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# South Walton Life

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## Support a Successful Sea Turtle Season

By HEATHER BENNETT EYE

It's sea turtle season again! In the Panhandle, from May through the end of October, we witness the nesting and hatching process. While walking the beach, you might come across some turtle tracks, a marked nest, or even witness a turtle crawl to nest, or hatchlings racing to the Gulf. I recently spoke with Lacie Wegner, President and Permit Holder, with the South Walton Turtle Watch (SWTW). She shared with me the importance of sea turtles in the Panhandle of Florida, and what we can do to help them stay safe and have a successful season.

South Walton Turtle Watch is a non-profit organization. With funding provided by grants, fundraising and the Walton County TDC, they operate under a Florida Marine Turtle Permit issued by Fish and Wildlife Commission, conducting sea turtle nesting surveys in Walton County. During the sea turtle season, they look for tracks and identify turtle species, mark and inventory nests, and

continuously monitor them during the incubation period. SWTW also responds to sick or injured sea turtles, and relocates them to a permitted rehabilitation facility.

Sea turtles have been around for millions of years. They are a key species, indicative of the health of our marine environments, and fostering healthy marine ecosystems, yet their population has drastically declined over the years due to pollution, habitat encroachment, illegal harvesting and incidental capture. "The loggerhead is threatened, and the rest (Green, Leatherback and Kemp Ridley) are endangered, but they all fall under the Endangered Species Act," said Lacie.

The Panhandle is important for sea turtles because of the temperature of our sand. A sea turtle's gender is based on the temperature at



which the egg is incubated. Warmer temperatures produce more females and cooler temperatures produce more males. "The Panhandle of Florida naturally has cooler sand because of its location and high-water tables, which will increase the production of males. This is very important considering the other coasts of Florida tend to be warmer," Lacie said. With so many opportunities for females to flourish, it's important these male dominant hatchlings survive. At the time of writing,

SWTW cataloged 48 Loggerhead nests and 1 Green nest so far this year.

Over the years, SWTW has worked to educate our younger visitors and locals alike on the importance of sea turtles and what we can do to help them thrive. What started out as Turtle Talk Tuesday six years ago has evolved into Wild Sea Turtle Wednesday hosted at The Big Chill 30A, offered through the end of August. "It's a chance

**SEA TURTLE**  
*continued on page 2*

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## CBA's Water Science Crew is Making Waves with Volunteers Like You!

It's no secret that this stretch of Florida's coast has something special between the rare coastal dune lakes, miles of sugar-sand Gulf beaches, and the third-largest estuary in the state. These natural features are a sanctuary for wildlife and humans alike, and it is the mission of the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA) to protect and preserve these waterways for future generations.

CBA takes action through education, restoration, and monitoring

**CBA**

*continued on page 2*



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 Community

**SEA TURTLE**

*continued from page 1*



to educate the kids,” stated Lacie. “They’re the future.” In addition to educational 10-minute talks at 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., kids can explore specimens and make crafts. Each child who attends will receive a free goodie bag. There’s also merchandise for sale that raises funds for the SWTW.

So how can we help make sure the sea turtles have a successful season? Follow #cleandarkflat. Make sure we clean up after ourselves (and others) at the beach. No trash, no boogie boards, no chairs, no toys, no

obstacles should be left out overnight. Fill in holes and knock down sandcastles before leaving the beach. These things can disorient a mother and lead to false crawls or become detrimental obstructions for hatchlings.

Light, or the lack thereof, is very important as the hatchlings use the light of the moon to guide them to the water. If they see a brighter light, they will crawl towards it. Keep it dark. Often, house lights that are left on lead hatchlings to the opposite direction of where they need to go, and they don’t survive. Besides no light, people should use red or amber light. Red light emits a more narrow portion of the visible light spectrum. “There is a light ordinance and we do submit those to Code Compliance,” stated Lacie. “The darker, the better.” The Walton County Tourism Department carries Beach Safety Toolkits that include information on sea turtle protection. We urge



property rental companies and homeowners to pick up these materials and distribute them as necessary to educate renters.

However, the ordinance doesn’t cover flashlights and cell phone lights yet, and many people love using these while walking the beach or crab hunting after dark. While there’s no law against it, please keep in mind how these lights affect turtles sharing the beach. You can visit the Walton County Visitor Center to pick up stickers for your flashlights and cellphones that make your lights turtle safe, or make your own red filter.

When you are out exploring our miles of white sand beaches, and see a turtle, call the SWTW. “If you see a turtle on the beach,



a nesting turtle, or a sick turtle, the first thing you want to do is stay back, and the second thing is to call the hotline (850-865-4503),” said Lacie. “If a turtle gets hooked, don’t cut the line. Call us first for help,” said Lacie. “At night, you want turn off all

the lights, stay 30ft-50ft back. Stay behind a turtle, you never want to get in front of her. It can disorient her. Same for hatchlings. Stay back. Call for help.” We also want to emphasize that you shouldn’t shine a light in the eyes of turtles, or attempt to take selfies with them.

Let’s do our part every day to protect these endangered sea turtles we love so much. Stay conscious of how your actions have a far-reaching impact. “The people are coming and so are the turtles,” said Lacie. “We have to figure out a way to coexist.”

If you would like more information on the South Walton Turtle Watch, please visit <https://southwaltonturtlewatch.org>.

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**CBA**

*continued from page 1*

program areas, all made possible by a passionate volunteer base. Locals and visitors alike can participate in experiences that empower them to take action to care for our shorelines, wetlands and waterways. CBA is currently seeking locals to join their Water Science Crew – on-the-ground stewards monitoring local water quality.

Why is water quality monitoring important? Gathering data is a crucial step in protecting our environment. Data can help us detect problems and improve management of our natural resources. Water quality data is also used by scientists to better understand ecology, climate change, human health, and more. CBA's Water Quality Monitoring Program collects data from 137 stations that inform annual reports, long-term trends, and add to over 20 years of recorded data!

Want to become a water quality monitor? Adopt a section of Choctawhatchee Bay or a coastal dune lake and visit



**Image of Western Lake in Grayton Beach State Park.**



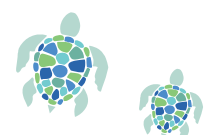
**Image of the Noggle family, volunteer monitors of Boggy Bayou in Niceville.**

the waterbody monthly to take samples and measurements. Volunteers receive training and equipment as well as a well-earned sense of contribution to science. No experience is necessary to join. Although some stations do require volunteers to bring their own kayak, paddleboard, or boat, others have a canoe on-site for volunteer use.

Best geared for paddlers are South Walton’s coastal dune lakes. Currently, Camp Creek, Grayton, Little Red Fish and Stallworth lakes are all in need of volunteer monitors. However, if you have boat access in the bay, or want to spend more time in the river, CBA works watershed-wide and has other open-

ings throughout the watershed.

If you are interested in exploring and connecting to nature, while giving back to the environment, you might be ready to join the Water Science Crew! Email [wingardk@nwfsc.edu](mailto:wingardk@nwfsc.edu) for details on how you can contribute. Want to pitch in but not ready for a monthly commitment? Check out CBA’s Facebook page for other volunteer opportunities ranging from beach clean-ups to creating oyster gardens.







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# Beach Activities Ordinance Policy Clarified

Although the Waterways and Beach Activities Ordinance (Sec. 22.54S) was recently amended and approved by the Walton County Board of County Commissioners (BCC), the practical enforcement of one of the provisions has become a challenge for the county's Code Compliance office.

The ordinance states: "Beach equipment must be set up and maintained on dry sand to ensure beach patrons the ability to traverse the beach unobstructed on all beaches within Walton County." The ordinance also states that "beach equipment means items generally used for swimming, sunbathing or beach recreation, including, but not limited to, beach chairs, umbrellas, tents, hammocks and

volleyball nets." Walton County Code Compliance Director Tony Cornman said, "What we have encountered are a few individuals that bring their personal beach chairs and place them on wet sand, sometimes in the surf. We want people to enjoy our beaches and not feel like their every move is being policed. However, we also want to make sure that beachgoers have no difficulty walking along the wet-sand beach shore."

Cornman said he had conferred with County Administrator Stan Sunday regarding the issue. "We concluded that common sense should rule our enforcement practices. The most important thing here is for people to be able to walk

unobstructed on the wet sand anywhere along our 26 miles of beaches," said Cornman. "One chair does not constitute an obstruction, although multiple chairs might and, if they do obstruct the path of other

beachgoers, those persons may be asked to move."

"We are recognized as having some of the most beautiful beaches in the world and we want everyone to be able to enjoy them," said Cornman.

"So, if everyone would demonstrate a little courtesy and respect for one another, then there will be no issues and beach fun and relaxation can be enjoyed by all."



## Citizens Beware: Deceptive Advertising in Political Campaigns

You may be receiving emails or seeing Facebook posts that appear as "WalCo," or "Walton County Breaking News." These emails and posts bear the Walton County seal and can be quite deceptive.

They appear to be politically motivated and often include untrue and offensive statements about various Walton County residents, elected officials and candidates. These statements are false, misleading and outrageous. It appears to be a smear campaign designed to benefit certain political candidates.

Please be aware of any correspondence that comes from WalCo, AKA John Walton, etc.

They have illegally obtained email addresses from the county database. If you "click" on any prompts, such as LEARN MORE or SIGN UP, you enable them to access

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## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELEASES STATE ASSESSMENT DATA



Superintendent of Schools A. Russell Hughes is proud to announce that, for the third year in a row, the Walton County School District has maintained its ranking as 3rd of 67 counties in the state of Florida. Additionally, the Walton County School District ranks #1 in Geometry, #2 in Algebra 1, #3 in US History, and #3 in 8th Grade Science. In total, the WCSD ranks in the Top 10 in 15 of 21 assessed areas.

*Congratulations to the students, teachers, staff, and all stakeholders for their EPIC work!*

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# Coastal Seniors Update for August



## Chair Yoga Classes at the Blake in Miramar Beach

Tuesdays, August 6, 20 and September 3 at 9:45 a.m. at the Blake, 90 Ponce De Leon St. in Miramar Beach. RSVP at (850) 650-5000 to register.

**Monthly Meeting** - Coastal Seniors will meet Friday, August 16 from 11:00-1:00 at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Guest speaker Joy Pettey, Santa Rosa Beach Physical Therapy, will speak about chair yoga and other services. Joy Hankins-Beene, Watercrest Santa Rosa Beach, will provide lunch. R.S.V.P. (850) 280-5342 or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

**Exercise Classes** - Angela Gibson will lead classes on Tuesdays, August 6, 13, 20, 27, and September 3 at 10 a.m. and on Thursdays, August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, and September 5 at 10 a.m., at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Cost is \$5 per session. Reservations required. R.S.V.P. to coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

**Water Aerobics at Watersound Fountains** - Join us on Mondays, August 5, 12, 19, and 26 at 9 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. Also on Wednesdays, August 7, 14, 21, 28, and September 4 at 9 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. All sessions are at Watersound Fountains, 65 Origins Pkwy, Inlet Beach. The cost is \$5 per class, cash or check preferred. A hat, sunscreen, and towel are suggested. Space is limited and reservations are required. Call (850) 280-5342 or

email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

**Pickleball** - Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex courts on Wednesday, August 21 at 6 p.m. Registration is required. Register at www.waltonrec.com. Open to Walton County residents only. Email Sandy Gulak at sowlapickleball@gmail.com for more info and with questions. Please join the SoWal 30A Pickleball Association on Facebook for more information and weekly updates and check the CSSW calendar at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org.

**Art Classes** - Watercolor Painting Class - Karen Peterson will begin classes on Friday, September 6 from 8:45 a.m. - Noon. Classes held at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Cost is \$15 for CSSW members and \$30 for non-members. Space is limited so call 850-280-5342 to reserve your spot, or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com. All supplies are included.

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

website at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org. Also, follow us on Facebook at Coastal Seniors of South Walton. Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. is a non-profit 501© (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



Community

# From Rescue to Rehab: One Dog's Mission to Bring Harmony to Healthcare

An exuberant, reddish-brown puppy found herself living on the street in northwest Florida. Originally thought to be male, she was called Cleo by Animal Control. She was taken to two different animal rescue agencies before finding her place, the second of which determined she was, in fact, a girl, and changed her name to Chloe. When she was ready to be adopted into a "forever" home, Chloe was dressed up in cute costumes to disguise her large size, strength, and likely pit bull heritage, and she even appeared on the local news.



After more than six months at the shelter, a new volunteer who did not intend to adopt a dog appeared. It was love at first sight and the would-be volunteer immediately dropped to the ground to greet Chloe, who excitedly kissed her face. The volunteer took Chloe home on a trial basis and the pair began working diligently on training with Nancy

Bown, CPDT-KA of Dog-Harmony.

Chloe gradually gained confidence and overcame her fear of garbage trucks and plastic bags. Bown, an evaluator for Intermountain Therapy Animals, recognized that Chloe had the right personality to become a therapy dog and encouraged the pair to

become evaluated. In 2023 at age six, Chloe and her mom became a certified therapy dog team with Dog-Harmony. They now volunteer at HCA Florida Healthcare's Northwest Florida Rehabilitation Center in Destin.

Each week, Chloe brings 65 pounds of love and joy to staff and patients – and occasionally

tears to patients who miss their dogs. Her favorite place to visit at the rehab center is the physical therapy (PT) gym, where she can interact with the PT patients. She is a great aid, assisting with repetitive arm movements as a command to sit, stay, or play fetch.

One day, Chloe almost fell asleep standing up as she received an excellent massage from a patient, who she distracted from blood pressure measurements before the patient began her work in the gym. The patient's blood pressure visually dropped on the device's screen as she patted Chloe.

A fellow volunteer at the rehab center, Sue Marks, said of Chloe:

"The staff have to give Chloe a hug, pet, or scratch and they tell us which patients in specific rooms would love a visit from Chloe each week. We have learned so many pet names and breeds belonging to the staff and patients. A smile after a visit from

Chloe goes a long way. She is so well-behaved. She takes treats nicely. She makes my day on Fridays, too."

The staff at the rehab center awarded Chloe the prestigious honor of Employee of the Month in February 2024 in appreciation of her visits.

Today, roughly 50% of American households (approximately 65 million) have a dog at home. Nearly all pet owners in the U.S. (97%) consider their companion animals family members. Living with dogs at home reduces stress and anxiety, lowers blood pressure, and improves the mood of humans.

Medical studies have shown that patients interacting with qualified therapy dog teams have been able to heal and recover faster. After only a few minutes of interaction, it is evident how profoundly therapy dog teams affect

**MISSION**  
*continued on page 7*



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**MISSION**

*continued from page 6*

patients and staff as they benefit from a “bit of home” in a difficult clinical setting.

In an inpatient rehabilitation unit of Johns Hopkins University’s School of Medicine, doctors realized “patients who participated in animal therapy were able to meet goals faster by involving the animals - standing for longer periods while patting a dog, for instance.”

Dog-Harmony is experiencing an overwhelming demand for qualified therapy dog teams in healthcare and a significant shortage of qualified therapy dog teams in northwest Florida. The 501(c)3 non-profit provides complimentary, ongoing training for therapy dog teams, coordinates their placement in healthcare facilities, accompanies team visits, and provides management and oversight for its healthcare partners. Dog-Harmony spends an average of 10 hours of training, which is provided at no cost to the teams, and is required for each team after the evaluation resulting in certification.

Because of Dog-Harmony’s significant experience and multiple relationships with national pet therapy organizations (i.e., Intermountain Therapy Animals, Therapy Pet Connections, Pet Partners, etc.), the non-profit can manage and assign qualified dog therapy teams based on abilities, temperaments, and clinical requirements. The non-profit also spends a significant number of hours on continued monitoring of team performance and ongoing therapy dog team training specific to animal-assisted therapy in healthcare.

According to Dog-Harmony’s regionally-focused survey of 895 respondents in 2023, 31% of people think animal-assisted therapy is “very important” and most responded with interest in helping to support by volunteering their time, skills, and knowledge. Dog-Harmony also needs financial support to sustain the hospital therapy dog program, which is provided at no cost; and for interested therapy dog partners to start the certification program required to volunteer at regional healthcare facilities.

To support Dog-Harmony’s therapy dog program, currently managed for HCA Florida Destin-Fort Walton Beach and Twin Cities hospitals, and expand its reach to additional healthcare

institutions in the area, visit [www.dog-harmony.org/donate](http://www.dog-harmony.org/donate) or vote for Chloe in the ‘Bark in Style’ photo contest running through August 1, 2024.

To learn more about becoming a team with Dog-Harmony’s therapy dog program, visit [www.dog-harmony.org/therapy](http://www.dog-harmony.org/therapy) or follow Dog-Harmony on Facebook to keep abreast of the next therapy dog team evaluation at the end of October.

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We are looking for donations and sponsors for a “Welcome Back” breakfast and lunch for our teachers and staff as they return to prepare for the new school year.

If you would like to help get our year off to a great start, we are looking for donations of breakfast and lunch items, beverages, snacks, and possibly meal donations from some of our amazing local businesses!

Please contact Kelly @ Bay School (850)622-5051, [Kelly.Woodworth@WaltonK12Fl.us](mailto:Kelly.Woodworth@WaltonK12Fl.us) or message here.

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# Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Family Birth Place Recognized Nationally

For the fourth time in a row, Newsweek has named the hospital one of America's Best Maternity Care Hospitals 2024

For the fourth year in a row, Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast is on Newsweek's list of America's Best Maternity Care Hospitals

at the highest five ribbon level. The Best Maternity Care distinction recognizes facilities that have provided exceptional care to

mothers, newborns, and their families based on three data sources. These include nationwide online surveys of hospital managers and maternity healthcare professionals, medical key performance indicators relevant to maternity care and patient satisfaction data.

"Being recognized nationally year after year is a testament to the continued commitment of our physicians, care teams and leadership to provide the highest quality of care to all mothers, babies, and families we serve," said Erica Bottom, MSN, RN-C, OB, Family Birth Place Manager.

Sacred Heart's facilities in

Pensacola and Miramar Beach have also recently taken part in the state's first postpartum wristband initiative. The new program involves giving a silver rubber wristband to mothers to voluntarily wear for up to a year postpartum. This has helped prioritize them as patients and spotlight their medical history when they seek care through EMS, ERs or other medical sites.

In addition, the hospital recently renewed its Baby-Friendly designation, recognizing its commitment to the highest level of breastfeeding support and education. It is the only hospital in the

area to hold this accreditation. Sacred Heart health system was also recently named one of the top 15 health systems in the country for 2024 by Fortune and PINC AI.

Ascension Sacred Heart Emerald Coast Family Birth Place is the home to the only neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) serving families from Walton and Okaloosa counties close to home. We have a neonatal specialist available 24/7 for neonates needing routine and specialty care.

The full list of recipients is available at <https://www.newsweek.com/rankings/americas-best-maternity-hospitals-2024>.



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## Florida State Parks Foundation, Cannondale Bicycle Corporation and REI Co-op Winter Park Store Collaborate to Provide e-bikes for Florida State Parks Rangers

Twenty-five new e-bikes will provide ease of transportation and reduce parks' environmental impact

The Florida State Parks Foundation, Cannondale Bicycle Corporation and REI Co-op's Winter Park Store today announced a collaboration to provide Cannondale e-bikes for use by Florida State Parks rangers during a press conference at Lake Louisa State Park.

Through this collaboration, believed to be the first of its kind among America's state parks systems, Florida State Parks will receive 25 Cannondale Tesoro Neo X 3 e-bikes for use by park rangers across the state. (Full park list below.)

REI's Winter Park certified bike shop mechanics assembled the e-bikes in late June in preparation for use by park staff.

"Everything about this effort aligns with the Foundation's mission to preserve, protect, sustain and grow our state park," Foundation CEO Julia Gill Woodward said. "Providing e-bikes to state parks supports our devoted rangers in their day-to-day tasks, reduces our parks' environmental footprint and is the result of a collaboration with two leaders in the outdoor recreation community."

"Cannondale and REI Co-op are the most respected names in



their fields, and we are so excited that they have put such significant and generous support behind our state parks."

Today's announcement marked the latest development in the Foundation's Greener Initiative, a campaign to encourage environmental sustainability in state parks.

Previous Greener Initiative projects have included:

- 144 water bottle refilling stations across 98 state parks and trails.
- More than 700 energy-efficient LED lighting fixtures and bulbs.
- The "Great Blue Heron" hybrid-electric river tour

boat at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park.

Greener Initiative projects are funded through the generosity of community partners, such as REI Co-op and Cannondale, and through the sales of the "Explore Our State Parks" specialty license plate.

In two years of availability, the "Explore Our State Parks" plate has generated more than \$675,000 for the benefit of Florida's state parks. Each e-bike is equipped with a bike-sized replica plate.

### In Northwest Florida, these parks will receive e-bikes

- Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park (Wakulla Springs)
- Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park (Tallahassee)
- Topsail Hill Preserve State Park (Santa Rosa Beach)
- Blackwater Heritage State Trail (Milton)
- Tallahassee St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail (Crawfordville)



# Revolutionizing Food Access: Unveiling Climate-Controlled Food Lockers to Combat Hunger in Walton County

The community of Walton County is set to embark on an innovative initiative to combat food insecurity with the introduction of state-of-the-art climate-controlled food lockers at the Generation Next Kids Homeless Service Center. This exciting project has been made possible through a generous donation by the Board of County Commissioners of Walton County, in partnership with the Florida Department of Health in Walton County (DOH-Walton).

Food insecurity has been

a pressing concern in Walton County, highlighted since 2019 as a priority in the Community Health Improvement Plan. DOH-Walton and the Walton Community Health Improvement Partnership (WCHIP) have been steadfast in their efforts to tackle food insecurity, especially in USDA-designated food desert areas. DOH allocated funds to counties to address these priorities, with a key strategy being the establishment of infrastructure to support mobile and community food pantries. Following

best practices from other Florida communities, the installation of food lockers emerged as a viable solution to provide round-the-clock emergency food access to the public.

Drawing on their 13 years of dedicated service to the community, the Matrix Community Outreach Center brings a wealth of experience to this groundbreaking endeavor. In partnership with the Walton County BCC and Walton County Emergency Management, the Matrix has been instrumental as the

human services branch during disaster activations at the Walton County Emergency Operation Center, particularly throughout the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID crisis, the Matrix (Community Outreach Center) rose to the occasion by securing and distributing millions of pounds of food to residents across Walton County. Their innovative approach included the establishment of 27 pop-up pantries throughout the county, providing weekly food distributions

to those in need. This remarkable feat underscored their unparalleled commitment to serving the community and solidified their position as the ideal partner for the current food locker project.

The food locker is located at the Matrix's Generation Next office located at 1122 N 9th Street in DeFuniak Springs. This pioneering project serves as a pilot initiative with the aim of securing additional funding for similar projects throughout Walton County.

## WCDWC Reminds Citizens to Vote

As it becomes more important every day that people vote, the Walton County



Democratic Women's Club has undertaken a postcard campaign to remind citizens to vote. The WCDWC is gath-

ering in different locations and preparing postcards to be mailed out to people in the Walton County area, urging

them to show up at the polls. It is the WCDWC's mindset that people will often not answer their phones or check

messages or emails, but will instantly turn over a postcard and read it.



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Community

# SOCKS Announces Meowsterpieces Art Show



O PICATSO



BARBARA CATWORTH



YAYOI CATSAMA



PAW KLEE



RENÉ MEOWG

Save Our Cats and Kittens (SOCKS), a nonprofit, no-kill, free-roaming cat shelter in

Fort Walton Beach, Florida, is pleased to announce their first Meowsterpieces art show and

competition.

The show's theme is feline, a celebration of all things cat,

from their beauty and agility to their independence and playfulness. The great Leonardo da

Vinci once said, "the smallest feline is a masterpiece."

Works will be displayed from Sept. 3, 2024, to Sept. 21, 2024, in the SOCKS event building, with awards presentation and reception from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sept. 21.

We invite all art styles, including painting, sculpture, photography, design, craft, video, sound art, kinetic art, and performance.

There are three age categories: child (ages 12 and younger), teen (ages 13-17) and adult (18 and older).

There will be two judging methods: A guest juror and People's Choice.

We are honored to have J. Wren Supak as the guest juror. Supak is the Director & Curator of Mattie Kelly Art Center Galleries at Northwest Florida State College.

People's Choice winners will be determined by an online pay-to-vote system. \$1 = 1 vote.

Trophies will be awarded to first, second, and third-place finishers in each age category and judging method. There will be nine winners determined by the guest juror, and nine winners in People's Choice. The same work may win in both judging methods.

All art styles are accepted, but the work must be the artist's own. The entry fee is a non-refundable \$25 for up to three pieces. The limit is three works per artist. The entry fee supports the reception, artist awards and the SOCKS shelter.

Submitted art will be auctioned after the exhibition, with proceeds benefiting SOCKS.

For more details and to enter, visit <https://www.saveourcatsandkittens.com/meowsterpieces-art-show>.

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- 2 Early Voting** (In-Person)
- 3 Election Day** (In-Person)

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

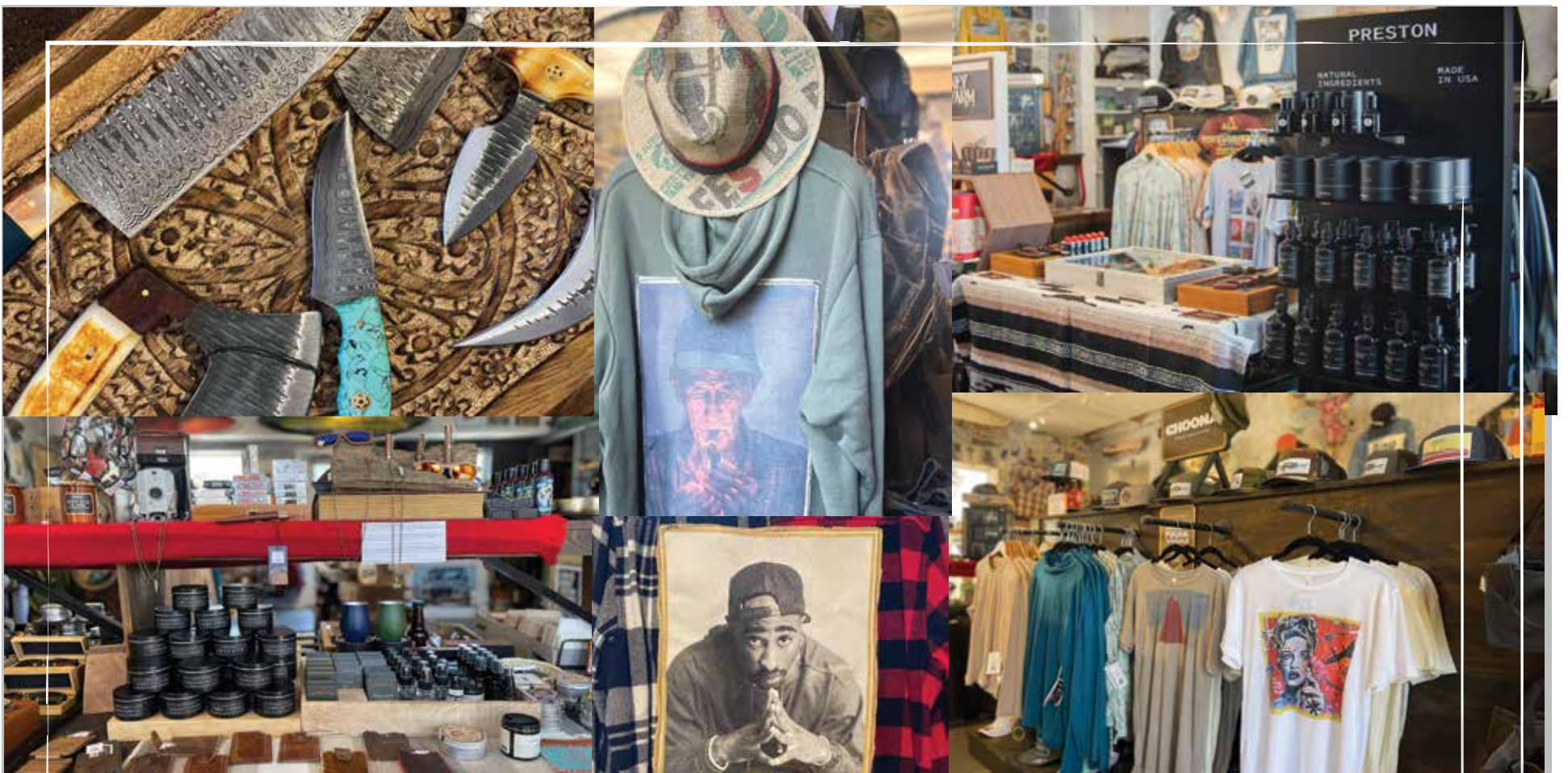
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counterparts, these stores prioritize individualized service, with knowledgeable staff members who are passionate about being able to help customers. The

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



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# Insights for Investors: Where Do We Stand at Mid-year



By MAURICE STOUSE, FINANCIAL ADVISOR AND BRANCH MANAGER

We are into an election year, the markets have made some extraordinary moves and we thought it was a good time to catch our breath and reflect on a few things. Davis Parrish, one of our advisors (in the Atlanta area) compiled some research (from Raymond James) for us and we wanted to share it with you here for your mid-year reading.

### The Stock Markets:

As of June 21, the S&P 500 had surpassed its own record 31 times since the beginning of January. That equates to an all-time high every four trading days. This year marks the first election year since 1892 when both major party nominees have occupied the White House. Gains for the market have historically been higher when an incumbent president is running for reelection. The volatility index or “VIX,” as of June 28 was 12.36, which was down almost 8% for the year. The worker participation rate is now at 62.4%. That is the percentage of people 16 years old and older that are working or seeking work. That puts it just about at its average for the past 75 years. Unemployment approximates 4% of the workforce. Its highest rate was almost 11% back in 1982 and its lowest rate approximated 2.5% in 1953.

### We have a few observations for our readers.

First is U.S. debt. Higher debt leads to higher debt service which could mean either higher taxes or less capital available for investment and growth and ultimately lowering living standards for Americans. Raymond James published an article in the first

quarter of this year addressing U.S. debt. Let us know if you would like a copy.

Second, we encourage readers to research what the U.S. net worth is as well as the U.S. household net worth. That makes things a bit more encouraging since you might find that as debt has risen, so has wealth. And wealth is several times greater than the debt. There are a variety of sources online that address that. We are encouraged when we see U.S. worth at several times GDP and several times debt. The same for U.S. household net worth. Again, we remind readers that higher debt always leads to higher debt service and that is important to economic growth.

Third would be potential solutions for entitlements – mainly Social Security and Medicare. The last time that Congress took substantial action was in 1983 when Congress increased the full retirement age from 65 to 67 (for those born after 1960). That is being looked at again as the last time the FRA was extended, it also provided long-term solvency for several decades after. Other measures being considered are raising the cap of income where the Social Security tax is applied (there is no earnings cap for Medicare taxes). Regardless of how someone sees it, we remained encouraged that the U.S. has found the answer before and will find it again.

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

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Community

# FWC Northwest Region Reports Operation Dry Water BUI Detection and Boating Enforcement Results

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) Division of Law Enforcement along with other law enforcement partners participated in Operation Dry Water's heightened enforcement weekend July 4-6. With the Fourth of July falling on a Thursday this year the heightened patrol efforts extended through Sunday, July 7.

ODW is a year-round national effort to educate recreational boaters about the dangers of Boating Under the Influence of alcohol or drugs and their mission is to reduce the number of alcohol- and drug-related incidents and fatalities on the water.

The Northwest Region of the FWC DLE includes 16 counties encompassing Escambia County to Jefferson County. The region's officers and staff

were proactive in getting boating safety messaging out to the public prior to the holiday and they continued educating the public while remaining on the lookout for reckless or impaired operators during the popular Fourth of July boating weekend.

Between July 4-7, FWC officers in the Northwest Region cited 131 vessel operators for boating safety violations, issued 631 boating safety warnings and removed nine vessel operators from the water for BUI. The highest Blood Alcohol Content reported was .19. In Florida, it is illegal to operate a vessel with a BAC of .08 or higher, the same as in a vehicle. Operating a vessel while under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal on all bodies of water and the use of both legal and illegal drugs



impairs judgment and reaction time, which can lead to serious injuries and consequences. Statewide, over 50 vessel operators were removed from the waterways of Florida for BUI during the heightened enforcement and holiday weekend.

"Boating under the influence can be a fatal decision," said Maj. Robby Creech, Northwest Regional Commander. "We know boating activity and alcohol consumption increase over the Fourth of July holiday and our officers were proud to partner with the Operation Dry Water Campaign by putting in the extra hours, increasing their patrol, educating the public and potentially saving lives. At the end of the day, the safety of the residents and visitors in Florida is what it's all about."

The FWC reminds all boaters to enjoy time with friends and family but to do so safely and don't forget to designate a sober operator before departing from the dock. More information about boating and boating regulations in Florida can

be found by visiting MyFWC.com/Boating and boaters can learn more about boating under the influence and the Operation Dry Water campaign by visiting OperationDryWater.org.

To report dangerous boating activity the public can submit anonymous tips by texting 847411 (Tip411) with keyword "FWC" followed by the location and any information about the violation or call 888-404-FWCC (3922). Additionally, there is an easy-to-use downloadable iPhone or Android app: "FWC Wildlife Alert."



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# Green Thumb Garden Club Will Tour Westonwood Ranch For The First Meeting of 2024/2025

BY KATHLEEN EDGE, PUBLICITY & WEBSITE CHAIR

One of the primary objectives of Green Thumb Garden Club (GTGC) is to provide Walton County students with scholarships to colleges, universities and technical schools. GTGC awarded \$6,000 in scholarships this year and the Club's goal is to increase that amount in 2025. The September meeting will give GTGC members and guests an opportunity to learn about our newest student sponsorship partner, Westonwood Ranch.

Attendees will meet at Horse Power Pavilion, located at 4497 State Highway 20 W, Freeport, Florida, for check-in beginning at 9 a.m. Carpools will then go to Westonwood Ranch for a tour and presentation, returning to Horse Power Pavilion for a brief meeting and lunch. The cost for the event including lunch is \$30 (cash or check) or \$32 (credit card).

Located in Freeport, Florida, Westonwood Ranch provides

life skills and job skills training to teens and young adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD) through educational opportunities including hands-on, experiential learning in their aquaponics farm operation. In addition to the job training program, Westonwood Ranch offers transitional services day programs and an after-school equine program. For more details about this remarkable organization, their website is [www.westonwood.org](http://www.westonwood.org).

GTGC's largest scholarship fundraiser, the fourth annual Holiday Bazaar, will be held on November 2, 2024, in the Cantina Laredo rear meeting room and the enclosed outdoor patio. Bazaar hours are from 9 a.m to 2 p.m. The past three year's events have been sellouts so be sure to save the date and come early for the best selection.

Green Thumb Garden Club welcomes new members. GTGC's website [www.greenthumbgardenclubinc.org](http://www.greenthumbgardenclubinc.org)



[greenthumbgardenclubinc.org](http://greenthumbgardenclubinc.org) contains detailed information about how to join the Club and

details on meetings, activities, and events. For additional information, please visit the website

or email [greenthumbgardenclubinc@gmail.com](mailto:greenthumbgardenclubinc@gmail.com).



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Community

# Walton County Emergency Management Welcomes New Logistics Coordinator, Wanya Goodgain

Walton County Emergency Management is thrilled to announce the selection of Wanya Goodgain as the department's new Logistics Coordinator. Wanya joins the team from Calera, Alabama, bringing a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective to our department.

Wanya is a recent graduate from Jacksonville State Univer-

sity, receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in Emergency Management with minors in Homeland Security and Cyber Security. Serving as a Communications Officer and former American Red Cross volunteer, he understands the importance of partner collaboration, information management, and successful decision making in

stressful situations.

"I was drawn to the Emergency Management field by its unique ability to serve local communities following a disaster," said Wanya Goodgain. "I am honored to serve as the Logistics Coordinator for the department and look forward to learning from some of the industry's leading professionals."



Wanya's comprehensive knowledge and commitment to emergency management make him a valuable addition to Walton County Emergency Management. We look forward to the positive impact he will bring to our community as we continue to enhance our disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

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## South Walton FIRE DISTRICT

### SWFD receives national recognition for EMS responses

During a prehospital heart attack or stroke emergency, every second counts in providing a patient with the best chance of survival and recovery. The South Walton Fire District has received the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline® EMS Silver Achievement

Award for its proven dedication and response to patients experiencing these severe, time-sensitive events.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers like SWFD serve as the vital link in the survivability chain by initiating rapid, lifesaving care before an individual reaches the hospital. From the time the 911 call is dispatched to when a patient is transported in an ambulance, SWFD Advanced Life Support (ALS) personnel recognize and treat the onset of heart attack or stroke symptoms with the goal of preventing serious injury or loss of life.

"Patients experiencing a stroke or cardiac emergency are suffering from what can be a terrifying and life-threatening incident," said SWFD Fire Chief Ryan Crawford. "We want our residents and visitors to know when they call 911 because of one of these difficult situations, our men and women will do everything in their power to provide you with a prompt, competent, and caring response."

In 2023, SWFD personnel

responded to more than 100 of these incidents. They handle each potential cardiac or stroke event by thoroughly evaluating a patient and their medical history, administering the appropriate medications, and responding emergently to the nearest hospital. In the most severe cases, personnel are responsible for resuscitating patients in cardiac arrest.



"The national recognition is great, but ultimately we know this is the level of service our taxpayers deserve, and it's what we strive to accomplish each day," Crawford said. "We want to recognize not just our personnel who respond on the frontlines, but the collaboration and teamwork of our EMS Division, Medical Director, and our area healthcare partners. It truly takes a community-wide effort to create a pattern of successful, pre-hospital care."

SWFD encourages community members to know the warning signs of cardiac and stroke events. The quick activation of EMS by calling 911 and describing symptoms is key to effective treatment.



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# Walton County Property Appraiser Gary Gregor Announces Reelection Bid



Gary Gregor, a long-time resident of Walton County, is running for reelection to the office of Walton County Property Appraiser. In a public statement he says, “Walton County is one of the most unique and diverse counties in Florida. With 29 years of experience in the appraisal field, and now a strong four-year record as your Walton County Property Appraiser, I believe I’m the most qualified to best serve our county during this time of growth and diversity. Most importantly, I will continue to prioritize serving the public and assisting property owners to address any questions or concerns they may have.”

As noted, Gary now has a 4-year record to run on.

### Goals achieved since being elected:

“First, we brought advanced appraisal technology to Walton County which enabled us to be more efficient and effective than ever before, also equipping us with the tools to provide the best possible customer service and the most advanced services available to Walton County. These improvements have also enabled us to be more effective in achieving our goal to be in compliance with Florida Statutes and Florida Department of Revenue Guidelines, as required by the Florida Constitution. With the emphasis on

providing outstanding customer service for the citizens and property owners of Walton County, we have also implemented on-line services for the ability to file homestead exemption and tangible personal property returns.

We continue to restructure the office to improve workflow and timelines. We have created a system that consistently stays ahead of schedule and allows for a better appraisal process and additional time for field inspections to meet required mandates by Florida law. In addition, we’ve increased the outreach efforts and services of the office through the website, social media, and online services.

*In a statement to South Walton Life Gary stated:*

“I believe I am the **Best** qualified candidate for this position, having 29 years of experience, approximately 10 of those in a management / supervisory role and the past 4 years as your Property Appraiser. In this time, the office complied with Florida Statutes, made technology and workflow process improvements while experiencing unprecedented growth in Walton County. I have the most appraisal experience having done hundreds of USPAP (industry standard) compliant appraisals. I have the most appraisal education having completed over 300 credit hours and 15+ classes related to the appraisal practice. I am the only candidate that is a Certified Florida Appraiser. I am the only candidate that holds a professional appraisal designation in mass appraisal. I look forward to continuing to bring advanced technology and professional appraisal knowledge and practices, along with an emphasis on outstanding customer service to the citizens of Walton County. It would be a tremendous honor to serve another term as your Walton County Property Appraiser. My promise is to continue to

comply with all Florida Statutes, produce **Honest, Fair** and **Equitable** assessments and exceptional customer service for all Walton County property owners.

Gregor has been married to Brianne Gregor for 20 years and

together they share two children. His family is actively involved at New Harmony Baptist Church and they enjoy spending their free time outdoors, at the beach, playing softball, hunting, fishing, and going on new adventures.

They are so happy to call Walton County home and he hopes to continue to share his knowledge and passion by serving as the Walton County Property Appraiser for the next four years.



## Re-elect Gary Gregor for Walton County Property Appraiser

*Please allow me the privilege to continue to use my experience, knowledge, education and leadership for you.*

### The Candidate with:

- ✓ the **MOST** appraisal experience
- ✓ the **MOST** appraisal knowledge
- ✓ the **MOST** appraisal education
- ✓ and proven leadership qualities



## Christian, Conservative, Republican

### Goals for keeping up with the growth and diversity in Walton County.

- Provide outstanding customer service
- Update and advanced appraisal analysis and technology
- Improve integrity and knowledge through staff education and employment of appraisal practice professionals
- Improve outflow of services that office provides and online filing capabilities
- Improve work flow

## Experience, Knowledge, Education & Integrity Matter!

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



# Dan Curry For District 1 County Commissioner

Dan Curry's campaign for the Board of County Commissioners District 1 is rooted in a desire to restore dignity and honor to local government. With pillars of Courage, Commitment, Community, and Character, Curry aims to bring about positive change that reflects the values of the community. We need a commissioner who will not be afraid to stand up to developers and self-dealing insiders with vested financial interests at the expense of everyone else. Curry will not be accepting campaign contributions from developers.

Dan Curry's candidacy for Walton County Board of County Commissioners is underpinned by a rich tapestry of professional achievements, community engagement, and a steadfast commitment to excellence.

As an executive in supply chain management and purchasing/procurement, Curry has spearheaded initiatives ranging from the negotiation of agreements worth millions to the implementation of technology solutions, consistently optimizing ROI and managing risk. His extensive industry knowledge spans automotive and industrial



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We have given some of our current Elected Officials and previous ones their opportunity, the decisions made along with their actions have placed bad optics on our county and put us where we are now with Development and Infrastructure. The incumbents and their allies, including my opponents, do not have the interests of the people in mind. They have recklessly approved and supported rezoning, large planned unit developments, and variances letting developers basically do what they want and overbuild. The result is crowded infrastructure, crowded beaches and lost natural resources and beauty. My opponents are being funded mostly by these developers so if they are elected you can expect more of the same.

**If you want change in Walton County, if you want an independent voice for the people, please vote for me on or before August 20.**

*Paid by Dan Curry Republican for County Commissioner.*



manufacturing, consumer goods, government and defense sectors, providing a solid foundation for addressing diverse challenges in county and state governance. With a proven track record of leadership and a vision for positive change, Curry is poised to serve the citizens of Walton County with Integrity, Character and Dedication.

### Dan Curry Supports:

- Responsible Growth
- More Diversity within our Economic Portfolio
- Open Beaches
- Adequate Infrastructure
- Departmental Audits from an outside entity





# Tony Anderson: To Make South Walton Stronger for Everybody, We Must Say “Yes” to Big Ideas

Expanding public beach accesses, reducing traffic, and building parks and ballfields have been key priorities for Tony An-

ernment must continue to take aggressive action on these important “quality of life” issues.

“Like all of America, Walton

our beaches open to all. And everyone wants relief from traffic.”

Anderson said he’s well-positioned to address these challenges because he’s built coalitions of residents to tackle tough challenges before. He pointed to Walton County’s fight for Customary Use, which he strongly supported, and the county’s historic investments in South Walton projects during his tenure as commissioner.

“We put aside negativity and worked together to build or break ground on three new beach accesses, three new parking facilities, and new feeder roads in South Walton,” he said. “We also purchased 220 acres of land to manage stormwater, resurfaced major roadways, and expanded Helen McCall Park and the South Walton Sports Complex – all while cutting property tax rates.”

Now, Anderson wants the county to accelerate efforts to secure state and federal grants to expedite infrastructure proj-



ness parks in DeFuniak Springs, Freeport, and Mossy Head to create higher-paying private sector jobs. He also indicated that he will propose another reduction in property tax rates next year to offset the burden of inflation.

“The vast majority of Walton County residents are hardworking people who just want their tax dollars used productively, and many of those folks don’t have time to show up at meetings. I’m in this job for them,” Anderson said. “You simply cannot get things done for people if you only listen to the folks who shout, ‘no.’”

Anderson was raised in Walton County, worked in the county his entire life, and raised his three children – Colby, Logan, and Keagan – here. Now, his three grandchildren call Walton County home, too. He faces two opponents in the August 20, 2024, Republican primary.

Learn more about Tony Anderson at [VoteTony24.com](http://VoteTony24.com).



derson throughout his service as Walton County Commissioner for District 5.

In announcing his campaign for reelection, Anderson, a Republican, said that county gov-

County faces challenges,” Anderson said. “Young people want better job opportunities with higher wages. Families want better parks and sports facilities for their kids. Most residents want

ects, improve cell phone service countywide, and protect Choctawhatchee Bay. He also supports securing the Boys & Girls Club property in South Walton to create more youth sports options, and he backs building a new sports complex for children in North Walton.

On economic development, Anderson says he will work to attract new aviation, avionics, technology, and logistics businesses to Walton County’s busi-

## REPUBLICAN TONY ANDERSON:

Bringing neighbors together. Delivering results for all of Walton County.

**Tony Anderson is a father, grandfather, retired small business owner, and conservative Republican.**

As our Walton County Commissioner for District 5, Tony works to deliver results for all residents, not just the elite few. With your support in the August 20 Republican Primary, Tony will continue the fight to:

- Support local businesses and create new jobs
- Improve infrastructure and roads
- Protect and expand public beaches
- Invest in parks and recreation facilities
- Cut property tax rates

Learn more at [VoteTony24.com](http://VoteTony24.com).







*Celebrate 100 Years of Golf  
at Eagle Springs Golf & Recreation!*

**Save the Date: August 17, 2024 @ 7:30 AM**

Food trucks, prizes, special discounts & more!  
Come and see the newly renovated golf & recreational facility!

**Making memories for the next 100 years of golfing at Eagle Springs Golf Course.**

Bring in your story of golfing at Defuniak/Eagle Springs Golf course, include a selfie and get a free commemorated Eagle Springs coffee mug. You can also send/text to [paul@lifemediagr.com](mailto:paul@lifemediagr.com)/850-999-3245. Players, this will run as an additional full page of pictures and memories in the SoWal Life August edition.

**Eagle Springs Golf & Recreation  
117 Country Club Lane, Defuniak Springs**

**[www.eaglespringsgolf.com](http://www.eaglespringsgolf.com)**



# Eagle Springs Golf Course Celebrating 100th Anniversary August 17th

First impressions are important. And when first driving into the Eagle Springs Golf and Recreation Center in DeFuniak Springs one can't help but think, "Wow, this is nice!"

First, the greens are impeccably well-groomed, a stately appearance for a course celebrating its 100-year anniversary. The facility is anchored by a Clubhouse-Restaurant-Pro Shop one can't help but be impressed. Another sign of success? We had to search for a parking space!

The 192-acre Eagle Springs golf course opened in 1924 as a 9-hole course and the greens were sanded, which was common in the early days of golf.

The golf course remained a 9-hole layout until the late 1960s when land was cleared for an additional 9 holes. The 18-hole course was completed in 1996.

Today, the former DeFuniak Springs Country Club includes an 18-hole, par-72 course featuring five sets of tees playing from 4,100 to 6,600 yards.

Carved from gently rolling hills and pine forests, the course

includes five spring-fed lakes, 23 sand traps and natural hazards, including towering trees, sandy scrub brush, hardpan and a variety of flowering shrubs.



Tree-lined, tight fairways lead to small Bermuda grass greens that are not only elevated but pitched and undulating enough to make the very best of putters a bit nervous. Eagle Springs is also quite affordable, boasting some of the lowest green fees in the area! Truly a hidden gem of a course with beautiful views from every vantage point.

In 2019, Walton County purchased the course and surrounding property.

The 190-acre site included an 18-hole golf course, public



swimming pool and clubhouse at a cost to the county of only \$50,000. The 2 million dollar renovation and expansion plans include fishing docks, walking trails, basketball courts, tennis courts, renovation of the Olym-

pic size swimming pool, irrigation for the golf course and more. "We're trying to make it a recreational facility where people can come out and enjoy the family, be outdoors; it's safe and not expensive," said Parks and Recre-

ation director Shane Supple.

The county will be continuing its 100-year celebration on Saturday, August 17 at 9 a.m. with a golf tournament, hole-in-one contest and a corn hole tournament beginning at 4 p.m. The day will be filled with activities and prizes. The public is invited to come out and celebrate the launch of this stunning county property!

The Eagle Restaurant is a wonderful addition with reasonably priced food.

Breakfast is served from 8:30-10:30 a.m. and Lunch is served from 11:00 a.m. - close, Wednesday to Monday.

While celebrating its 100th anniversary, it seems Eagle Springs Park and Recreational Facility and Golf Course has a bright future!

Find Eagle Springs Golf and Recreation Center at 171 Country Club Ln in Defuniak Springs, FL 32435. Call (850) 892-3812 for more information or visit their website at www.eaglespring-golf.com.

# SHERIFF MIKE ADKINSON HAS UNIFIED THIS AGENCY.



LAW ENFORCEMENT



FIRE RESCUE



ANIMAL SERVICES



COUNTY JAIL

## IT'S NOT JUST POLICING. IT'S NOT JUST A JOB. IT'S A CALLING. VOTE ADKINSON FOR SHERIFF ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 20TH.

POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT APPROVED AND PAID FOR BY MICHAEL ADKINSON JR., REPUBLICAN, FOR SHERIFF.



 Community

# Barbara Morano: Champion for Change

Barbara Morano, Republican, is running for Walton County Commissioner for District 5, bringing a wealth of experience and a proven track record of community service. Her extensive involvement in county activities, organizations, and tireless volunteer work showcases her commitment to the community



and readiness to take on this vital role. In a public statement, Mrs. Morano stated, "I have participated in many county meetings during the past five years, speaking at the podium on the county budget, the land development code, planned unit developments and ordinances that affect our quality of life and the natural environment and the need for enhanced infrastructure throughout Walton County. I do my homework and I research. I have no special interests except for the citizens of Walton County."

## Leadership in Community Organizations

As a former school counselor, supervisor and principal, Barbara's advocacy for children, parents and teachers was always at the forefront. Her dedication to helping others ignited her passion for advocacy, problem-solving and leadership in retirement.

Barbara is a Board member of South Walton Community Council, a 501c3 non-profit volunteer organization with a focus on sustainable growth. She is a member of Coastal Seniors. Barbara led the Draper Lake Coastal Village HOA as president from 2014 to 2017. Additionally, she contributed to the Draper Lake

Architectural Control Committee from 2018 to 2020 and currently presides over the Hidden Lake Condominiums as President since 2019.

As a board member of the South Walton Community Council Contributions, Barbara has actively opposed detrimental developments, such as defeating the rezoning of property on Moll Drive for an RV park and reducing the density of a DR Horton project on 30A. She has alerted neighbors to potential developments, worked to eliminate "ghost chairs" at public regional beach accesses, and advised communities both north and south of the bay on navigating county processes and procedures. "I have walked neighborhoods and knocked on doors to inform citizens of projects that are being proposed and would negatively affect them."

## Endorsement

The Walton County Citizens for Smart Growth has endorsed Barbara Morano for the Board of County Commissioners, District 5. A portion of the endorsement:

"Mrs. Morano has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the community and promotes fiscal responsibility when taxpayers' funds are spent.... watchful that it will be managed prudently and effectively.

Her extensive experience and active participation in crucial county meetings highlight her understanding of county governance. Barbara's unwavering dedication to smart growth is evident in her advocacy for green space conservation and her significant contributions to the Tree Ordinance committee.

Barbara's tenacity, knowledge, and proven perseverance make her the best overall candi-

date to fill the Board of County Commissioner Seat in District 5. Walton County Citizens for Smart Growth believes that Walton County will thrive and grow responsibly under her leadership. We urge our fellow citizens to support Barbara Morano's candidacy for the Board of County

Commissioners, District 5."

Barbara has been married to James Morano for over 50 years and they have a married daughter who is an infectious disease physician working at the Veterans Hospital in Tampa and one grandson. "I have enjoyed the beauty of Walton County, the

diversity of the various communities and cities, but most of all, I desire to serve as your Commissioner and I promise to serve with integrity, transparency and caring for all FIVE districts."

**Voting for Morano is a vote for change.**

## BARBARA MORANO

### Republican for County Commissioner



## Giving a Voice to the People

Barbara is driven by a desire to maintain the character and quality of life in Walton County. She is an articulate advocate who is actively involved in managing responsible growth, and promoting accountability and transparency.

### POSITIONS:

- ✓ Supports opening South Walton beaches to public access, restricting signs on beaches and banning ghost chairs
- ✓ Opposes rezoning to allow expanded and higher density development
- ✓ Supports preserving the character and natural resources of Walton County
- ✓ Supports responsible spending of taxpayer dollars that are fairly distributed throughout the county.

### Contact Barbara:

[Barbara.Morano@proton.me](mailto:Barbara.Morano@proton.me) • 850-585-4935  
[www.BarbaraMorano2024.com](http://www.BarbaraMorano2024.com)

**FOR CHANGE - VOTE MORANO**  
*Vote on August 20 in the Republican Primary*

# Barbara MORANO

## FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Political ad paid for by Barbara Morano for County Commissioner.

VISIT  
[SOUTHWALTON.LIFE](http://SOUTHWALTON.LIFE)



# ECTC Opens Registration for Fall Programs

## Programs Available in Miramar Beach, Freeport and DeFuniak Springs

Emerald Coast Theatre Company's (ECTC) 2024 Fall Educational Theatre programs are bigger and better than ever. These programs provide creative and engaging classes designed especially for young thespians from elementary to high school, as well as adult classes. ECTC offers classes for Mini Players (5yrs.-1st), Little Players (2nd-3rd grade), Big Players (4th-5th

grade), teens, and adults. This year, ECTC is offering Shrek the Musical, Show Choir (4th - 12th), Acting for Musical Theatre, Movie Magic Mondays, Tap for Teens and Adults, Jazz and Dance for teens and adults, Homeschool Classes, Beginner and Intermediate Ballet, ECTC Thespian Troupe, ECTC Teen Company (9th-12th), and Individual Coaching Sessions for



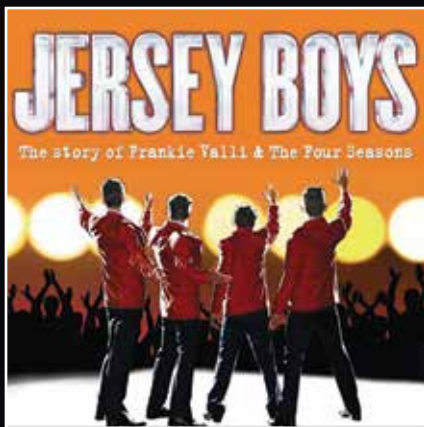
schedule of class dates and times along with tuition and registration rates can be found at [www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org/youth-classes](http://www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org/youth-classes).

"ECTC is elevating the game this fall. We have new classes, old favorites, and a show our students have been begging for - Shrek

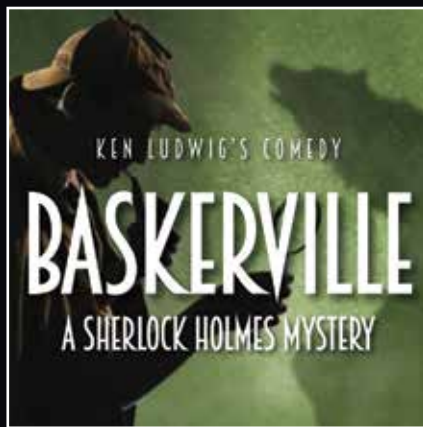
Jr Thespians/Jr Company, and a Senior Drama Club. The full

**ECTC**

*continued on page 29*



Sept. 20 - Oct. 13



Oct. 24 - Nov. 3



Dec. 6-22

# ECTC

emerald coast theatre company

## Season 12 Coming Soon

More Info and Tickets:  
[www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org](http://www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org)

# Aj's

# FOOTBALL IS BACK!



## WATCH

THE **BIG** GAMES  
NFL SUNDAY TICKET  
& COLLEGE GAMEPLAN

## EAT

SPECIAL FOOTBALL  
MENUS AT EACH LOCATION

## DRINK

BEER SPECIALS & GREAT DRINKS!





 Events

# Things To Do Around SoWal



**Grand Boulevard Lawn Games Fridays and Saturdays**

Grand Boulevard invites you to bring the entire family out to enjoy some fun! Fall Lawn Games will take over Grand Park from 5 - 8:30 p.m. on Friday & Saturday, August 16 thru October 26. Grab some food and drinks from one of the many restaurants in Grand Boulevard before you settle in to a fun round of corn hole, giant lawn chess, checkers and more.

**Foster Gallery Fête & Artist Talk August 15**

Come out for the Foster Gallery Fête & Artist Talk on Thursday, August 15 from 5 - 7 p.m. at the Miramar Beach Creative Campus, home to

The Foster Gallery and J. Leon Studio. Enjoy an intimate artist talk and visual storytelling session with Southern Prize and State Fellowship artist Nadia Meadows. Immerse yourself in an evening full of creativity and conversation as she shares insights into her artistic journey, inspiring stories and creative process. Light bites will be served throughout the evening, complementing the ambiance of creativity and camaraderie. Learn more and get the latest CAA news: [culturalartsalliance.com](http://culturalartsalliance.com).

**Huck & Lilly @ Seaside Amphitheater Tuesdays and Thursdays**

Huck & Lilly will perform LIVE in the Seaside Amphitheater Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5 p.m. Bring a chair or blanket, snacks and drinks, and enjoy the show. Free and open to all ages. Singer/songwriters Ken Johnson and Andi Zack-Johnson as Huck and Lilly specialize in music for kids AND the grown ups who love them!



**Topsail Hill Preserve State Park Guided Plant Stroll August 19**

Join Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and Master Gardener Bill Kuenstler on the third Monday each month from 9-11:00 a.m. for a Guided Plant Stroll. The stroll begins at Tram Stop #2. This program is free with regular park admission. Park programs are made possible by Friends of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park. For more information about the Friends of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park,

visit [topsailparkfriends.org](http://topsailparkfriends.org).

**Dog Day Pawty at Sandestin Baytowne Marina August 26**

Celebrate International Dog Day with us at the beach at Baytowne Marina on August 26th from 6:30-8:30 p.m.! Enjoy this FREE event with live music, a doggy kissing booth, a special dog menu at Marina Bar and Grill, photo booth, and more! Bring along your furry friend for an unforgettable event!

**Perfect Hues: Baytowne Art Fest**

Join The Village of Baytowne Wharf for Perfect Hues: Baytowne Art Fest, August 31 - September 1st. Each evening from 4-9 p.m., stroll The Village streets as you browse a variety of artwork from local and regional artists, and savor bites from some of the area's best restaurants and food trucks. Enjoy LIVE music throughout the festival and a spectacular fireworks show over the lagoon on Sunday at 9:30pm. Also on Sunday night, be sure to check in by the breezeway to enjoy a sip & shop through The Village. Admission is free and open to the public.

The main stage at the events Plaza will feature live music nightly from 4 - 9 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 31, 4-6:15 p.m. Mike Whitty; 6:30-9 p.m. Timmy Hood

Sunday, Sept. 1, 4-6:15 p.m. Emily Bass; 6:30-9 p.m. Jared Herzog



**Dedicated Lawman.**

**COMMITTED TO KEEPING US SAFE.**

**Vote Conservative Aaron Murray for Sheriff on Aug. 20th**

*"I am committed to creating a positive culture for our public safety professionals, so they can bring that same positive attitude to the public." - Aaron Murray*

Aaron Murray has dedicated his life to public safety. He has more than **24 years of law enforcement experience**, including as a SWAT Team Commander and as a local Chief of Police. Aaron knows that the key to keeping us safe is by keeping politics out of the Sheriff's office and taking the fight to those wanting to cause our community harm.

Political adv. paid for by Aaron Murray for Sheriff.



Aaron Murray is grounded in faith, a devoted family man and a servant leader.

**A Safer Way Forward for Walton County**

- ✓ Create a Positive Culture for Public Safety Professionals to Thrive
- ✓ Improve Safety on Our Streets, Which Are the 10th Most Deadly in the Country\*
- ✓ Fix Walton's 911 System to Help Save Lives
- ✓ Emphasize Better Training, Communication, and Health of our Sheriff's Office
- ✓ Manage the Sheriff's Office with 100% Transparency and Accountability

\* <https://www.nwfdailynews.com/story/news/local/2024/05/08/study-shows-walton-county-roads-are-the-10th-most-dangerous-in-us/73530071007/>

**Learn more at [www.murray4sheriff.com](http://www.murray4sheriff.com)**





## Celebrate the Arts with *Festive Fall Events*

**Best of the Emerald Coast** \*MKAF is the 2024 Charity Beneficiary

OCT 10 | 6 PM | Grand Boulevard at Sandestin

**An Evening with Wendy Rodrigue**

OCT 11 | 6 PM | The Dugas Estate | Santa Rosa Beach

**Arty Kick Off Party & 29th Annual Festival of the Arts**

OCT 25 | 6 PM | Henderson Beach Resort | Destin

OCT 26 | 9 AM - 5 PM & OCT 27 | 10 AM - 4 PM | Dugas Pavilion Green in Destin

**Purchase Tickets at [MKAF.org/Events](https://www.MKAF.org/Events)**

Proceeds from all events benefit MKAF and its ArtsReach education and community engagement initiatives.

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SINFONIA GULF COAST

# CABARET

AT SEAGAR'S

**An Evening with Alysha Umphress**

**Tuesday, Sept. 17 | 5:30 PM**

**Seagar's Prime Steaks & Seafood**

**TICKETS: FROM \$395 PER PERSON**

*The evening includes valet, champagne reception, multi-course dinner, wine, gratuity and performance.*

Join us for a spectacular evening with award-winning Broadway star and television actress Alysha Umphress. With impeccable vocals, magnetic storytelling, and contagious charisma, Umphress captivates. Her undeniable talent has been showcased in *On the Town* (Tony nomination), *American Idiot* (Grammy Award), *Smokey Joe's Café* (Chita Rivera Award), and the world premiere of *Beaches* (Helen Hayes nomination). Come and experience the magic of Alysha Umphress live on stage!

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

PRESENTED BY:

**SEAGAR'S**  
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Box Office:  
[SinfoniaGulfCoast.org](https://www.SinfoniaGulfCoast.org)  
850.460.8800





# Governor Ron DeSantis Presents \$20,000 Awards to Five Florida Teacher of the Year Finalists

Governor Ron DeSantis recently recognized the five Florida 2025 Teacher of the Year finalists. Governor DeSantis presented each finalist with a \$20,000 check. The winner, Jaime Suarez, was named the

overall winner at the Teacher of the Year gala on Thursday, July 25. Suarez will receive additional awards, bringing her total award amount to \$50,000.

The five finalists for the 2025 Florida Teacher of the Year

were Samantha Nelson, Florida State University School; Jennifer Brown, Marion County; Jaime Suarez, Hernando County; Dr. Clayton Nylund, Hillsborough County; and Heather Stewart in Walton County.



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<p><b>Surgical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breast Augmentation &amp; Lift</li> <li>• Tummy Tuck, Mommy Makeover</li> <li>• Liposuction (Vaser, 360)</li> <li>• Facelift, Necklift, Eyelid Lift</li> <li>• Gynecomastia (Male Breast Reduction)</li> <li>• Post Weight Loss</li> </ul>	<p><b>Non-Surgical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Botox Bar</li> <li>• Facial Fillers</li> <li>• Profound (RF Microneedling)</li> <li>• Laser Hair Removal</li> <li>• OBAGI Skin Care</li> <li>• Laser Pigmentation / Wrinkles</li> </ul>
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## Grit and Grace Honors WCDWC Member



Walton County Democratic Women’s Club member Victoria Crystal was honored by Grit and Grace July 19-23. Her “powerful” story was delivered by Connie Baldwin of Defuniak Springs. From being orphaned at the age of 6 to being an abused wife to the many contributions she has made to her town, Crystal’s life has been a full one. The story of her meeting and later losing the love of her life brought tears to many in the audience.

In addition to being the Communications Coordinator for the WCDWC, she is

the PR Director for The Tivoli Historical Society and Walton County Democratic Black Caucus and also a member of CJEF of Walton County and the NAACP. Victoria is the founder of The Ladies of Distinction of DFS, a group formed to honor people, many of whom are never thought to be worthy of honor. She is a writer, poet, and the author of seven books. Victoria was in the beauty business for 45 years, where her prolific skills as a stylist and hair care specialist earned her the nickname “Queen Bee”.



# Why is Sustainability Important?

KIMBERLY STANLEY, SEASIDE INSTITUTE™

When discussing sustainability, many think about environmental concerns and the ways we can help slow the effects of climate change. However, the concept extends far beyond our planet's health. It also encompasses social inclusion, wellness, and economic stability. The term, officially defined in 1987, refers to our ability to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

From an environmental perspective, sustainability involves safeguarding our ecosystem from pollutants to ensure the long term health of our natural resources. By reducing pollution, adopting renewable energy sources, and implementing more environmentally friendly methods and practices, we can do our part to help mitigate climate change. A healthy ecosystem is a thriving ecosystem.

Social sustainability means taking the necessary steps to improve everyone's quality of life.



Access to clean water, nutritious food, and safe living conditions support physical and mental well-being. This fosters optimism, hope, and can improve an indi-

vidual's sense of self-worth. People who have access to their daily needs and a better sense of self-worth will likely take steps to embrace a healthier lifestyle, thereby

increasing their lifespan.

Economic sustainability promotes the importance of economic growth. Positive economic growth is vital for a community

to thrive and be a healthy place for its residents to call home. This includes balancing supply and demand, investing in green technologies, and supporting local businesses to create jobs. If workers can provide for their family, their overall quality of life improves and the local economy continues to move forward.



It is essential for each of us to take practical steps to be more sustainable. Every individual should play a part as the health of our environment affects each of us. We can do small things like conserve energy, reduce waste, walk or bike when possible instead of driving an automobile, and choose products that are better for our body and the environment. Actions like these not only benefit our planet, but also enhance our resilience and quality of life.

By embracing sustainable practices in our daily lives, we can contribute to a more robust and equitable future for generations to come. If interested in learning more, visit [seasideinstitute.org](http://seasideinstitute.org).

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B E A C H





# Sunbright Inn Receives Scenic Walton Design Excellence Award

BY KERRI PARKER

Scenic Walton recently announced Sunbright Inn as the winner of its Design Excellence Award for the renovation of the oldest house in Walton County.

The organization presented the award to owners, Patrick and Heather O'Neill, among their family and friends, including dignitaries involved with the project in DeFuniak Springs in June.

Among a couple dozen guests, the ceremony opened with Leigh Moore, executive director of Scenic Walton, explaining the purpose of the organization and the award. "We created this

award for businesses and local governmental entities that excel in the areas of architecture, landscaping, signage and other categories related to scenic beauty in the built environment," says Moore. Scenic Walton recently revived the Design Excellence Award in 2024, originally debuting in 2017. The award helps to promote beauty and safety throughout Walton County by recognizing indisputable development and design excellence. "The efforts of the O'Neill family and Paul Rushing Construction have delivered astonishing renovations that not only restored a significant historical building in DeFuniak Springs, but also enhanced the beauty of Highway 331," says Moore.

Patrick O'Neill accepted the award with a heartfelt speech placing significant emphasis on the team behind the scenes who tirelessly pursued excellence in the renovation process, including his children. "There is no better way to spend time with your kids than laying pavers in the extreme Florida summer heat," laughs O'Neill. The renovation was a family affair, with all hands on deck throughout the 27-month renovation. Not only the O'Neill family, but also their operation partners, Inn Keepers David and Heather Campbell. The Campbell's young adult children are also involved in daily operations of the Inn. Staying on course, in thanking Paul Rushing of Rushing Construction for invaluable expertise in Victorian home renovation, O'Neill also highlighted Paul's son "Bubba" Paul Wayne Rushing II, as having "the most blood, sweat and tears" in the project. In closing of the presentation, all attendees were invited on a tour of the home turned Inn, with eight rooms that embrace the past but with modern amenities – "like plumbing," laughs O'Neill.

"This award presentation was the first-ever to bring me to tears. It was heartwarming and embodied the importance of family and community. We are delighted to recognize Sunbright Inn and all the people who made this renovation possible," says Moore.

Scenic Walton, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that promotes in-



creased property values, a robust business environment and safe and beautiful surroundings for all, works to preserve, protect and enhance the beauty and safety of Walton County.

Since its inception in 2008, Scenic Walton has been dedicated to preserving the natural beauty of Walton County while enhancing safety for pedestrians and cyclists. By collaborating with community members and elected officials, Scenic Walton ensures that the region's charm remains intact for future generations.

Leigh Moore, the dynamic Scenic Walton executive director and vice chair of Scenic America's Board of Directors, embodies a deep passion for scenic conservation. Initially joining as a part-time executive director for the Scenic Corridor Foundation, Leigh has seen the organization evolve into Scenic Walton, where she now leads full-time. "I'm really passionate about what we do," Leigh shares. "We're the only ones who do it. There's not a lot of advocacy being done for scenic beauty."

Scenic Walton's primary focus is on impactful project work. "In the beginning, we concentrated on Hwy. 98 and Hwy. 331 south of the Bay. By 2018 and 2019, we started achieving more significant milestones and received requests to extend our projects beyond that corridor. That's when we expanded our reach to cover the entire county and rebranded ourselves as Scenic Walton. It was a substantial expansion for us."

Following this expansion, Leigh and her team integrated board members from Central and North Walton and began identifying project opportunities north of the bay. "Our mis-

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**VISIT  
[WaltonGOP.org](http://WaltonGOP.org)**

*Continued on page 43*



**ECTC**

*continued from page 23*

the Musical! This semester is going to be magic! We hope to see everyone on stage with us!" - Heath Carroll, Director of Education

Shrek the Musical, the Tony Award-winning musical features your favorite Ogre and all of his fairytale friends as they fight the evil Lord Farquad to regain their homes. Students will work as a cast to act, dance, and sing throughout this high-energy, fast paced production. There's a reason Shrek has become a cultural phenomenon. Join us and be a part of the action!

Fall Youth and Adult Education Classes are held from August 10 - November 16, 2024. Payment plans and Scholarships are available. \*Tuition price includes a \$30 non-refundable registration fee. Class locations include ECTC's main space at 560 Grand BLVD, Suite 200 in Miramar Beach, FL as well as Florida Chautauqua Theatre (FCT) at 848 Baldwin Avenue in Defuniak Springs, FL and at the Freeport Elementary School in Freeport, FL.

"Theatre arts allow children to express themselves in a comfortable environment with other children, without judgement. We are overjoyed to be able to continue these programs here at ECTC and surrounding communities," says ECTC co-founder and producing artistic director Nathanael Fisher.

ECTC's 2024-2025 season is made possible with support from Grand Boulevard at Sandestin, St. Joe Community Foundation, Howard Group, and the South Walton Tourist Development Council. Thank you to our Education Program Sponsors - Shoreline Title, Barker Williams, PLLC, Jennifer Crawford's Own At The Beach Team with Keller Williams, Heritage Oak Wealth Advisors

To register for ECTC 2024 Fall Theatre Education classes, visit <https://www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org/youthclasses>.

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By KAY LEAMAN, HEALTH ARCHITECT, HEALTHYDAY HEALTHYLIFE

It sounds like a western. However, these don't carry

pesticides in at least one sample of each item tested.

More than 50 different pesticides were detected on every type of crop on the list except cherries (part of the dirty dozen).

Some of these pesticides and chemicals can be linked to cancer, reproductive damage and are also banned in Europe and the European Union.

In order of toxicity the Dirty Dozen items are:  
Strawberries



guns, ride horses or fight outlaws. These dirty dozen do, however, have an effect on our health.

Every year, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) releases its Dirty Dozen and Clean 15 list. This list is based on thorough testing of many fruits and vegetables. For 2024, here are a few results from EWG ([ewg.org](http://ewg.org)).

More than 90% of samples of strawberries, apples, cherries, spinach, nectarines and grapes tested positive for residues of two or more pesticides. A total of 209 pesticides were found. There are 13-23

- Spinach
- Kale, collard and mustard greens
- Grapes
- Peaches
- Pears
- Nectarines
- Apples
- Bell and Hot peppers
- Cherries
- Blueberries
- Green Beans (tested positive for a pesticide the EPA banned over 10 years ago)

The Clean 15 have the lowest counts of these residues:

- Carrots
- Sweet Potatoes
- Mangoes

# The Dirty Dozen

- Mushrooms
- Watermelon
- Cabbage
- Kiwi
- Honeydew melon
- Asparagus
- Sweet peas (frozen)
- Papaya (Can be produced from genetically modified seeds)
- Onions
- Pineapple
- Sweet Corn (Can be produced from genetically modified seeds)
- Avocados

With the dirty dozen, buying organic should be our first choice. We can also find alternatives like blackberries, oranges, bananas, etc. It doesn't mean these are totally clean, but their testing results places them in between the dirty and the clean.

The small label on produce tells us how it was grown. A 4-digit code beginning with a 3 or 4 is

**DIRTY DOZEN**

*continued on page 33*

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Wellness

# Want a Long, Happy Marriage? Be Loving AND Stubborn



BY JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PHD  
**You might be surprised to learn that stubbornness in marriage is a good thing.**

Some spouses try to create a happy marriage through grand romantic gestures like sending flowers, planning romantic dinners, champagne at sunset, or wearing sexy lingerie. Special plans like these do go a long way toward creating a terrific date night or memorable summer vacation, but they are woefully inadequate for sustaining a happy marriage.

Other, more enlightened spouses realize that **love is an action word that is best demonstrated by frequent small gestures.**

These spouses understand that a happy, love-filled marriage involves daily actions that sustain intimacy, commitment, and passion. Robert Sternberg used

these concepts to articulate his powerfully descriptive Triangle Theory of Love.

I use this theory to help couples understand that to sustain a happy, loving marriage over a lifetime they must continually and intentionally:

(1) Remain open and responsive to one another and act like (not just say) they are best friends with their spouse.

(2) Touch and show physical affection and passion toward each other, recognizing that the frequency and type of sex evolves with the length of the relationship and throughout the aging process; and

(3) Demonstrate their commitment to each other and their relationship by consistently behaving positively to each other and being dependable, especially when it counts.

Happy, well-adjusted couples understand that it takes all three sides of the Love Triangle to sustain a happy marriage.

**In fact, they make it look easy.**

Clearly, this kind of approach to marriage does make day-to-day life easier and more pleasant, in part, because relationship **intimacy, commitment and passion** fuse together to create a Teflon-type protection against routine ups and downs.

But, when real challenges enter a marriage, spouses must show commitment “on steroids”! To sustain a marriage through life’s big challenges, couples must be stubbornly persistent. And it also helps to take a marriage refresher course, to prove it.

Some big challenges are invited, like raising children and building a career. Others are unwanted, like illness, job loss, alcoholism, or a big mistake.

But what it takes to sustain a happy marriage through both invited and unwanted marital challenges is good, old-fashioned stubbornness. That is, couples must want to stay together and be unwilling to accept any other outcome.

Judy C. Pearson author of *Lasting Love: What Keeps Couples Together*, included in her book an explanation of the value of stubbornness provided to her by Larry Constantine, who at the time was the editor of *Lifestyle* and a professor of family studies.

Mr. Constantine explained that in this context,

*“Stubbornness is a quality which keeps people hanging in there when problems seem to defy solution, when logic or fear or pain might otherwise lead them to quit”.*

Relationship professionals like me often talk and write about the value of commitment in a



lasting relationship. But I think Constantine was on to something when he said that the important, but complex concept of commitment “pales beside the adrenaline of real stubbornness when it comes to sustaining a vital relationship”.

So, this year on your summer vacation go ahead and display a grand romantic gesture, as it will create a happy memory and earn you some relationship points. Go ahead and profess that your spouse is your best friend, your lover, and your soul mate all wrapped up in one. But, if you really want your spouse to feel the love, repeat the promises you made on your wedding day and turn them into daily actions that enhance intimacy, fuel passion, and, especially, demonstrate commitment.

Or you could channel Colbie Caillat and sing “I’m never gonna walk away.... always gonna have your back”. (Or maybe you might just want to have this cued up on your phone.)

Whatever way you declare your love this summer, why not share this post with your spouse and talk about the importance of being stubbornly committed to your marriage? Then, when times get tough (and they will), you can remind each other of your promise to be stubborn. If you are already in tough times, maybe these ideas will help you “**work it out**”.

**Let me know if I can help.**

*Jamie C. Williamson, PhD is a FL Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator and Couples Counselor who is part of the Gottman Referral Network. She is an owner and partner at Amity Mediation Workshop, a mediation practice specializing in “friendly divorce” mediation and psycho-educational counseling for couples. Dr. Jamie speaks frequently on relationship topics and authors the blog “Work it Out.” You can find her online at amitymediationworkshop.com.*

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# Peacekeeping and Peacemaking

BY VICTORIA OSTROSKY

Clyde was quite proud of his appearance. And his voice. He wasn't what you'd call musical, but he was loud and that's what he liked. His feathers were a stunning black with a patch of red on his shoulders. He thought he looked a bit like a General. You can guess that he was not just a proud red-winged blackbird, but a bully.

Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow, or Jack and Jill as their friends called them, were small and non-descript, the color of unpainted, weathered wood, except for the smudge of mahogany and black with a hint of white on Jack's head. Their friends were other sparrows, mourning doves, finches, and wrens. These friends kept each other up to date on the location of the best feeders in the neighborhood, and when they were freshly restocked.

One particular backyard was a huge favorite. It was fenced and quiet, filled with flowers and no dogs or cats to startle them when they took their dinner on the ground. Lately, they'd been taking their meals on the ground more since Big Clyde was hanging around. When Clyde claimed a feeder, no one else was going to eat from it until he decided to leave and bother someone else.

On a recent afternoon, Clyde had been especially, well, noisy and irascible. He kept returning to their favorite feeder, so Jack and Jill and a small group of their friends – about a dozen in all – decided to just enjoy their meal on the grass, without paying attention to Clyde the bully above them. Clyde had this habit that was actually helpful

to anyone eating on the ground. He loved to fling seeds while he dug for his favorite morsels. This was almost as good as someone in a parade float throwing out handfuls of candy to the watching crowds.

Clyde suddenly stopped what he was doing, cocked his head, looking down in confusion. Jack and Jill and their friends ignored him and kept eating.

Peacekeeping is a little like this. We keep the peace when we avoid unnecessary conflict. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 12:18, told the believers, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." When the world seems to have lost its collective mind, searching for things to get offended over, this verse is a good anchor to commit to memory. But our brother Paul didn't stop there. He also encouraged the church in Thessalonica, "to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life..."

Peacemaking, on the flip side, is different. In Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount, He spoke about peacemaking more than once. Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." And then a little later in the same chapter, verses 23 and 24 "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First, be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift."

As Jesus showed in these word pictures, in God's kingdom, forgiveness is a big deal. Peacemaking happens when you step in and seek either reconciliation between yourself and someone

you've wronged or has wronged you, or bring others together, assisting them in finding peace between themselves.

Civil disobedience, when it comes to obeying God rather than men, can seem like the opposite of peacekeeping or peacemaking. Standing up for truth in the face of wickedness is necessary. We are, after all, to be salt and light. And Jesus said that truth needs to be shouted from the housetops. But it all

needs to be done in a spirit of gentleness, never violence.

As followers of Jesus, our lives are to reflect the transformation that occurred within us when we were born again. We're called to practice peacekeeping as a way of life, and other times, peacemaking. As the Holy Spirit works in us, making us more and more like Jesus, we'll find increasing opportunities to put these into practice. The world needs peace like never before.

"Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior; and they will give honor to God when He judges the world." (1 Peter 2:12 – NLT)



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**Lee Campbell**



 Wellness



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG

I found myself standing in the kitchen littered with craft buckets, rocks, pillows, stress balls, chore charts, money charts, an emotions poster, and a desperate grasp for control and change. More than one of the kids were in developmental seasons of big feelings with big behavior and I was attempting

to implement “parental support” to feel in control of others’ behavior that was clearly beyond my control. I decided to create a positive reinforcement system, a calming closet, chore structure, and a money education plan all at the same time to “support the kids.” Seems pretty realistic to change all of those at once, doesn’t it?!

When life feels out of control and change is needed, you may feel tempted to rush it, throwing various change strategies into practice simultaneously. Maybe you’ve started multiple strategies to address health, weight goals, relationships, professional challenges, parenting, or something else. In the midst of stress, rushing change can become a way of avoiding the

uncomfortable reality that sustainable change takes time, learning, and energy in a new direction over months to produce deep and lasting results. Sometimes small change can be sustained in short time periods, however, most change takes months and years to bear noticeable fruit in life.

Once you let go of trying to implement many change strategies to get a quick result, you are able to better identify and implement the area and strategy of change that will address the root of the struggle. You can always try additional strategies once your primary change effort begins to flourish.

So, how are you supposed to approach sustainable, steady

change?

**7 Ways to Create Sustainable Change Without Rushing It**

1. *Notice stress as a sign for inward reflection.* Notice when you are feeling discomfort in your chest, stomach, head, muscles. Notice irritability, low motivation, anxious thoughts/behavior. Notice numbing behaviors like drinking, smoking/vaping, drug use, shopping, gambling, spending, phone scrolling, or other things you do to avoid uncomfortable feelings.

2. *Openly acknowledge your stress.* Tell yourself it’s normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes. Remind yourself stress often points to an area of needed change.

3. *Engage healthy calming to get out of fight/flight/freeze responses.* Take

2 minutes to deep breathe, go for a walk, talk to a trusted friend, pray, journal, use your creativity. Use healthy coping (not numbing) to help regulate your immediate stress level so you can use rational thinking skills again (rational thinking goes offline when we get emotionally overwhelmed).

4. *Once calm, identify the problem.* Name the problem and allow yourself to think and talk about the issue as needed. “My kids are having lots of tantrums and that makes me feel like a bad parent. I’m trying to control their behavior because of my discomfort and my fear they will become bad people. I need to figure out what I can reasonably change and what I need to accept as the reality of parenting kids through hard stages.”

5. *Sort what you can and can’t control.* Controlling others’ behavior is impossible and the only person you can control is yourself. “I can’t control my kids crying or melting down. I can be in charge of my emotional health, my patience, my approach to connection and correction, and providing them with opportunities for healthy sleep and nutrition.”

6. *Choose one area of change to begin addressing what you can control.* “When my kids start melting down, I’m going to use deep breathing and remember my job is to guide them through the emotions their developing brains can’t yet handle well. I’m going to keep a steady voice, calm body and I’m going to validate their emotions and offer two calming skills they can relate to.”

7. *Stick with the one area of change until it feels natural.* Avoid changing other things while you are focused on your one area of change. It can take 3-6 weeks or longer for a new behavior to feel routine. Adding too many changes at once will make sustaining long-term change difficult. Once you have your first change area incorporated, try adding another area of change in the same manner.

Be patient and kind as you work toward change. Our brains are wired to be moldable and change takes time and consistent practice. Keep going, celebrating your successes and being gracious in your failures. Not rushing change produces noticeable, significant life transformation. If you need support along your journey of change, connect with us for counseling and coaching at Journeybravely.com.

# Don't Rush It



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# Medicare Life Changes



BY CHRISTIAN REGALADO

Often when I receive a call from a new client, it's someone going through some kind of life change. Most commonly, it's one of three reasons: a 65th birthday around the corner, an individual or family new to the area, or a Medicare-eligible person leaving their employer plan after age 65. Below, I will share a bit about these issues which may apply to you.

Because I specialize in Medicare, the most common call I receive is from people aging into

Medicare by turning 65. Some folks get confused about when they qualify for Medicare since age 62 is when you can begin collecting Social Security benefits. There are exceptions to the standard age of entry such as being on SSI Disability for 24 months or having ESRD (End-Stage Renal Disease), but 65 is the standard.

Typically, if you're collecting Social Security benefits, you'll be automatically enrolled in Medicare Parts A & B about three months before your 65th birthday. Your initial enrollment period is 7 months: three months before your birth month, your birth month, and three months afterward. Should you not enroll then, you'll have to wait until the annual enrollment period, (AEP) which starts every October 15 and ends on December 7. Don't delay too long because you will also be subject to a late enrollment penalty if you wait more than 63 days past your eligibility window and don't have other

creditable coverage like an employer health plan still in effect.

Next are folks who move to a different service area, triggering an SEP. This Special Enrollment Period starts the month before you move and lasts for two months after your move. Those on a Medicare Supplement plan only need to notify their insurance company for billing purposes. But if you're on an ACA plan, a Medicare Advantage plan, or a PDP plan, you'll have to change it.

The third group includes those who stayed on their employer's health plan after turning 65. They may be enrolled in Medicare Part A but not Part B. Once you come off your employer's group insurance, you need Medicare Part B in order to enroll in a Supplement or Advantage plan. If you had an HSA (Health Savings Account), you can't contribute once you enroll in any Part of Medicare, but the money you've contributed can still be spent on quali-

fyng expenses.

Changing plans can be confusing, but you don't need to figure it out by yourself. I suggest calling a local, certified broker whose services are free to you. Sadly, there are predatory advertisements out there that coax people into calling their 800 number, collect your information, and (likely) inform you that you don't qualify for the incentive that hooked you. Then you're pushed toward an Advantage plan they can sell you. You will never talk to that broker again.

If you would like to find someone locally, I would be excited to hear from you. I am an independent licensed broker in Santa Rosa Beach. I am certified with many different insurance carriers, and I am happy to answer your questions and assist any way that I can.

Email me at [christian@evergreenhealthins.com](mailto:christian@evergreenhealthins.com) or call (850) 687-7606.

## DIRTY DOZEN

*continued from page 29*

conventionally grown. The 5-digit code starting with 9 is organic and the 5 digit code starting with 8 is genetically modified.

There is also a new label showing up on fruits and vegetables: Apeel touts itself as natural and safe; a plant-derived food additive. It creates a thin layer or skin on the vegetable and cannot be washed off. The description is a food additive, mono and diglycerides, by-products of fat and oil processing, classified as 'emulsifiers' and contain trans fats.

If you'd like to take a deep dive, [nutritionwithjudy.com/meet-apeel](http://nutritionwithjudy.com/meet-apeel) is a good place to start.

As we start making changes, buying more organic of certain items, the stores will take notice and offer more organic options. I understand, especially in today's world, paying more for organic can be a hard choice. Focus on the clean 15 and substitutions. It's about starting new habits and making wise choices.

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# Sean of the South



BY SEAN DIETRICH

Kansas City International Airport. I was standing in a long, LONG line, waiting to board my plane. We were like cattle, clogging up the chute. Nobody was happy.

Namely, because yesterday the whole world underwent a

hugged back. Until, finally, he broke a smile, ended up terminating the phone call, and he said to the boy, midhug, “I guess I’m good, how are you?”

“It’s not ‘good,’” the boy said. “You never say ‘I’m good,’ it’s bad grammar. It’s WELL. You should have told me, you’re doing WELL!”

Everyone laughed at that. All the people in line, in foul moods, some of whom had been living in KCI for the past 20 hours, surviving on vending machine food, actually began chuckling.

The businessman was laughing too, when he said, “Okay, then I am doing WELL, and how are you today?”

“I’m good,” the boy said.

More laughter.

Then the boy addressed an-

The kid approached several others in line. I watched people’s rancid attitudes fade, one by one. And I watched a few hundred delayed airline passengers start to smile.

When it was time to board the plane, the kid stepped back in line. His comedy routine was over. He was with his mom once again. He was quiet.

“That’s one remarkable boy,” I whispered to his mother.

She smiled.

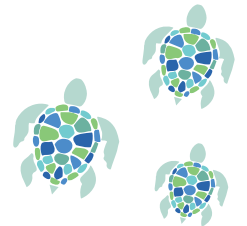
“He has a gift,” she said. “He can make anyone smile. And I mean ANYONE.”

“He must inherit that gift from you?” I said.

She laughed. “Lord, no. His biological parents left him in a dumpster as a baby, behind a restaurant.” She used a pinky to dab away a tear. “I was just the one who was lucky enough to find him.”

Some folks get all the luck.

*Sean Dietrich is a writer, humorist, novelist, and biscuit connoisseur, known for his commentary and stories on life in the American South.*



historic global internet outage, which delayed and canceled nearly 3,000 American flights. And on this particular historic day in human civilization, I happened to be flying.

You could see boiling anger and frustration on every face in the airport.

The young man in line ahead of me was with his mother. He was maybe 15. He had Down syndrome. He was shouting hellos to people in line. He was a natural comedian. He was Mister Personality.

And you couldn’t help but smile when the kid landed his miracle gaze on you.

“Hello!” the boy shouted to a businessman in line. “How are you today?!”

The business guy was on the phone, having a heated conversation at the time.

“Uh, I don’t know,” the guy says.

Then the boy hugged the man. “Does this help!?” he said.

The businessman tentatively

other woman in line. She was playing on her phone. She was mid-forties. She looked like she’d just sucked a lemon.

“Hi,” the kid said.

She looked up from her phone.

“Um. Hi?” she replied.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“Laura.”

“Can I give you a hug, Laura?”

Laura looked around. “Um. I don’t think so.”

He hugged her anyway. He even closed his eyes. Laura was taken off guard. She put her phone away and committed to the hug.

“You smell good,” the kid said.

“Thanks,” she said.

“What about me?” he said.

“Do I smell good too?”

Laura looked around again. “Sure.”

This made her laugh. Which was exactly what the boy was aiming for, of course.

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Musing

# Road to Redemption: Aleeza Kempton – But God

BY VICTORIA OSTROSKY

It was Aleeza Kempton's last day of school at Troy University and she was tired, but ready to head home to her mom. Her car was finally loaded up and she was ready to go. As she prepared to leave, Aleeza said she heard a

still, small voice whisper to her to go inside and rest, but she was in a hurry, and, not being a Christian, had never heard the Holy Spirit's prompting. She had a long drive ahead of her and wanted to get it over with.

And that was her last con-

scious memory for five days.

We pray for safety and traveling mercies and healing. We pray for provision and blessing. But what do atheists pray about? That's just it – they don't acknowledge God at all, so of course there's nothing to pray

about and no one to pray to. But God. His mercies are new every morning – and He loves us even before we love Him. He patiently searches for the lost sheep that doesn't yet know it's lost and brings it home.

Her car, traveling at 80 mph, veered off the road, and hit a concrete culvert. Because she didn't think a seat belt would save her, she wasn't wearing one. She was ejected 70 feet through the windshield, landing on the back of her head.

With a blood clot between her brain and skull compressing her brain stem, and multiple broken bones, she was life-flighted from the accident scene, then rushed into surgery – not just one, but two. Afterward, the doctors put her into an induced coma to allow time for the brain swelling to subside.

With such a traumatic brain injury, Aleeza was put on anti-seizure medication. After a while, she became depressed and suffered from insomnia. At this time, she was also experiencing suicidal visions, where her mind pictured various scenarios of ways to kill herself.

Aleeza became so distraught, she was "brought to a point where I was crying and screaming out to God." And that's when her sister invited her to church, where she gave her life to Jesus. The lost sheep was home.

The accident was in 2016. Now, in 2024, Aleeza marvels at how much God loves her. She didn't grow up in church and considered herself an atheist. She lived her life like she wanted, and all the while, God was hovering in the background, watching out for her. She recounts



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Aleeza clearly remembers, while in her coma, her mom holding her hand and singing to her. She had an out-of-body experience, with an aerial view of the room. "It was a peace beyond understanding. There are no earthly words to describe how it felt. There was light – extremely bright and pure. It wasn't heavy – there was no fear, no darkness, no judgment, just pure love.

After her hospitalization, Aleeza went to rehab. Her doctors believe that her quick recovery was mainly attributed to the fact that she was very healthy and physically fit.

that even as a teenager she felt lonely, like there was something missing. Now she knows exactly what that something was.

Today, Aleeza shares her testimony with others. She tells her story, pointing to the mercy of God, that He preserved her life in the accident. "Give Him a chance. Live in community and go to church. Life with Jesus is fulfilling and peaceful, and nothing compares to it."

*You can hear Aleeza Kempton's entire interview and listen to many other incredible stories on the weekly Road to Redemption radio show and podcast at [www.rtrdestiny.com](http://www.rtrdestiny.com).*



# Words Matter



BY KIRK MCCARLEY

I came across a video where the speaker was addressing leadership effectiveness among prominent politicians. He was complimentary of one person being bold and decisive in what they stood for contrasting that with another who was less adamant, even “wishy washy.” As I watched, I found myself less focused on the message and more attuned to how it was presented.

The messenger was passionate about his observations and beliefs, sprinkling in the “F-word,” several times in his short discourse.

Once, during a barnstorming tour to attract new businesses to my geographical region, I was paired with a colleague whose language was so brusque and

blustery that I found it wearisome. Attempting first to promote unity and comradery I hesitated before I finally commented upon his ribaldry, remarking that I didn’t feel it met the standards of professionalism we should want to convey. His response to me was disagreement, further believing it would “attract and be relatable to prospects.”

Yelling, swearing and being overbearing were things Tony Dungy avoided during his 13-year NFL head coaching career. He believed there were better and more useful ways to get his message across to the players. Rather than scream, Dungy taught.

Rather than curse, Dungy talked in a calming voice. As opposed to overbearing, Dungy treated his players with respect.

“I think it was an approach that was outside of the box,” former Colts cornerback Marlin Jackson said. “It was different because of how he was able to relate to players. Guys naturally respected him because of the way he conducted himself. You wanted to go out there and play

for him. You felt like you didn’t want to let him down.”

Dungy first learned about being mild-mannered and respectful from his parents. He then realized that philosophy carried over to his job when he played safety for the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1977. Dungy got his first opportunity to carry out that philosophy in 1996 with the Buccaneers. Most players are accustomed to coaches who swear and yell a lot. Dungy told his players from the start that things wouldn’t be that way in Tampa.

“I said, ‘This is the way I’m going to coach and if you need to be yelled and screamed at, I can hire another coach to be the screaming coach. Other than that, I’m just going to tell you what we need to do,’” he said.

Dungy didn’t have any problems winning games that way. He led the Buccaneers and Colts to the playoffs in 11 of his 13 seasons coaching the two teams. The Colts won five division titles, reached the AFC Championship Game twice and won Super Bowl XLII.

In other vocational fields, swearing does not necessarily equate to success. In the rugged world of stand-up comedy, Ellen Degeneres and Jim Gaffigan rarely use profanity of any kind. Jerry Seinfeld described cussing in one’s act as actually being lazy.

Author and consultant Phil Cooke counsels many leaders who falsely believe that carefully directed anger and occasional swearing strengthens their leadership position. Instead, he finds that:

Real leaders never get to the place where anger or swearing is necessary to maintain their leadership.

The minute you lose control, you’ve just telegraphed to your team that you’ve run out of real answers, and don’t have a clue what to do next.

Cooke goes on to say, “In many ways, swearing in the workplace is like taking risks with social media. For everyone that gets away with it, someone’s career is ruined. I can’t count the number of promising leaders in business and politics who hit the rocks because of

a thoughtless email, Twitter post, or other social media blunder. Swearing can backfire just as easily. Consider the impact when it comes to your perception. A moment’s profane vent could completely change your perception in the office or with customers or associates.”

How “clean” is your brand? How positively does it influence others? Are your words and expressions thoughtful, clever, creative, intelligent, upright, moral?

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





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Dining

# Pies & Provisions Brings Artisanal Pies to Santa Rosa Beach

Pies & Provisions, a locally-owned artisanal pie shop located in Santa Rosa Beach, FL, is thrilled to announce its grand

opening offering delivery and pickup options of their sweet and savory pies to Santa Rosa Beach and the coastal communi-

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mitment to crafting the finest artisanal creations. With roots in cherished family traditions, Ryan and Julie Robinson bring decades of pie-making expertise to their newest venture.

Inspired by his grandfather's love for pies and guided by Julie's culinary finesse, Ryan transformed his passion for pie-making into a profession upon relocating to the idyllic shores of Santa Rosa Beach. With Julie's impending retirement and a shared entrepreneurial spirit, the idea of sharing their love for pies with the community blossomed into reality.

Julie Robinson, co-founder of Pies & Provisions, added, "Pie has always been a symbol of comfort and celebration in our family. We're excited to invite the community to experience the magic of Pies & Provisions and create new memories together and indulge in a slice of our story."

Quality is paramount at Pies & Provisions. Each pie is expertly handcrafted using only the finest, high-quality ingredients, ensuring a fresh and flavorful experience with every bite. The menu, which changes monthly,



offers a variety of sweet and savory pies to suit every palate.

Pies & Provisions offers online ordering for delivery and pickup options, bringing the taste of coastal charm directly to customers' doorsteps. Delivery is available in Santa Rosa Beach



ties along 30A. Founded by the dynamic mother-son duo, Ryan and Julie Robinson, Pies & Provisions brings a touch of love, tradition, and coastal charm to every bite.

Steeped in a tradition of love, Pies & Provisions is the culmination of a shared passion for the art of pie-making and a com-

and the coastal communities of 30A, with pies delivered fresh on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. The delivery area is limited to within a 20-mile driving distance from the commercial kitchen in Point Washington, encompassing South Walton County and much of Freeport.

Pies & Provisions will also be available at the Sunday morning Green by the Gulf Farmers Market at Gulf Place in Santa Rosa Beach beginning Sunday, June 23rd.

For more information and to explore the delectable menu offerings, visit piesandprovisions.com. Follow Pies & Provisions on social media at @30APies for the latest updates and behind-the-scenes glimpses into the world of artisanal pie-making.

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# 7 Things You May Not Know About Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill

## Where Fudpucker's Started

Fudpucker's wasn't always a Beachside Bar & Grill. It opened in 1982 as a snack bar inside NightTown – Destin's first Nightclub where it was called Fudpucker's Barside Galley. Thanks largely to great food and a successful T-Shirt, the following year Fud's moved to a beachside shack in South Walton County where Pompano Joe's is today. It is there that it became Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill. After a fire destroyed the building in 1985, Fud's moved to Okaloosa Island next to Cash's Faux Pas. In 1989, Fudpucker's opened a second location on the new U.S. 98 in Destin. While Destin is now home to the only stand-alone Fudpucker's, you can still enjoy our signature dishes at Pelican's Roost at the Sundestin Beach Resort and at the Tiki Hut in Waterscape on Okaloosa Island.



tion, Gator Beach is undeniably "The World's Greatest Alligator Park." Explore our Reptile Discovery Zone, meet baby gators, join interactive guided tours, feed the gators, and get a photo holding one. Gator Beach is Destin's ultimate adventure spot. For more info, slither over to [www.GatorBeach.com](http://www.GatorBeach.com).

## Honor Roll Program

For over 35 years, Fudpucker's has celebrated academic excellence with our Honor Roll program. We provide award certificates to elementary and middle school students who make the A or A/B Honor Roll, each redeemable for a free meal. Every year, we expand this program to more classrooms in Okaloosa and Walton Counties, supporting our local scholars one free meal at a time.

## Rob Whaack Scholarship

In 2018, we partnered with Northwest Florida State College to create the Rob Whaack Culinary Scholarship, honoring our beloved kitchen manager. This scholarship covers 100% of the costs for the 12 credit hours needed for the Chef's Apprentice Certificate, ensuring Rob's legacy lives on.

## Fun While You Wait

Anyone who's dined out in Destin during summer knows that long waits are inevitable. But at Fudpucker's, we turn waiting into a blast. With four bars to kick off your dining experience, NWFL's only Alligator Park (with free admission), a photo scavenger hunt with prizes, a Fudnominal gift shop, a henna tattoo parlor, a hurricane simulator, bar games (like Ring & Hook and Cornhole), giant Jenga and Connect Four, and live entertainment, we've earned our title as "The Best Place To Wait"!

## Beer Can Collection

One of our founders, Tim Edwards, didn't just contribute to the economy; he practically fueled it — one beer at a time. His college beer can collection has grown into a wall-spanning spectacle in several of Fudpucker's dining rooms. This unique display is a tribute to Tim's youthful zeal and love of beer. Every year, we host the Winter Brewery Collectible Show—a perfect blend of beer memorabilia and, well, more beer.

## Maze-Like Building

Entering Fudpucker's Beachside Bar & Grill is like stepping into a whimsical labyrinth. No, seriously, good luck finding your way out! Our "7 Level Tree House" dining areas each boast unique themes (decorated with classic Fudpucker junk) and quirky names, creating a fun maze-like structure. You'll encounter countless staircases, a vestibule with five different paths, an elevator, and even a few doors to nowhere. Don't be surprised if families make a few laps before stumbling upon the exit.

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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. 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. Visit [www.oldfloridafishhouse.com](http://www.oldfloridafishhouse.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. Visit [foow30a.com](http://foow30a.com).

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

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

on the Main Stage at 5 p.m. Check [ajsgrayton.com](http://ajsgrayton.com) for other live music throughout the week.

### Shunk Gulley

Shunk Gulley is a premier location on 30A for live music, brining in artists from around the gulf coast, and furthe. Whether you just want to relax to indie guitar players or upbeat party songs, the talented musicians know the vibe of the area. Visit [www.shunkgulley.com](http://www.shunkgulley.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. Mike brings in new musicians to play every week.

Wednesday nights in August:  
August 14: Sugarcane Jane  
August 21: Martin Lane  
August 28: Casey Kearney

### Sounds of Seaside Concert Series

Enjoy an evening of live music in the Seaside Amphithe-



ater on Wednesdays. Sounds of SEASIDE features musicians ready to entertain the whole family. Bring a chair or blanket, snacks and drinks, and enjoy the show. Free and open to all ages. Visit [seasidefl.com](http://seasidefl.com) for more details.

August 14: Fred Domolot  
August 21: Roman Street  
August 28: Fred Domolot

September 4: Mac McCann  
September 11: Fred Domolot

### Baytowne Wednesday Night Concert Series

Live music concerts take place in the Baytowne Events Plaza every Wednesday night from 7-9 p.m. Various local and regional artists perform throughout the year - see the

lineup. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets. Free and open to the public.

August 14: Boukou Groove  
August 21: Dion Jones and The Neon Tears  
August 28: Scratch 2020  
September 4: Cadillac Willy  
September 11: Horseshoe Kitty

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# The Heritage of Home Music Lessons

Home studio music lessons, a tradition that spans centuries, offer a personalized and immersive approach to musical education. This method of learning has been cherished for its unique benefits, fostering a rich and personal relationship between the student and music. The student enters a musical zone of learning as soon as they walk through the studio's front door.

Learning music is a journey that combines the excitement of discovery with the discipline of working towards a goal. For many, the choice of learning environment can significantly impact their progress and enjoyment. One of the popular choices is learning music at a teacher's home studio. This offers a home setting with a unique blend of benefits that greatly enhance one's learning experience.

### Personalized Attention and Tailored Instruction

One of the most significant advantages of learning music at a teacher's home studio is the personalized attention students receive. In a home studio setting, the teacher can focus on the individual needs and learning styles of each student. This one-on-one interaction allows for customized lesson plans



that can adapt to the student's pace, strengths, and areas for improvement. Lessons are flexible and can evolve based on the student's progress and interests.

### Comfortable Learning Environment

A home studio typically provides a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere compared to a music store or classroom setting. This can help reduce anxiety where students can express themselves freely, make mistakes, and learn without fear of judgment.

### Access to High-Quality Equipment and Resources

Many home studio teachers invest in high-quality musical instruments and equipment,

ensuring that students have access to the best tools for learning. This includes well-maintained pianos, guitars, keyboards, and other instruments. Additionally, home studio teachers often have a wealth of resources at their disposal, such as many years of experience learning and teaching privately, music books, sheet music, charts, a sundry of personally created handouts, affiliations, technology, and educational software, which enhance and inspire the learning

experience.

### Closer Student-Teacher Relationships

The home studio environment fosters a closer, more personal relationship between the teacher and student. This rapport can be instrumental in keeping students motivated and engaged. Teachers who work from home often have the opportunity to get to know their students on a deeper level, understanding their musical goals, personal interests, and any challenges they may face. This deeper connection can lead to more effective teaching and a more enjoyable learning experience.

### Inspiring Creative Space

A home studio is often a reflection of the teacher's personality and passion for music, creating an inspiring and creative space. The environment is filled with musical memorabilia, inspiring artwork, and a sense of personal touch that is often missing in more institutional settings. This inspiring atmosphere will set the tone as soon as they

enter the home which stimulates creativity and encourages students to explore their musical potential.

Whether you are a beginner or an advanced student, the unique advantages of a home studio can help you achieve your musical goals while enjoying the journey of learning. Since 2011, Studio 237 Music Lessons of Santa Rosa Beach has offered a home-style learning experience from a variety of teachers on a variety of instruments including piano, voice, guitar, ukulele, keyboards, and drums as well as offering songwriting for kids, and more. Our goal is to inspire people (young and old) to discover, develop, and demonstrate music as they learn via successful time-tested methods. Call Ray or Lisa Cyr at Studio 237 Music Lessons to begin your learning journey at (850) 231-3199 or text (850) 797-3546, visit our website at [www.Studio237Music.com](http://www.Studio237Music.com), or email us at [Studio237Music@gmail.com](mailto:Studio237Music@gmail.com).



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BY CHRIS BALZER, EMERALD COAST ENERGY SOLUTIONS

*But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?*

*It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.*

No one would dispute having the beauty of soft natural light shining through our windows that puts a smile on our

light and give us views into our world, whether it's a lakefront, oceanfront, pool front or simply a view of the outside.

For a time when I worked in a cubical, I often dreamed of having a view, even if it was of the parking lot, something to let in natural sunlight. Now, I am finding that many of us

have windows that are letting in much more than soft natural light and have become a sore spot. We hunt for blinds and curtains or just quarantine the area from 1 to 7 p.m. We search for dark or mirrored tint to help against the heat while maintaining some of our views. We place towels and blankets over our furniture and wood floors to protect from fading and cracking. We even go to the extreme of replacing our windows with expensive new ones.

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

We coated the windows and the couple contacted us and said, "Thank you so much! We are very happy with the heat reduction we have noticed."

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

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

### 30A-Based Beach-Safe French Rosé Now Carried At Local Retail Establishments

#### The Rosé in Luxe Plastic Wine Bottles Stands Out Among Popular Rosé Options

After one year of being sold direct to consumers, 30A-founded beverage brand SALTY Girls Rosé is now available for sale in retail establishments, making it easier than ever for customers to sip their beach-friendly rosé across Florida.



Florida grocers, liquor stores, restaurants, hotels, and other retailers will now be able to stock SALTY Girls Rosé retail, providing their customers with a light and refreshing rosé imported from the South of France, packaged in a full-size, non-breakable bottle to be enjoyed anywhere.

SALTY Girls Rosé was created in response to a gap in the market that kept most wines off beaches and pool decks due to their glass pack-

aging. In full-size, PET plastic bottles that have less carbon footprint than glass, SALTY Girls Rosé combines a beach and pool-friendly design with a refreshing taste imported from the South of France, for a perfect union that can be sipped anywhere on or off the sand.


John Fiacco, Wine Connoisseur and owner of Imperial Importers, said about SALTY Girls Rosé, "Don't let the innovative beach-friendly packaging fool you, this rosé stands with the best that France has to offer..This is an easy-drinking wine."

In its initial distribution launch, SALTY Girls Rosé is available wholesale to retailers from Perdido Key to Apalachicola.

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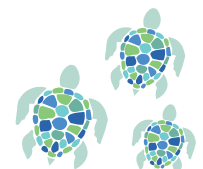



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# Five Things to Do Before a Storm



BY JULIE A. MARTIN,  
LICENSED AGENT FL



and to your other possessions?

The first thing you should do is call your insurance agent and ask for a copy of both your declarations page and your policy jacket. You should do this both for your home and for your vehicles. If you have boats, motorcycles, an RV or any other contrivance or dwellings, get all of your policy documents together in one place. Familiarize yourself with your deductibles, coverages and any exclusions or limitations. You should do this regularly anyway, because once a storm is in the box, no cover-

age can be changed, altered or reinstated. If there is a payment due, pay it. You might be unable to do so later, if the timing of the storm coincides with a cancellation or the expiration of your policy.

The second thing you should do is take pictures and videos of the inside and outside of your home and email them to yourself. This is to show what your house looked like BEFORE anything happened. If you recently purchased big ticket items like new furniture or an entertainment center, email yourself any receipts you might have for the more expensive items in your home. In the event of a loss, receipts, photos and videos will aid the adjusters in processing your claim in a fair and timely manner.

The third thing to do is go out into your yard, front and back, and think about anything that can become a projectile. Winds upwards of 120 miles

per hour can turn even a 6 oz. can of soup into a weapon. The more things that you can bring into the garage or a shed, the less they will be likely to fly into one of your windows or the side of your house. The things that you are unable to bring into your garage, lay them on their side as close to the back of the house as possible, or the shed. Try to tie them down with rope so it is less likely to fly away and either damage your home or hurt someone. Anything on your patio? Bring it into the house or into your garage, if you have one.

If you have hurricane shutters or windows, you are already ahead of the game. But, if you do not, boarding up your windows is a good close second. You might need to go to Home Depot or Lowe's where they have both the lumber and the clips/screws to board up the windows tightly. Do some research before you do this, be-

cause there is a right and wrong way to board up your house against the possibility of storm damage.

The last thing to do is make sure you have a battery-operated charger for your phone, so that in the event you do get hit, you can communicate with your family, and call the agent and insurance company for help in putting in your claim. Get gas before the storm. Don't just top it off. If you have three vehicles, take them to the station one by one and fill them all up. The first thing that happens after a hurricane is a localized shortage of goods, and you don't want to have to scramble around at the last minute and go without. If you prepare yourself, your home and your vehicles well in advance of the upcoming storm, you can breathe a sigh of relief that even if the storm hits, you have done everything you can to prevent against further loss.

## SUNBRIGHT

*continued from page 29*

sion is to maintain and enhance the visual aesthetic and natural beauty of Walton, as well as ensure the county's safety. We achieve this through several initiatives, such as undergrounding utilities, creating cyclist and pedestrian paths and landscaping public areas."

Currently, Scenic Walton is focusing on landscaping along primary roadways in Walton County. Additionally, they ac-

tively promote and educate the community about the advantages of implementing good development standards and are planning a partnership with the Walton County Tourist Development Council to support their Keep Walton County Beautiful initiative.

One way you can support is through Scenic Walton charity license plates. \$25 from each initial sale and ongoing renewal fee goes directly to Scenic Walton and can be purchased at any tax collector office or on-

line. "It's an easy way to support our countywide mission," says Moore. The Walton County Tax Collector's offices have the plates in stock. Citizens with a car, RV, trailer, or golf cart/LSV registered in Florida can pick up their plate there or order online at [scenic.org/walton-plate](http://scenic.org/walton-plate).

To learn more about Scenic Walton or sign up for the newsletter, visit [scenicwalton.org](http://scenicwalton.org). Visit Sunbright Inn at <https://sunbrightinn.com/>.

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# MKAF Awarded \$30,000 National Grant by Emeril Lagasse Foundation

Northwest Florida's champion of the arts for all abilities was awarded \$30,000 (one of four national grants totaling \$127,000) recently from the Emeril Lagasse Foundation.

Founded in 2002 by Chef

Emeril Lagasse and his wife Alden, Emeril Lagasse Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity headquartered in New Orleans. The Foundation's mission is to create opportunities to inspire, mentor, and enable youth to



(Orange County, Calif.).

"We're honored Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation's ArtsReach efforts in Northwest Florida have been recognized by such a respected organization as the Emeril Lagasse Foundation in such a profound way," said MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller. "We are approaching our 30th year and this is a great way to start the celebration ... by making the arts accessible to even more youth in our community."

In 2024, MKAF presented around 140 ArtsReach programs — a record and 71 percent increase over the previous year. Since it was established in 1995, MKAF estimates its outreach has impacted more than 400,000 in the local Northwest Florida community.

Arts for All Abilities initiative is unique in the area. MKAF is the only arts organization that has a specific program initiative to deliver arts to people of all abilities. Arts Empower is MKAF's effort to reach K-12 students through dynamic creative learning opportunities presented by professional art partners such as live theater performances, music sessions, hands-on art workshops and more.

MKAF's community outreach initiatives provide cultural outreach programs through ArtsReach serving K-12 students, adults and children with special needs, at-risk youth, and through MKAF's Warrior Arts program serving active/veteran military.

For more information about becoming an MKAF member, sponsoring, volunteering to attending MKAF events, visit MKAF.org or call (850) 650-2226.

Tip of the day 

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reach their full potential. Since its inception, Emeril Lagasse Foundation has granted more than \$20 million to children's charities to support culinary, nutrition, and arts programs with a focus on life skills development.

"Alden and I started this foundation to support youth and provide them with opportunities they would not otherwise have," said Chef Emeril Lagasse. "While we continue to

nurture our roots here at home in New Orleans, we are excited that the reach of the foundation is growing across the country."

Other recipients of a Spring 2024 grant include: Second Harvest Food Bank's Summer Feeding and Kids Café Program (New Orleans), The Ingram Lee Foundation (Houston, Texas), Orange County School of the Arts Foundation's Culinary Arts & Hospitality Conservatory



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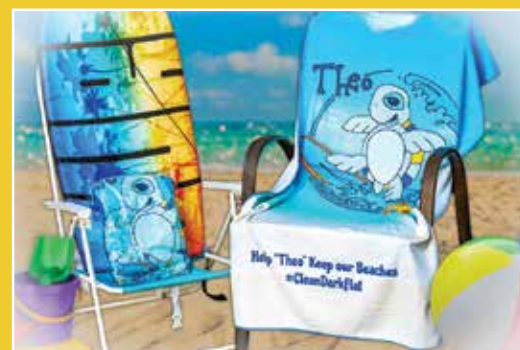
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continued on next page

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