need to set up a username and password and be prepared to take multiple steps to verify your identity. If you'd like assistance, give us a call and we'll be glad to help you.

Once you get into your SS account, there are two options, and this is where things can start to get complicated. The first option simply says, "Sign up for Medicare." There is a little blue box with an (APPLY ONLINE) option. Most people should select this and start the application. The second option says, "Sign up for Part B Only" and that blue box will say, "Get Started." This is for folks who already have their Part A or delayed enrolling in Medicare Part B because they stayed on an employer group plan past the age of 65.

Keep in mind that once your

application is complete, it will take 2-4 weeks before you receive your Medicare card. In the meantime, you'll want to learn about the various options you have for health and prescription coverage once you become a Medicare Beneficiary. Changes in healthcare are ongoing, and you'll also want an idea of what's coming ahead. For instance, in 2025, as part of the Inflation Reduction Act, seniors who choose a Medicare Supplement plan and a separate Medicare Part D prescription plan will find prescription out-of-pocket costs capped at \$2000. This will have a significant impact on people currently managing high prescription costs.

Choosing a Supplement and Part D plan provides maximum coverage. Alternatively, there are highly rated \$0 premium Advantage plans that include prescription coverage in our area.

There are a lot of choices to be made once you become

Medicare eligible. It can get confusing, and what's best for you, personally, will depend on your needs and budget. We can help educate you on your options, as well as help direct you to make sure you are getting the most of

your Medicare benefits. Contact us anytime. There is no fee for our services and we are always happy to help. Reach me, Christian Regalado, by phone at (850) 687-7606 or email christian@evergreenhealthins.com.

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Musing



BY PETE HYDE

A cool north breeze took the edge off the warm sunshine of a winter day in Alabama. We stood in large cemetery near the University of Alabama at Birmingham looking for grave markers of long-departed relatives. Having no real idea where the markers were and with the cemetery offices closed, we did a lot of walking. However, we did have some success. The cem-

etry was busy on a Saturday afternoon as caravans of cars processed into different parts of the grounds to say a final farewell to family members and friends. As I stood next to the final resting place of a long-lost relative the wail of bagpipes filled the grounds with an eerie rendition of Amazing Grace. The noise of the nearby traffic and the general hustle and bustle of the city faded into the background. A message of hope overflowed in the space filled with mourners.

There was a pause in the music. I turned for a moment to look across at the large crowd gathered around a grave a few sections away. No one moved. The drone of the bagpipes started once again and a lively tune of "O When the Saints" added a new element to the quiet atmosphere of a place

Marching In

meant for reverence and peace. But, how appropriate that this saint, whoever he or she was, was on this day "Marching In!!" I thought to myself how the blessing of music touches each of our lives.

The next day we searched out two more cemeteries in Sylacauga, Alabama and located family members who marched into heaven in the 1860s. Pictures were sent and conversations had with my sister who has done a lot of research on our family tree.

We began the trip home around noon and took the backroads, as we usually do, between Birmingham and Montgomery. South of Montgomery on Highway 331 is the small Alabama town of Luverne. We stopped for lunch at one of our favorite local diners – The Chicken Shack. Don't pass it up if you're

headed through Luverne even a little bit hungry.

The place was packed with the after-church crowd. The Sunday special was a choice of fried or baked chicken or roast beef. A choice two sides: butter beans, mashed potatoes, fried green tomatoes, macaroni and cheese or peach cobbler. The place was filled with families and friends sharing Sunday dinner and fellowship. The same family and friends that would one day be gathered in a cemetery singing Amazing Grace and O When the Saints. A lonely old preacher and his wife in their "Sunday Best" (Too bad Sunday best has become a thing of the past for church) enjoying a few moments to themselves over dinner.

Then from somewhere in the back of the dining room came singing. The crowded room began to quiet down a little and

then go silent as a table surrounded by a group of young women (also in their Sunday Best) sang in harmony "God is so Good, God is so Good, Good is so good to me!" The silence was replaced by a sudden outburst of applause and cheers. We probably would have all stood if we weren't seated around tables. (Kay said, "Only in small town America...") We picked up our check for two Sunday specials and two glasses of sweet tea, paid our \$13.60 bill and headed back to car more than blessed.

In today's mixed-up, backward, upside-down world, be assured that God is present each and every day in each and every place and in each and every moment. God is so Good. God is so Good. He's so Good to you and me. His Amazing Grace fills the space of our lives like the music of the bagpipes filled the mournful setting of the cemetery and the beautiful voices filled the space of the Chicken Shack. Let us live faithfully in that assurance 'til the day when we all Go Marching In.

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

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Sean of the South: On That Day



BY SEAN DIETRICH

A small town. The kind of American hamlet that causes you to start looking around for the Norman Rockwell signature. Hanging begonias. Storefronts with colorful awnings. A cute downtown.

There was a loud party happening on Main Street.

I followed the sound of distant music and many voices. I suddenly realized I was still wearing my pajamas. I shuffled into town barefoot, with sleep crusted in my eyes.

The sun was shining. Birds were cackling. People were everywhere. It was a veritable town-wide hoedown.

I saw women positioning casseroles on card tables. I saw children playing tag. Old men in aprons were deep frying hunks of fish.

There was music playing at the hardware store. Good music. The kind with twin fiddles. People were dancing before a ply-

wood stage. Each front porch was crowded with people drinking lemonade and sugary tea.

Everyone was there, the whole gang. I saw them all. All my loved ones who died and left me behind. All my friends who met untimely ends. All my relatives who were called home too early. All my kin.

They were all right here, holding plates of hot food, mingling with one another. Everybody was smiling, throwing their heads back, laughing until they couldn't breathe.

I saw grandparents, deceased uncles, departed aunts, and cousins who died before they were old enough to know what life was about.

I saw multitudes of unfamiliar children, dancing while the musicians played "Turkey in the Straw." I asked an old woman nearby who all these children were.

"Those are the babies who died in the womb," the woman said. "Aren't they precious?"

We were interrupted when a large pack of dogs came running through the town, careening up Main Street. They came stampeding like a herd of bison. Among them, I saw six of my own dogs.

I saw Lady, the cocker spaniel who died in my arms when I was



a teenager. I saw Joe, who was hit by an SUV in a hit and run. I saw Boone, the collie-mix who died in a veterinary office while gazing into my eyes. I saw Ellie Mae, the bloodhound I'll never get over.

In a nearby park, I watched old friends play baseball. Mister Reginald was pitching—the retired Methodist minister who once lived on my street.

I saw my grandmother, standing at home plate, holding a hickory bat in her hands. Lord have mercy. She was a teenager, long and beautiful, with raven hair and Hershey's Kiss eyes.

After the ball game, I was hungry. So I found a paper plate and stood in line at one of the food tables. A guy in line said, "Sean! Don't you remember me?"

I stared at him, but didn't recognize his face.

"It's me!" he finally said. "James!"

"JAMES!" I screamed. James and I were friends as kids. He died driving home from his very

first job. He wrecked his car on the interstate. I sat on the front row at his funeral and wept alongside his sisters.

Mid-hug, I saw someone else familiar. She was standing behind a food table, serving people. I knew those two fiery eyes, flecked with tinges of playfulness. It was my mother-in-law.

She was behind a crockpot, wielding a long spoon, wearing an apron that said "KISS ME, I'M METHODIST."

When she recognized me, she shouted my name and came running around the table to hug me. It was a colossal embrace that made my ribs squeak.

"You have no idea how much we all miss you back home," I told her.

Next, I saw Aunt Judith, Uncle Tommy Lee, the Williams boy, my old Little League coach, Cousin Elroy, Cousin Rose, Cousin Ray, and dear Mrs. Betty Lamb, who taught me in elementary school. I saw hundreds more familiar faces. Maybe thousands.

Then an old woman grabbed my arm and said, "There's one more person you need to meet, sweetie."

She led me to the edge of town, to a meandering river. There, on a shallow wooden bridge sat a young man, feet dangling over the edge, trousers

rolled up to his knees. He was holding a long fishing rod like a grown-up version of Huck Finn.

He saw me.

He stood.

My God, he was so young. He was so very young and so very lean. He had a mess of red hair atop his head, and his patient pending matinee smile was unchanged. He was wearing the same shirt he died in.

We embraced and I heard myself say his name. A word I've been waiting to use for a long time.

"Daddy."

I could smell his deodorant, a scent I haven't known in years. I could feel his lean trunk beneath my arms, and his beating heart only inches from my own.

"What is this wonderful place?" I asked my father.

"Does it matter?" he said

"Yes, it matters. Because I don't ever want to leave."

He smiled. "Neither do any of us."

Then I woke up.

Sean Dietrich is a columnist, novelist and podcast host known for his commentary on life in the American South. His work has appeared in Life Media publications, Newsweek, Reader's Digest, Southern Living, Garden and Gun and in newspapers from Savannah to San Diego.



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Musing

The Tree

By VICTORIA OSTROSKY

She wasn't surprised when it happened. Ripping her out by the roots was agonizing, but at her age, she had experienced many disappointments and much mistreatment. No longer beautiful or symmetrical, shivering through the previous winter's sub-freezing temperatures for days on end, was the final straw. Already dead, or dying, she was unceremoniously discarded next to a city dumpster. It was an ugly place to languish.

Then something happened the tree didn't expect. Several days passed, then a woman, fractured and scarred by many abuses in life, took pity on the dead tree. She didn't have room in her own yard, but she knew her mother-in-law did, so she asked her new husband to put the tree in his pick-up truck, deliver it to his momma, and plant it in the ground, just on the off-chance that it might still be alive.

Her mother-in-law, now the new owner of a dead-looking

tree, and who had her own life scars, watered the tree religiously every day. She checked the branches constantly for some sign of growth, but it appeared dead. Day after day, week after week. Nothing. But she continued watering it and hoping. Then one day she discovered a small swelling on a tiny branch. And each day as she continued her vigil, there was more swelling until leaves, one after another, pushed themselves outward and unfurled. Every branch displayed

life until the tree was covered in healthy green leaves soaking up the sun, rustling in the wind, and dancing in the rain.

Enduring such extensive trauma, the tree's new owner wasn't sure if it would ever bloom again. One day, she noticed something that looked like it just might be a flower stalk with unopened buds, but she wasn't positive. Within a few days, the first bright pink blooms opened as a testament to how much life yearns to flourish. Soon, the once-dead tree was joyfully sporting flowers from every leafy branch.

We are all broken and fractured and scarred by life, and we all desire to be healed and

whole. Sometimes, to others, we may look like there's no hope left. Time to walk away. No reason to waste energy and resources trying to fix what is unfixable.



But God, who is the giver of all life, specializes in repairing and restoring broken things. We need to always remember that each of us is valuable and worthy of love. Our damaged parts take time

to heal. We need to extend patience and shower mercy on one another. "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

Let us learn how to, at all times, breathe grace.

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Finding a Common Language

By KIRK MCCARLEY

I called my daughter-in-law a couple of days ago to wish her a happy birthday. She shared that the weather where they live had been wildly variable as winter transitioned to spring. In fact, her daughter and my granddaughter had been pelted with what she described as “dime-sized hail.”



Thinking quickly, or so I thought, I asked what kind of impression FDR had left on her. A moment of silence ensued, and I realized that what I considered a deft remark had likely only brought puzzlement.

In “Strawberry Fields,” The Beatles’ John Lennon sings “No one, I think is in my tree,” which presents at least two interpretations. One is that Lennon has an intellect and imagination all to himself, which can lead to his being misunderstood. Another thought is that the words are essentially nonsensical and sung to stimulate thought about “meaning” when there really is none. The joke is then on those of us wanting elucidation when no logical explanation exists.

I recently had a conversation with a CODA. For those not familiar with the term, it refers to a

“child of a deaf adult.” In 2021, a movie of the same name was released. It depicted a talented fully “hearing” young woman who, as the only speaking member of her family, was cast in the role of mediating between her family’s business in the fishing industry and customers. The tension revolves around the expectations of her parents to continue to be the communicative conduit for the business vs. seeking her own dreams as a musician and performer.

In considering that quandary, my friend offered a perspective I had not considered. As a product of a non-speaking environment, although she was fully capable of verbal communication, the first language she actually came to know was “signing.” Now she often finds herself “threading the needle” between two different worlds: one where she seeks to articulate effectively among those with full audial function and another where she attempts to navigate the standards of signing. I had not considered that sign communication, like verbal, has its own unique patterns and dialects, just as in the speaking world. And that is just as it relates to English, not to

mention the plethora of world languages that adapt to signing.

So how do you know if you are connecting and finding common ground with others?

1. How much are you listening vs. speaking? Do you conscientiously apportion the time for each function? What would happen if you tried to limit your words to no more than 30% of the talking, using the approximate proportion of two ears and one mouth?
2. Where are your eyes focused? What might be distractive elements such as cell phones, large crowds, or background noise? Pocket the phone. Consider an alternative location to talk.
3. Does the other person appear engaged with you? If not, pause for a minute or change the pace. Check in. Ask, “Are we on the same page?”
4. Stop multitasking. Should not the person that is the present company be the most important consideration at that moment?
5. Ask questions. Let your curiosity be aroused. Again, slow down the pace of the conversation. Ensure that you’re not coming across as “rushing” or hurrying the communication.
6. Repeat back what you’ve heard said. Summarize it. Verify that

you have heard accurately.

7. Thank the other person for the opportunity to dialogue. Using terms such as “Thank you for the privilege of your time,” can connote honor and demonstrate a connection of esteem.

I appreciate the creatively and verbally gifted, those who are quick thinkers and geniuses at “turning a phrase.” For all of us the challenge is to make sure that we first seek to share a common language with each other. Otherwise, it may not even be worth a dime.

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Kirk McCarley is a Certified Profes-

sional 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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Dining

Crab Stuffed Avocado aka Galatoire's Crabmeat Maison

BY SUSAN BENTON, 30AEATS.COM

I'm sharing one of my favorite New Orleans recipes adapted from my Galatoire's cookbook, which is one of my favorite New Orleans restaurants, called Crabmeat Maison.

James Beard award-winning restaurant nestled in the heart of the French Quarter. Its cuisine is anchored in French Creole traditions, which reflect the bounty of the region's seafood, poultry, game and spices.

Having moved to NOLA at the tail end of middle school and

not officially departing until my second child was born, I have many fond memories of weekday martini lunches and special birthday dinners at Galatoire's and always look forward to a return visit.

I was sent a large gift box of avocados with four varieties from SoCal Avocados, which inspired me to make the Avocado Stuffed Crabmeat Maison (Crab Stuffed Avocado).

SoCal Avocados are grown on a small farm in California, ripen after they are picked from the tree, and each is hand-picked to order. They are carefully packed, and shipping is free! I especially enjoyed a new favorite, the Fuerte.

Though I was familiar with Hass and my native Florida Avocados, It was fun to taste test the other varieties sent to me:

Bacon: Large body, smooth green skin, fruity and mild in flavor.

Fuerte: A smaller avocado in size, smooth, creamy and rich flavor. This was used in the Crabmeat Maison Recipe.

Pinkerton: Large body with rougher skin, and slightly fruity. I used this in my Great Guacamole.



mustard)
1-1/2 cups high-quality olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper

Avocado Stuffed:
1/2 cup Dukes or Hellman's mayonnaise
3 tablespoons Maison dressing (above)
3 green onions, finely chopped

1 teaspoon small capers, rinsed and drained

1/2 teaspoon chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 pound lump crabmeat

3 Soft Ripe Avocados

1 large head of iceberg lettuce cut into ribbons (not shown), or butter lettuce

1 large heirloom tomato cut into wedges, creole if you can get one (not shown)

Lemons

Preparation:

To make the maison dressing combine the vinegar and mustard in a food processor, slowly adding olive oil in a thin stream in olive oil to form an emulsion. Season with salt and pepper.

Remove above to a mixing bowl, and mix together mayonnaise and maison dressing. Gently fold in the green onions, capers, parsley, salt and pepper.

Chill for two to four hours. Just before serving, gently fold in the lump crabmeat.

Slice the avocados in half, removing the outer shell and seed. Divide the lettuce ribbons among 6 serving plates spooning the crab on top of the avocado. Garnish with slice of tomato and wedge of lemon on the side.

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GatorFest 2024

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill is set to host GatorFest 2024, a spectacular event promising an exhilarating blend of entertainment, education, and gastronomic delights. Scheduled for May 4th, 2024, this four-hour extravaganza at Destin's most family-friendly venue aims to bring together individuals of all ages for an unforgettable experience dedicated to one of nature's most awe-inspiring creatures — the alligator. Festivities go from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.



GatorFest Activities

GatorFest 2024 is more than just an event; it's a journey into the heart of Florida's beloved wildlife culture, set against the backdrop of Fudpucker's renowned hospitality. From thrilling Gator Shows that offer an up-close look at these magnificent reptiles to a Gator Tail Cook Off Competition that showcases culinary creativity, the festival is a testament to the diverse attractions that make Fudpucker's a must-visit destination.

The dedicated Kid's Zone is a paradise for young adventurers. Here, children can engage in a variety of activities, from face painting and airbrush art to Gator-themed games, fostering an environment of fun and creativity. Meanwhile, adults can savor Cocktail Tastings, indulge in Hot Sauce Tasting, and enjoy music, ensuring there's something for everyone.

GatorFest Charity Partnership

GatorFest is not just about fun and games. It stands as a beacon of community involvement and environmental conservation. Partnering with Alaqua Animal Refuge, the festival channels its energy into raising awareness and funds for the refuge's mission to rescue and care for animals in need. This collaboration highlights the event's commitment to making a positive impact, offering attendees a chance to contribute to a noble cause while enjoying the festivities.

Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

Fudpucker's itself is a destination that embodies the spirit of family-friendly fun, with its title of "Best Family-Friendly Restaurant" earned through a commitment to providing memorable dining experiences. Gator Beach, dubbed The World's Greatest Alligator Park, allows visitors to interact with these fascinating creatures, offering an educational experience that leaves lasting memories.

The anticipation for GatorFest 2024 reflects a broader community excitement, drawing visitors from across the United States. Known for hosting vibrant events like Teen Night, Kid's Day, the Noon Year's Eve Balloon Drop, Kick-Off Parties for Emerald Coast Volleyball, Jeepalooza, and Jazz Dinner Shows, Fudpucker's continues to be a beacon for family entertainment, making it the perfect venue for GatorFest.

Food, Fun & Gators

GatorFest 2024 promises a day of exhilarating entertainment, delicious food, and a shared commitment to wildlife conservation. By integrating fun with educational and charitable endeavors, the festival not only offers a unique experience but also reinforces the importance of community and environmental stewardship. Mark your calendars and join the celebration at Fudpucker's, where the wild is welcomed, and memories are made.

So, stop by and have some fun at Fud's GatorFest – see you later, alligator!

Visit Fudpucker's in Destin at 20001 Emerald Coast Parkway. Visit on the web at www.FudsGatorFest.com or www.Fudpucker.com.



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Music

South Walton Live Music Scene

Old Florida Fish House Weekdays

For over a decade, Old Florida Fish House has proudly featured local live music. April features Russ Whitten, Alex Napier and Dave, Thomas Waves, Mike Whitty and BT Turner. Duel-

ing Pianos are up Wed. - Sat at 7 p.m. 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. Don't miss the Lakeside

Concert series! Visit www.old-floridafishhouse.com.

FOOW Live Music Fridays and Sunday Brunch

Enjoy live music on Fridays and for Sunday Brunch at FOOW - Fish Out of Water. The Gulf front restaurant invites you to delicious dining paired with live music. Friday line up includes April 12: Zack Manino, April 19: Christon Birge, April 26: Kyle Lamonica, May 3: Jamah Terry. For Sunday Brunch - April 14: Joey Shaling, April 21: Jared Herzog, April 28: Kristi Allen, May 5: Weston Hines. Visit foow30a.com.

songs, the talented musicians know the vibe of the area. April 11-12: Johnny Hayes, April 18-19: Mike Diamond, April 20: Isaac Moore, April 25-26: David Dunavent, April 27: Dixon Darling. Visit www.shungkulley.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. 2415 South Hwy 331, Santa Rosa Beach.

Moon Crush: Pink Moon at Seascape Resort April 18-21

Moon Crush will be held at Seascape Resort in Miramar Beach, Florida Thursday, April 18 - Sunday, April 21 under The Pink full moon. Dawes, Marcus King, The Wood Brothers, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue and The Head and the Heart are among the acts on the lineup for the 2024 event.

Learn more about Moon Crush, the lineup, your safety, and the experience here: <https://www.mooncrush.live>.

Taylor Swift Album Release Party April 19

Join City Food Hall at Destin Commons from 6-10 p.m. for an unforgettable Taylor Swift Album Re-

lease Party of the highly anticipated release of Taylor's latest album, "The Tortured Poets Department." Get ready to test your Taylor Swift knowledge with Swiftie Trivia kicking off at 6 p.m. Show off your expertise and compete for fabulous prizes! Immerse yourself in the magic of Taylor's new album with a special Listening Party. But that's not all! Indulge in delicious special cocktails and mocktails inspired by Taylor's music as you mingle with fellow Swifties. Get crafty and make friendship bracelets to commemorate the occasion, and don't miss out on Taylor Swift-themed games and swag to keep the fun going all night long. Capture memories with friends at the Taylor Swift-themed photo booth and dress in your favorite Eras look to truly embrace the Swiftie spirit! Free and open to the public. All ages welcome. Visit www.cityfoodhall.com.

Seabreeze Jazz Festival April 24

Don't miss the smooth jazz, white sands, and fun set for April 24 - 28, 2024 at Aaron Bessant Park at Pier Park. The Ultimate Weekend of Smooth Jazz. Named a "Top 10 Jazz Festival in the USA" by JazzIZ Magazine and nominated as "Best Jazz Festival" at the Oasis Smooth Jazz Awards, the Seabreeze Jazz Festival in Panama City Beach combines the top national smooth jazz artists with a full weekend of fun, sun, great beaches, and good times.

Tickets and lineup for the 25th Seabreeze Jazz Festival: seabreezejazzfestival.com.

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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. Check ajsgreyton.com for other live music throughout the week.

Shunk Gulley

Shunk Gulley is a premier location on 30A for live music, bringing in artists from around the gulf coast, and further. Whether you just want to relax to indie guitar players or upbeat party

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Studio 237 Music Lessons: Meet the Teachers



Piano: Helmut Dimmel has recently moved from Germany to Walton County. At the early age of seven, he learned how to play the organ. Due to his rapid progress, his teacher advanced him to classical training piano lessons. Helmut later developed a love for rock-pop music at the age of 17. He now has 29 years of experience as a piano teacher.

Helmut has the unique ability to teach a worship leader/pianist/organist how to accompany different choirs, to be a soloist, and/or train someone to perform in weddings, concerts, and musicals with a band. Due to his vast experience using the chord method, Helmut can help students develop their ability to play by ear, and identify and play chords, tabs, and patterns.

Keyboard improvisation is a fun method to learn. It develops the freedom to be creative, the ability to play in bands, and the option of playing without sheet music.

After earning his bachelor's degree in social work and education in Germany and many years of teaching private lessons, Helmut has the experience and knowledge needed to effectively educate children, young people, adults, and senior adults to reach their musical goals.

To find out more about Lessons with Helmut, call Ray Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons at (850) 231-3199 and visit <https://studio237music.com/helmut-dimmel>.

Violin: Linda Chung: Calling all violin students! We have a violin teacher with 40 years of experience. Linda Chung has joined the 8-member team of music educators at Studio 237 Music. Her formal education is from the University of Southern California where she earned her Bachelor's degree in Violin Performance. Linda also obtained a Master's degree in Music



from the University of Central Florida which has opened doors for her to teach not only private lessons but also classroom music and a Suzuki string program. She enjoys teaching students of all ages and levels.

As a performer, Linda has been a soloist and concertmaster of several chamber ensembles in Florida and Tennessee. Her vast experience as a performer with several orchestras has greatly added to her violin instruction and enabled her to coach ensembles and soloists for state competitions and orchestral auditions. In addition to private lessons, Linda desires to form group a string program providing performance experience with fellow violinists. She is highly motivated to bring inspiration, excitement, quality,

and passion to our students.

To find out more about lessons with Linda, call Ray Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons (850) 231-3199 or visit our website for more info at <https://studio-237music.com/linda-chung>.

Voice: MaryKate Cary is a classically trained vocalist who enjoys teaching voice lessons using a variety of styles including gospel, jazz, theatre, and current pop. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in music along with special studies in music entrepreneurship from Florida State University. MaryKate is excited and passionate about empowering and supporting each of her students as they develop their voices.

She says, "I have always enjoyed the thrill of singing and performing and I find teaching voice lessons just as rewarding." MaryKate loves nurturing, encouraging, and sharing the joyful experience of vocal music with others. Her positive and uplifting personality energizes and refreshes students and those around her!



Since joining our team of teachers at Studio 237 Music Lessons in Santa Rosa Beach, MaryKate has provided voice lessons for students of all ages. Her diverse background and experience provide enough knowledge to enable one to improve their vocal ability and sound after a season of personal instruction. Because of her experience as a gifted performer, she understands the types of training a person will need to develop their voice and stage presence.

To read more about MaryKate go to <https://studio-237music.com/marykate-cary>. Call Ray Cyr (850) 231-3199 to schedule your appointment for a voice lesson.

Willamette Valley Wineries Association Brings 15 Award-Winning Wineries to the 2024 South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival, April 25-28

One of the most exciting additions to the 2024 South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival is the partnership with the Willamette Valley Wineries Association (WVWA). The WVWA is bringing 15 of their prestigious wineries to the festival this year. Vineyard owners and winemakers will pour their award-winning wines and be able to converse directly with attendees in a relaxed manner. Willamette Valley Wineries Association is celebrating their 40-year anniversary with South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival and it's going to be a very special celebration for all! In addition, another 500 wines from around the world and 100 craft spirits will be poured at the 2024 event at the beach.

The featured Grand Tasting Tent will showcase Willamette winemakers, including some of the most important winemakers of Oregon wines. David Adelsheim, of Adelsheim Vineyard, is the original petitioner of the Willamette Valley AVA will be on hand for the weekend festivities. The esteemed Eugenia Keegan of Willakenzie Estate will participate, as will wine-

maker and co-owner Ben Casteel of Bethel Heights Vineyard, Max Bruening from Ponzi Vineyards, Jim Bernau of Willamette Valley Vineyards, Bethany Ford of Illahe Vineyards and many more.

Expect a big demand for the tasting seminar presented by Myra Barginear, co-founder and CEO of Paul Sutton Bourbon, who was named a leading "Women in Whiskey" by Forbes. Her award-winning bourbon has received major industry recognition. Other weekend seminars include a Banfi wine tasting presented by Jgor Marini and a panel discussion with a selection of the WVWA wineries. Sunday's seminars kick-off with a sparkling tasting by Celene Lannoye of Celene Bordeaux – we love our bubbles on Sunday!

Creative large-scale interactive activations presented by in-demand spirits are an exclusive way for attendees to meet distillers and industry insiders, who are eager to talk about their distilling practices. Expect engaging activations from On the Rocks Cocktails, Mijenta Tequila, Bardstown Bourbon, Garrison Brothers Bourbon and

more.

The festival kicks off Thursday at 5 p.m. – 7 p.m. with Winemakers & Shakers, held at Wine World in Destin. The VIP Wine Tasting takes place Friday, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m., followed by the Friday night Craft Beer & Spirits Jam, 5:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. The Grand Tastings are Saturday, 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. (note the new Saturday time) and Sunday,

1 p.m. – 4 p.m. The VIP Tasting can only be attended by purchasing the VIP Wine Festival 3-Day Package that includes most festival events as well. All Friday, Saturday and Sunday events are held at Grand Boulevard's Town Center.

South Walton Beaches Wine & Food Festival is an annual charity event held the last weekend in April. The festival features a stun-

ning showcase of some of the best wines in the world. The Culinary Village offers a sumptuous array of foods to taste, wines to pair. The event is a major fundraiser for Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation, which benefits children in need in Northwest Florida. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.SoWal-Wine.com.



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Scary Places

ENERGY TIPS

by Emerald Coast Energy Solutions



By CHRIS BALZER

As children, some of us had places which scared us: the space

under the bed, a cracked closet door or shadows in the dark which drove our imaginations wild. As adults, some of us have different scary places: our bank balance, our retirement investments, our children going off to college, a friend or relative's health or not waking up to our alarms. We all have things or

places which can trouble us.

One space which causes some of us grief is a crawl space under our homes. Not all of us have these and they're not really scary. Merriam-Webster defines crawl space as: a shallow unfinished space beneath the first floor or under the roof of a building, especially for ac-



cess to plumbing or wiring. These spaces are typically insulated with rolled insulation with some type of netting to keep the insulation from falling down. Some of us who have this type of insulation have witnessed our wild native friends: beach mice, squirrels, birds, and even geckos. Yes, geckos, the small chiefly tropical and nocturnal insectivorous lizards, also like this space and will rip the netting to gain access to the insulation and become non paying roommates under our homes.

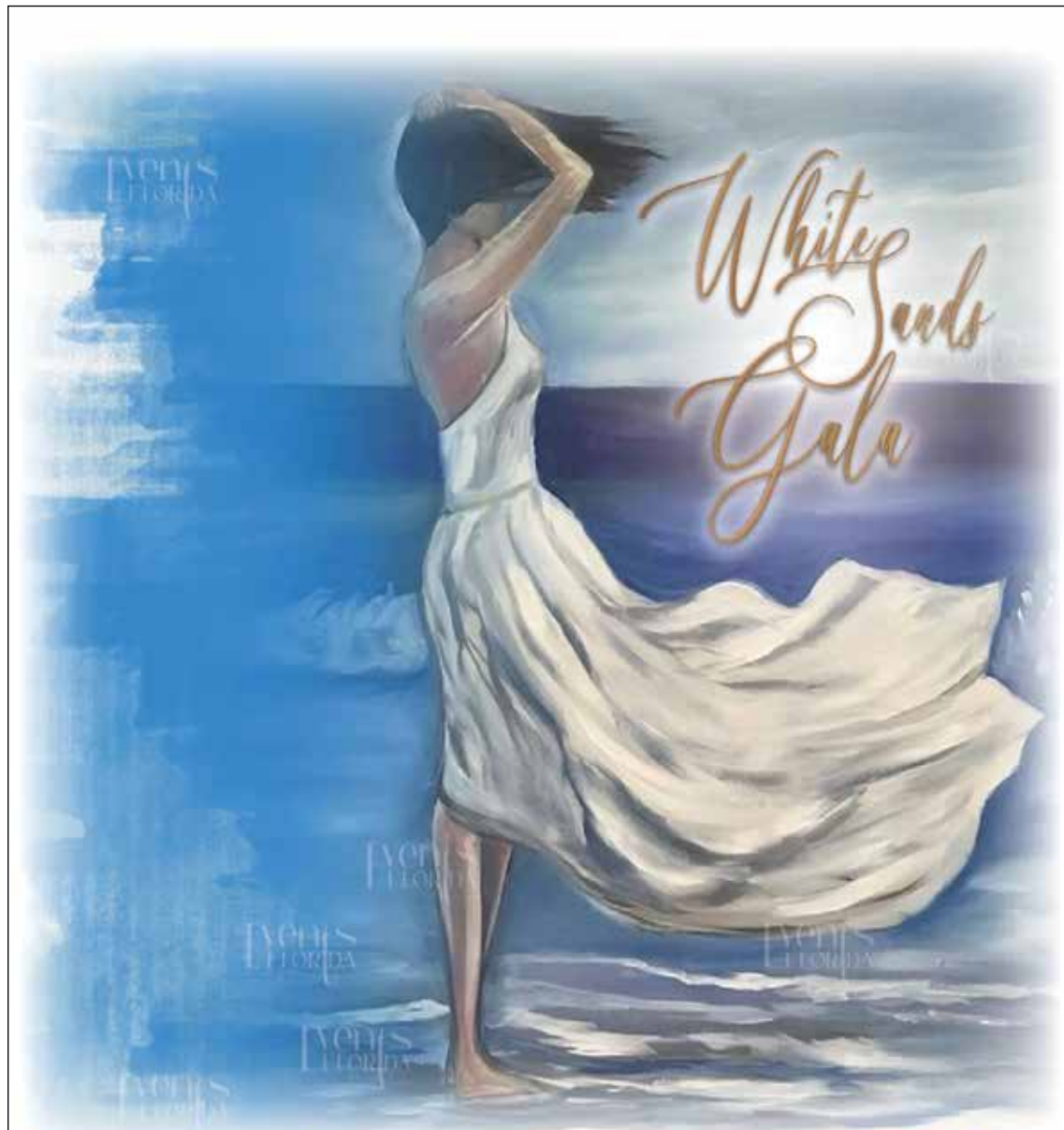
At ECES, fixing crawl spaces was not always a service we provided, because there was not really a great solution other than spray foam or replace the rolled insulation and netting which would once again become a playground for our wild friends and would need replacing in a few years.

We believe in finding solutions which are highly energy efficient, healthy and will last the life of the home. A local Destin resident introduced us to a system which was a collaboration between LSU (Ag-Center), Forest Product Laboratory and Raised Floor Living. This system was a year study which took 12 homes and six different insulation systems after Hurricane Katrina. The types of insulation included Open Spray Foam, at three different thicknesses, one with a vapor barrier, Closed Spray Foam, Kraft-

faced fiberglass batt (typical in most homes) and our Max Cap System. Max Cap and Closed Spray Foam showed the best performance from all types tested. The main differences we found between Closed Spray Foaming the crawl space and installing Max Cap, is there is no off gassing and ease of maintenance for plumbing or wiring with Max Cap. Plus it leaves the crawl space, in my opinion, with a clean, crisp look.

After many conversations with the director of LSU's AgCenter, and countless hours of research, ECES added the Max Cap Crawl Space System to our services. This system gives our customers a piece of mind, knowing that their wild friends have been evicted, higher energy efficiency than before, maintenance free and will last the life of the home. If you have a scary place under your home and would like to not think about it again, we would be happy to see if your home is a fit for Max Cap.

Chris Balzer is Founder and President of Emerald Coast Energy Solutions and resides in the Santa Rosa Beach area with his wife and three children. For more information on how to save this summer 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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Covering Your Assets



By JULIE A. MARTIN

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

The answer is both. **Property Insurance** covers your homes, your condos, your furniture, electronics and all the things you use in your home that is not permanently attached to your home. **Casualty Insurance** usually refers to the items that move, such as your cars, motor-



cycles, boats and jet skis.

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

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

The umbrella policy covers in levels from \$1M to 5M, with requirements to maintain a minimum level of liability on

the underlying policies for auto, boat, etc. of 250/500 Bodily Injury Liability and 100K Property Damage Liability. The minimum underlying liability requirement for home insurance or any property policies the umbrella covers would be 300K.

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

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

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



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May 18 | Event Sponsorship

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We will be celebrating with our friends and neighbors at The White Sands Gala on Saturday, May 18, 2024. Sponsorship packages offer VIP entry, VIP parking, early access to the Popup Selfie stations, just



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for fun Poker game and an open bar. Please consider supporting us as one of the Gala Sponsorship Partners, and save the date for this exciting event.

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What's on 30A TV? The Antenna Makes a Comeback

In today's digital age, the landscape of television viewing has evolved beyond the traditional cable and satellite services to embrace a blend of old and new technologies. This evolution offers a more enriching and diversified entertainment experience, combining the reliability of over-the-air (OTA) TV accessed via a TV antenna, the convenience of a Tablo distribution device, and the vast content universe of Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) through HLS (HTTP Live Streaming) m3u8 channels. For those new to these terms, understanding how they come together can unlock a world of television viewing possibilities.



Understanding Over-the-Air TV

Over-the-Air (OTA) TV refers to free television broadcasts that anyone with the appropriate antenna can receive. This method taps into the traditional broadcasting system to deliver local news, sports, and a variety of other channels without the need for a monthly subscription. Modern antennas have evolved to be more efficient and user-friendly, enabling clear reception of numerous high-definition (HD) channels. This cost-effective approach is a boon for viewers looking to enjoy quality content without hefty cable bills. Surprisingly, in the Santa Rosa Beach area, it's possible to get 35 channels with the right antenna.

A TV antenna is your gateway to accessing OTA TV. These devices are designed to capture broadcast signals from television stations, providing access to

a range of free channels. With advancements in technology, today's antennas are sleek and effective, offering superior picture quality over many cable services due to less compressed signals.

To further enhance your OTA TV experience, adding a Tablo distribution device introduces the ability to record live broadcasts and stream them to multiple devices in your home. This means you can watch your favorite shows on your schedule, across various devices, blending the traditional broadcast experience with the modern convenience of streaming. Tablo is available for a one-time \$99 purchase in retail outlets or on Amazon.

Combining a TV antenna for OTA broadcasts, a Tablo device for recording and streaming, and an IPTV app for accessing HLS m3u8 channels creates

an ultimate viewing setup. This combination caters to a variety of interests and preferences, offering everything from local news and sports to international programming and niche content—all without the traditional costs associated with cable or satellite services. For viewers new to this realm, it represents a shift towards a more personalized, flexible, and cost-effective way to consume television, where the power to curate content is placed directly in the hands of the consumer.

Conclusion

For those stepping into the modern world of TV viewing, the synergy of OTA TV, Tablo offers an accessible yet comprehensive way to explore a vast landscape of content. It's a testament to how far television technology has come, blending the simplicity of traditional methods with the boundless potential of internet-based streaming to meet the diverse needs of today's audience. This setup not only maximizes value but also ensures a tailored viewing experience that can adapt to the evolving trends and preferences of the digital age.

About 30ATV

Founded in 2008, 30A TV broadcasts 20+ channels of content, from 30A to Sports, Classic Movies, Podcasts, Comedy and Business News. Find out more at 30aTelevision.com



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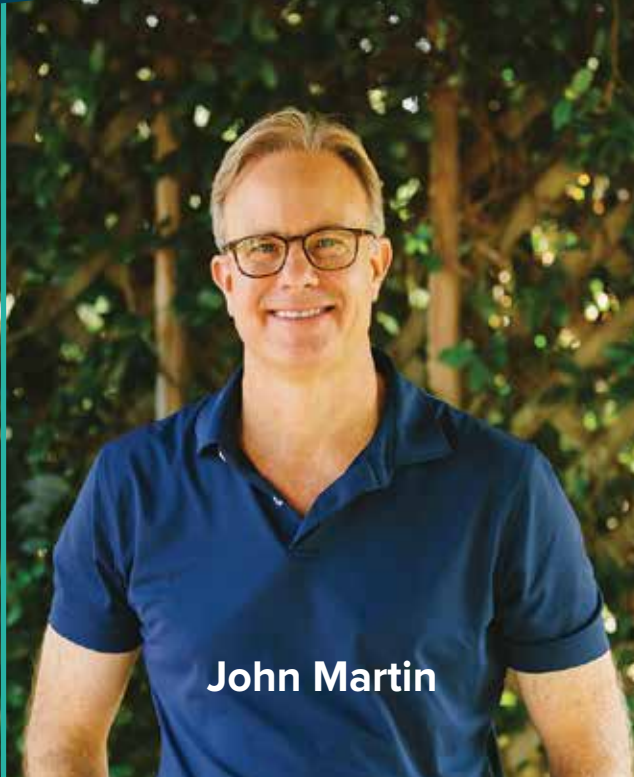


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