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Toasting Hope with Bailey Brigade

BY HEATHER BENNETT EYE

We've all been affected by cancer. Cancer has touched us whether it's a dear friend, a loved one, or a personal diagnosis. Michele Bailey, founder of Bailey Brigade, and her family were affected in a big way when her husband Scott, a father of three, passed away in December 2021 from a rare salivary gland cancer. He was only 54 years old.

Bailey Brigade was started to honor Scott and support locals battling all types of cancer. All money donated goes to help patients from The Emerald Coast. "Every dollar raised here is helping your neighbor," stated Michele. They work closely with the oncology team at Ascension Sacred Heart Cancer Care at Santa Rosa Beach. "They have the most incredible spirits and are so loving to the patients," said Michele.

In the two years since they started, Bailey Brigade has provided four scholarships for those wanting to go into the medical field, hundreds of chemo care backpacks for

cancer patients that contain self-care and hydration items along with letters of encouragement from local school kids and community members, held multiple fundraisers, and raised thousands of dollars in co-pay assistance, and now transportation assistance.

For their latest fundraiser in November 2024, Toasting Hope, Bailey Brigade teamed up with the 30A Distilling Co. to produce a charitable spirit. The bourbon, originally a single barrel from Indiana, had been resting at Sugarfield Spirits in Gonzales, Louisiana before making its way to 30A. The seven-year-old bourbon was transferred to an Orange Flavored Rum barrel to finish for two weeks. The final product is a unique 118 proof, limited-edition bourbon. The Bailey Brigade Board members hand-labeled and numbered the 195 bottles produced. Each bottle comes in a hand-crafted wooden box to protect and display the bourbon. One hundred dollars of the \$175



TOASTING
continued on page 3

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2025 Perfect in Walton County Award Winners Announced

The Walton County Tourism Department unveiled the winners of the 2025 Perfect in Walton County Awards during a celebration at the Hotel Effie Sandestin on Thursday, Jan. 30. Now in its 11th year, this annual tradition invites residents and visitors to nominate and vote for their favorite tourism-related businesses, services and organizations.

"We are incredibly proud to celebrate our local business, activities and events as part of the Perfect in Walton County awards," said Matt Algarin, tourism director for Walton County.

PERFECT WINNERS
continued on page 3



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Community

Winter Rescue: Community Comes Together After Cold-Stun Event Threatens Sea Turtles

This past month brought record-breaking cold temperatures and snow to the Florida Panhandle which, while fun for humans, spelled danger for Florida natives not well-adapted to these cold spells. Water temperatures below 50 degrees Fahrenheit for prolonged periods can be fatal to cold-blooded sea turtles. Three days of nighttime air temperatures below freezing alerted local biologists to prepare for a sea turtle cold-stun event.

When sea turtles become too cold, they are unable to swim, or even lift their heads out of the water to breathe. Often, this leads to drowning or the turtles are washed ashore where they are unable to fend off predators. They need warmth and protection from the harsh weather conditions to revitalize, and time is of the essence.

Numerous volunteers and volunteer organizations answered the call for assistance, alongside state and federal biologists, to save these beloved creatures. The rescuers bundled in



IMAGES COURTESY OF US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE; BOTTOM RIGHT BY AUDREY WILSON
Volunteers work alongside state and federal biologists to rescue cold-stunned sea turtles stranded near St. Joseph Bay and Tyndall AFB's Crooked Island. Rescuers retrieved and transported more than 1,100 turtles to Gulf World Marine Institute in Panama City Beach for rehabilitation and medical treatment.

protective clothing and went to work, searching for turtles along St. Joseph Bay shoreline in Gulf County and Tyndall Air Force

Bases' Crooked Island shorelines in Bay County by foot, kayak, and motorboat.

Many turtles were found

along mucky shorelines or drifting in the bay with shells slightly above the waterline. All were barely moving or not moving

at all. Rescuers walked in waders or muck boots to reach the turtles, using kayaks or paddleboards to transport multiple turtles to a nearby dock or to a motorboat waiting in deeper waters.

From shoreline or bay to truck, each turtle was lifted many times, a cold and physically demanding job - turtles ranged in size from a dinner plate to over 100 pounds! You better eat your Wheaties if you want to rescue sea turtles. Once loaded onto trucks, they were taken on a 1.5-hour ride to Gulf World Marine Institute in Panama City Beach.

In total, the rescuers retrieved and transported over 1,100 cold-stunned sea turtles to the marine Institute, most from St. Joseph Bay. The vast majority of the turtles rescued were green turtles, with only a handful of loggerheads or Kemp's ridley.

Sadly, for some of the turtles, it was too late, but without the

TURTLES
continued on page 7



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TOASTING

continued from page 1

retail price goes directly to Bailey Brigade to support their mission.

You can purchase a bottle at the 30A Distillery Co. (605 N County Hwy 393, Bldg 15-B, Santa Rosa Beach) during their tasting room hours, or contact Michele directly. “This is an exceptional bourbon. One of a kind, there’s only one like it, and when it’s gone, it’s gone,” stated Michele. “It makes a perfect old fashioned.” You can learn more about the bourbon on the Bailey Brigade website or by visiting the 30A Distillery Co. website at www.30adistillingco.com under About Our Spirits.

Bailey Brigade also partnered with South Walton High School for several fundraiser nights at local sporting events, where they

sold Bailey Brigade merchandise, and all ticket sales went to the non-profit as well. This fall Bailey Brigade was invited to the Flutterby Festival by the Cultural Arts Alliance where kids painted rocks with messages of encouragement to add to their chemo care backpacks.

The goal for Bailey Brigade is to be able to continue funding the assistance they have in place, and eventually expand. To reach this goal, Michele would love to have consistent donations and fundraising, ongoing signature events in the community and to partner with local businesses who support the mission behind Bailey Brigade. “If you are a local business that believes no one should go through can-



cer alone, and want to partner with us, please call. We’re determined to find a way to continue to be able to help local cancer patients,” said Michele. “Everybody is just one diagnosis away from being the person in the

chair.”

Another way to help is to volunteer your time and skills. If you are interested in social media, website content or grant writing, Bailey Brigade is also looking for volunteers to assist

with social posts, maintaining their website and writing blogs, and grant writing to help secure additional funding. These volunteer positions could be great for either someone with years of experience looking to get involved in the community, or students looking to gain community service hours for Bright Futures.

For more information about Bailey Brigade and their army of hope and love, please visit their website at www.baileybrigade.com and follow them on Instagram @baileybrigadefl. To reach Michele, please call (850) 586-1382.

Remember to get your bottle of bourbon before they are all gone!

PERFECT WINNERS

continued from page 1

“These awards allow us to celebrate and shine a spotlight on our well-deserving businesses that work hard to provide unforgettable experiences throughout the year.”

This year, more than 6,000 votes were cast across 30 catego-

ries to determine the best in dining, entertainment, shopping and more throughout Walton County. The 2025 Perfect in Walton County guide features the 90 winners, including first, second and third place, or Diamond, Platinum and Gold, in each category.

“What it means to win is that you’re a leader in the community,

you’re giving back to the community and you’re supporting the community – those three valuables,” said Kevin Rosa, director of Sales and Marketing at Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, winner of three awards. “It validates everything you do in your job day to day, that you’re setting the standard in the community

and being recognized by [Walton County Tourism], the entity that brings us all together.”

Jared Herzog, Diamond Award winner for Best Local Musician/Band, has won in the past and says he feels fortunate to attend the awards again this year.

“Music has been a big part of my life, ever since I was very

young,” said Herzog. “There are so many incredibly talented musicians in this area, and I’m honored to stand aside them and get to attend this amazing event every year.”

The full list of winners and detailed category results can be viewed online at perfectinwalton-county.com.



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Community

Beyond the Bicentennial: Reflections of Walton County History

By CHRISTOPHER MANSON

Last year marked the 200th anniversary of Walton County, which at one time was much larger than its current 1,028 square miles. In 1846, portions

of the original territory were given away to help form Washington County. Two years later, part of the northeast section was given to Holmes County. And in 1915, a western chunk—along

with an eastern portion of Santa Rosa County—was untitled and released to form what is now Okaloosa County.

To celebrate Walton County's bicentennial, numerous projects



and editing reins. The videos generally run 20 minutes or less, though "some of the people have shared such rich detail about our history that we were able to make them into two parts," says Kelley.

"The feedback has been extremely positive," he adds. "And with people moving here from other places, it's a chance for them to find out about the history of their new home. I've learned many things, even though I've been in Walton County most of my life. It's fascinating for residents, too.



Lifelong Walton County farmer Donnie Richardson, interviewed for "Reflections" Episode 19.

were undertaken in 2024, including the website walton200.com, which focuses on the county's history through the written word, photographs and videos. The YouTube series "Reflections of Walton County" launched last year on the Walton County BCC channel and features interviews with residents who, according to Public Information Officer for Walton County Commission Ron Kelley, "either helped create some of that history or had relatives and ancestors who did."

In late 2023, Kelley and Commissioner Danny Glidewell kicked around ideas about how to celebrate the bicentennial, and Glidewell suggested a series of interviews. "The idea caught on quickly," says Kelley. "We compiled names to see if they would participate, and most of them have."

At first, Kelley and videographer Billy Goodwin handled the interviews. Then Goodwin was called away for other county tasks, and Kelley took the interviewing

"We're losing members of the greatest generation all the time. So, it is important that we preserve as much of their amazing life experiences as we can. In the future, our children and grandchildren will be able to get a sense of what life was like in the early days of Walton County and hear

BICENTENNIAL
continued on page 6

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



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Coastal Seniors Update for February



Chair Yoga Classes at the Blake in Miramar Beach– Tuesdays, February 4, 18 and March 4, 18 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 - Friday, February 21 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. A light lunch will be served. Also, The Walton County Library Bookmobile will be there. R.S.V.P. by calling (850) 280-5342 or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com.

Exercise Classes – Angela Gibson will lead classes on Tuesdays, February 4, 11, 18, 25 and March 4, 11 at 10 a.m. and on Thursdays, February 6, 13, 20, 27 and March 6, 13 at 10 a.m., at 70 Logan Lane in Grayton Beach. Cost is \$5 per session for CSSW members and \$10 for non-members. Space is limited, please call

(850) 280-5342 or email: coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com for more information.

Line Dancing Classes - Line Dancing classes are set for Wednesdays at 3 p.m. February 5, 12, 19, 26 and March 5, 12 at Watersound Fountains at 65 Origins Pkwy behind Publix at Inlet Beach. The cost is \$5 for members/\$10 for non-members. Space is limited and registration is required.

Art Classes – Watercolor Painting Class – Karen Peterson will teach classes on Fridays, February 7, 21, 28 and March 7, 14 from 8:45 a.m. to noon. Classes are 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.

Pickleball - Beginner Pickleball 101 at Walton Sports Complex courts on a date to be determined. Registration required. Register at www.waltonrec.com. Open to Walton County residents only. Email Sandy Gulak at sowlpickleball@gmail.com for more info and with questions. Also join us at the Boys and Girls Club on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. through April 24. Cost is \$5 per day and an initial \$35 waiver fee. Please join the SoWal 30A Pickleball Association on Facebook for more information and weekly updates and check the

CSSW calendar at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org.

Seniors 50 years of age and up residing in or visiting Walton County are invited to join CSSW. Membership is \$30 for individuals, \$40 for family, and \$100 for businesses (your business will be listed on our home webpage and our Facebook page). You can become a member via email at coastalseniorsofsouthwalton@gmail.com, or on the website at www.coastalseniorsofsouthwalton.org. Also, follow us on Facebook at Coastal Seniors of South Walton. Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. is a non-profit 501© (3) organization for active adults and we are looking for dedicated, enthusiastic persons to join our Board of Directors. Media Contact: Jim Wilson, Director, Coastal Seniors of South Walton, Inc. T: 404-432-6037 Email: jim_wilson@bellsouth.net

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 Community

BICENTENNIAL

continued from page 4

from some of the people that made an impact.”

The website, too, is a work in progress. “We’re adding to it all the time,” says Kelley. “We would like for it to become a one-stop historical resource. Obviously, no single book, film or website will contain everything, but we want this to be a growing repository for as much of our historical data as we can gather.”

Commissioner Glidewell initiated a series of public meetings that doubled as “history fairs” and were held at locations throughout the county in 2024. For last fall’s Walton County Fair, an exhibit with newly designed stickers featuring the bicentennial logo were on display. The county planned a street event in DeFuniak Springs with music, food vendors, videos playing at the Chautauqua Theater and fireworks over Lake



“Reflections of Walton County” Episode 2 features the late Reverend Kenneth Harrison, and can be viewed on the Walton County BCC YouTube channel.

DeFuniak for December 28—to tie in with the actual bicentennial date of December 29—but inclement weather postponed the celebration until January 4, 2025.

No commemorative events are

scheduled for the rest of 2025, though Kelley and his team will continue to film interviews with local citizens and historians. “We’ve really just scratched the surface,” says Kelley. “So, I will

continue to interview as many people as possible that have a significant depth of knowledge about our fascinating history.

“The ‘Reflections’ series is just as important today as it was in the bicentennial year, and there are many stories we haven’t yet heard. We sometimes forget that history continues to be made even as we speak. It may be a disconcerting thought, but our current era will eventually be ‘The Good Old Days’ for a whole new generation, and we need to make sure that we have something valuable and memorable to share with them.”

An early episode with Reverend Kenneth Harrison generated a lot of favorable comments. “He told me that he’d been approached by a lot of people who enjoyed that segment, and it’s one of my favorites,” says Kelley. “Reverend Harrison passed away recently, making his appearance in the series somewhat bitter-

sweet.

“Donnie Richardson, a life-long Walton County farmer, shared incredible stories about farm life then and now. South Walton folks will recognize the name Ed Walline; his daughter Adrienne talked to us about his impact. Ann Robinson, who helped launch Grit & Grace (Walton County’s annual theatrical production) and a second Chautauqua Assembly, did a great interview with us—she, too, has recently passed on, which illustrates how important it is to gather and preserve these incredible histories.

“We also did interviews with local historians like Brenda Rees and Bruce Cosson. There’s something for everybody, and we’re planning more. I think people may not realize how rich Walton County history is, and hopefully, we’re going to change that.”

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The Housing Revolution Starts Now Meet Visionary Bekah Manley

BY CHRISTOPHER MANSON

Bekah Manley is a holistic realtor, meaning that she looks well beyond the structure of a house. “I take the physical, spiritual and emotional into consideration,” she explains. “I go a little deeper than most realtors when it comes to finding an environment in which a person will best thrive. To me, a house is more than a structure. It’s a sanctuary for your soul.”

Bekah has called the Emerald Coast her home since 2017. After graduating from Auburn University (Manley majored in psychology, which she says she uses every day in her work), she visited her mother who had recently moved to the area. “And me being a broke, confused college student, it was either go back to my hometown or go to the beach,” she says. “I decided to go to the beach.”

The Northwest Alabama na-



...tive has been engaged to Destin Mayor Bobby Wagner for more than a year now, and I jokingly ask if she has any influence over the city government. “No,” she laughs. “But we have been able to use both our jobs to create a positive impact on the community.”

Bekah and Mayor Wagner worked together shooting videos

in Gulf County after Hurricane Michael, letting the rest of the world know that the area was rebuilding. She obtained her real estate license in 2021, and one of the first things Bekah did was ask her brokers:

“Why do we keep building the same thing over and over again and expecting different results?”

Bekah sought out contractors and architects with a passion for revolutionizing the building environment “from the ground up” as well as utilizing political connections to “challenge and change the building standards for the state of Florida.”

For the past three years, Bekah and business partner Joseph Beeman have been building THEIA Development to create sustainable, resilient and affordable houses using advanced technology like 3D printing. “Due to recent hurricanes, people’s eyes have been opened” to new

things, she says. “You don’t have to be an expert to know if something isn’t working. I believe we can change the standards. The ‘Oh, we’ve always done it this way’ isn’t working anymore.”

Bekah says traditional building methods are outdated. “Insurance rates are not going to budge until we have better products for them to cover.”

She is also working to connect with industry people interested in green initiatives. “I know they exist,” says Bekah. “I’m just trying to bring different experts – appraisers, lenders, builders, engineers – out of the woodwork who care about sustainable futuristic building practices.”

Bekah and her team are looking to launch the new housing

initiatives here in the Panhandle, with a focus on areas affected by hurricanes. And then, spreading throughout the state and beyond.

“The next step for me is to build a physical product for people to touch and feel,” she says, “so they can see the whole process and open their minds about how to build in the future.”

“It’s not that scary. The big obstacle is that a lot of people fear change and things they don’t understand. Sometimes people tend to be a little closed-minded when it comes to (housing).” Bekah is working to create a dialogue and educate the community.

“It should be clear, in light of recent events, why I’m looking to change things. And have been.”

TURTLES

continued from page 2

rescue efforts, many more turtles might have died. Losing sea turtles in a mass casualty event caused by cold weather could have lasting impacts on an already compromised population. Florida is home to five species of sea turtles; all are federally listed as endangered or threatened.

Once rehabilitated, the turtles will be released into the Gulf of Mexico, near the tip of the St. Joseph Bay Peninsula. These mass release events are open to the public, and more information on timing will be available soon. Deeper waters, such as those in this area, may help turtles reorient to warmer areas for the rest of the winter months.

If members of the public encounter a sea turtle in distress, they should not touch it, but instead call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s 24-hour Wildlife Alert number at 1-888-404-FWCC (1-888-404-3922).

The Gulf World Marine Institute is a non-profit organization and depends on the support of volunteers and donations. To learn how you can get involved visit <https://www.gwmi.info>.





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at Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa

Join Caring & Sharing of South Walton for the Spring Fashion Show, presented by Bluewater Plastic Surgery and Emerald Coast Hospice, on Sunday, March 23, 2025, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. The much-anticipated event promises an afternoon of

fun, fashion, and community support, featuring a fashion show, lunch, music, a silent auction, a photo booth, and much more.

The doors will open at 12 p.m., and guests will be greeted with a complimentary welcome drink. Attendees will have the opportunity to mingle, browse



also as an active volunteer.”

Volunteers and supporters of Caring & Sharing will walk the runway, modeling outfits made entirely of items donated to the Caring & Sharing Thrift Store. These featured pieces, along with additional thrift store items, will be available for purchase at the on-site pop-up boutique, specially curated for this event.

“In my five years as a volunteer and board member with Caring & Sharing,” said Miller. “I’ve witnessed this event grow year after year. It’s been exciting to see its continued success and to watch our guests enjoy themselves while supporting such a meaningful cause.”

CARING & SHARING
continued on page 21

the boutique, and place bids on silent auction items before the ballroom opens at 12:30 p.m. for lunch and the fashion show.

“The Caring & Sharing Fashion Show is not only an exciting and unique event (the

only fashion show on 30A), but it also raises awareness in the community about our neighbors in need,” said Mary Catharine Miller, Board President of Caring & Sharing. “I’m proud, not only as the Board President, but

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Meet Our Hometown Hero: Local Native James Uthmeier – Florida’s New Attorney General

By DOUG STAUFFER

The Florida panhandle has a new reason to celebrate as one of its own, James Uthmeier, has assumed a very influential role in the state. Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Uthmeier as Chief of Staff in 2021 and has now tapped Uthmeier to succeed Ashley Moody as Florida’s Attorney General following Moody’s appointment to the U.S. Senate. This exciting development highlights Uthmeier’s impressive career and deep Florida roots, promising a bright future for the state under his leadership.

A proud native of Destin, Uthmeier’s journey began at Fort Walton Beach High School, where he cultivated the discipline and determination that have defined his career. As a University of Florida graduate, he earned academic accolades. He competed as part of the Florida Gators track and field team, helping to bring home a

Southeastern Conference championship in 2010. His athletic and academic achievements earned him recognition as one of the University of Florida Alumni Association’s “40 Gators Under 40.”

Uthmeier’s rise to prominence in the Florida political arena has been swift and impactful. After earning his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center and serving as managing editor of the Georgetown Journal of Law and Public Policy, he began his legal career as an associate at the prestigious law firm Jones Day. Uthmeier then moved into public service, working as senior advisor and counsel to U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross during the Trump administration.



In 2019, Uthmeier returned to his home state to join Governor DeSantis’ legal team as Deputy General Counsel. His leadership skills quickly earned him a promotion to General Counsel in 2020 and Chief of

Staff in 2021. In these roles, Uthmeier played a central part in shaping and implementing the governor’s agenda, including leading the state’s judicial nominations process and taking on some of Florida’s most significant legal battles.

Governor DeSantis praised Uthmeier as a “proven leader” who has been at the forefront of Florida’s fights for conservative values and constitutional principles. “James is someone who has consistently demonstrated his commitment to serving the people of Florida. He has big shoes to fill, but I am confident he is more than up to the task,” DeSantis said.

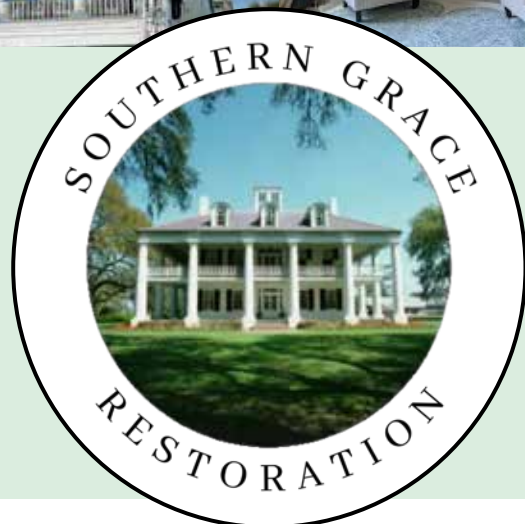
Uthmeier’s appointment as Attorney General comes at a pivotal time for Florida. His

legal acumen and experience in both the state and federal government position him as a formidable advocate for Floridians. Whether tackling critical issues such as public safety, constitutional rights, or judicial integrity, Uthmeier is expected to bring the same passion and dedication that have defined his career.

He and his wife, Jean, have made Tallahassee their home, where they co-teach religious education classes and actively participate in their community. As James Uthmeier takes the helm as Florida’s Attorney General, Destin, and the entire Emerald Coast can take pride in the accomplishments of a hometown hero. His journey from the Panhandle to one of Florida’s highest offices serves as an inspiring reminder that with hard work and dedication, the sky is the limit. Uthmeier’s future—and Florida’s—is undeniably bright.

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Community

Spotlight On

Elizabeth Erin Designs

ACHIEVING YOUR VISION, TOGETHER - NATIONWIDE & LOCAL

At Elizabeth Erin Designs, we are more than just a full-service Residential, Commercial, and Vacation Rental Interior Design Firm – we bring your dreams to life. For over 21 years, clients across the U.S. have trusted us to transform their spaces into functional, beautiful reflections of their vision, and we take that responsibility to heart. While we proudly serve clients nationwide, we have local design experts right here in your community, with designers in the Destin area of Florida, the Rochester area of New York, and central Iowa. No matter where you're located, our team is ready to bring our trusted design process to you.



When I founded Elizabeth Erin Designs, my mission was clear: to exceed expectations and be a trusted partner throughout the design process. From luxury vacation rentals in Florida to commercial spaces in New York, our nationwide and local clientele count on us to deliver high-end designs that perfectly reflect their goals. Acting as the crucial bridge between you and your contractor, we ensure every aspect of your project is executed with precision, care, and excellence – down to the smallest detail, including stunning 3-D walkthroughs and documentation that rival HGTV.



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Our Ensured Ease Design (EED) process is built around you – offering flexibility and customization at every turn. With flat-fee design packages, you can tailor your experience to perfectly match your needs, whether you're embarking on new construction or a complete redesign.

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Experience Trust, Integrity, and Lasting Design – Locally and Beyond. With over two decades of experience and projects spanning from coast to coast, we've earned a reputation for trust, integrity, and extraordinary design. As featured in [Insert Major Publication], our trendsetting designs continue to push the boundaries of what's possible. At Elizabeth Erin Designs, it's not just about creating beautiful spaces – it's about building lasting relationships. When you choose us, you're not just hiring a design firm – you're gaining a lifelong partner dedicated to making your current and future projects truly unforgettable.



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Elizabeth Erin Designs
ACHIEVE YOUR VISION

Eleventh Annual "Tea Fore Her" Fundraiser Supports and Celebrates Breast Cancer Patients Along the Emerald Coast

on March 9th at The Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa

Fore Her announces ticket sales for their annual "Tea Fore Her" fundraiser on Sunday, March 9, at 12 p.m. at The Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort and Spa. This tea and luncheon is a beloved tradition among locals who are ready to dress for Spring, gather with friends and support breast cancer patients along the Emerald Coast. Fore Her local nonprofit organization offers financial assistance, resources, hope, and compassion for all who are affected by breast cancer, with fundraisers like Tea Fore Her.

This year's tea, presented by Emerald Coast Hospice, will include a seated luncheon with a special appearance from opera singer Toccara Scott, a silent auction, photo booth... and of course tea! Guests are encouraged to wear their most gorgeous hats for a chance to win the coveted "Best Hat" prize!

Guests will get a very special treat with Tea For Her's Keynote Speaker, a local treasure and breast cancer survivor Donna Bell, News Director and Anchor at WJHG in Panama City. Bell is a "new" survivor as she was diagnosed with breast cancer only in July of 2024. Tea Fore Her will be Bell's first public appearance after going through breast reconstruction in February of this year.

"In 2013 I lost my mom to breast cancer," says Bell. "In 2024, I was diagnosed at stage one. What I learned through my experience with breast cancer is no two journeys are the same. Early detection is so important, but so is listening to your body, following your instincts, and advocating for yourself and your loved ones. I hope my story encourages others to do just that."

"This event is near and dear to my heart, not only as a Fore Her board member but most importantly as a breast cancer survivor," says Ginny Richerson, Fore Her Patient Liaison and Board Member. "It is truly remarkable to see our local community come together to raise funds for these breast cancer patients at this beautiful event. I look around the room every year

and see how much good we are doing in caring for and supporting patients who need financial assistance during the most trying time in their lives.."

Tickets are \$70 per person and tables (8 guests each) are also available for purchase at www.foreher.org. A discounted ticket price of \$65 per person will be available for breast cancer survivors.

Tea Fore Her 2025 sponsors include Hilton Sandestin Beach



Golf Resort and Spa (Venue Sponsor), Emerald Coast Hospice (Platinum), Clay Garden and Gifts (Photo Booth and Centerpiece Sponsor), Silver Sands Premium Outlets (Beverage Sponsor), Eglin Federal Credit Union (Registration Table Sponsor), Shelley Albarado and Brenda Whitwell of Edward Jones (Dessert Table Sponsor),

Veronica Trout and Family (Tea Table Sponsor), Community Bank (Pink Ribbon Sponsor), RHoward Photography and AlphaLit.

To become a Tea Fore Her sponsor, donate to the silent auction, or for more information, contact amy@foreher.org or visit www.foreher.org/tea-fore-her.



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Community

Rare Snowfall Creates Winter Wonderland at Florida Golf Course

By PAUL WILLMS

In an extraordinary meteorological event that left residents rubbing their eyes in disbelief, the Burnt Pines Golf Course transformed into a winter wonderland as over five inches of snow blanketed its pristine greens. The unprecedented weather event turned the Emerald Coast destination into a temporary winter retreat, complete with an unlikely visitor: a snowman named Bogey Frost holding court on the 16th hole.



mits with a laugh. "Snow removal isn't exactly in our standard operating procedures."

The unexpected snowfall sparked impromptu celebrations throughout the community, as local families descended upon the course's gentle slopes with boogie boards in hand, repurposing beach equipment for winter entertainment. Children, many experiencing snow for the first time, delighted in rolling snowballs across the normally manicured fairways.

This rare meteorological event has created more than just operational challenges - it's crafted lasting memories for the Emerald Coast community, proving that sometimes the most extraordinary moments come when Mother Nature decides to break with tradition.

"In all my years since moving from Rochester to Florida in 2001, I've seen a few flakes in the air but nothing like this," says Golf Course Director Liam Branagan, who has overseen operations at Burnt Pines since 2019. "Building a snowman on a Florida golf

green? That's definitely a first for my career."

Course General Manager Kristin Ercoli temporarily closed the facility. "We're a bit out of our element here," Ercoli ad-

The Snowbirds Get Busy!

Escape the winter blues and join the Walton County Snowbirds community in Florida! This group surely knows how to have fun!! Hosting several sports and outdoor activities as well as their arts, crafts, cards, and discussion groups, there is something for everyone. Their social events include TGI Thursday happy hours, dinners, dolphin cruise, casino trips, and bi-weekly gatherings are all packed with entertainment, joy, and laughter.



Check out their latest activity highlight - the Ukulele Next Step class - a new favorite among snowbirds! Join them for exciting February events, and if you are interested in be-

coming a member, visit their website, www.waltoncountysnowbirds.com, or Facebook page, Walton County Snowbirds, for registration details and the latest events. Don't miss out on the warmth, camaraderie, and endless activities.



100 Years of Golf!

Eagle Springs Golf Course and Recreational Center is a 190 acre site located in DeFuniak Springs. The Club currently offers an 18-hole Golf Course, Public Swimming Pool and Clubhouse. Future expansion will include fishing docks, walking trails, basketball courts, tennis courts and much more. Eagle Springs Golf Course is available to host your tournaments and the Clubhouse is available for rent for parties, birthdays and weddings.

All Junior Golfers (15 and Under) play golf FREE.

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How the 2024 Hurricane Season Impacted Recreational Fishing in the Gulf

BY NOAA FISHERIES, SOUTH-EAST REGIONAL OFFICE

The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, which officially ended on November 30, showcased above-average activity. It had a profound impact on recreational fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, causing recreational fishers to face challenges and interim closures. Hurricanes Beryl, Helene, and Milton caused devastating effects in many Gulf Coast fishing communities—many of which are still working to recover.

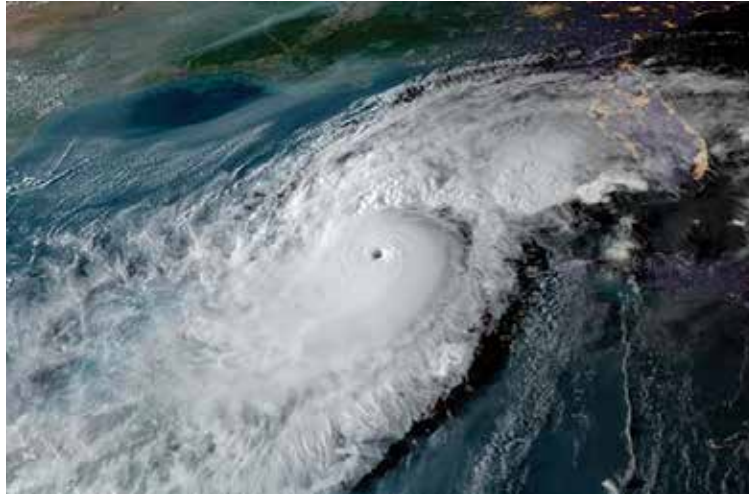
The aftermath of this hurricane season is still being felt by many key industries that contribute to the coastal economy—including the recreational fishing community. NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Recreational Fishing Coordinator, Sean Meehan has spoken with key members in the industry to learn the full scale of this hurricane season's impacts.

"Hurricanes can upset coastal marine ecosystems, but they also have the ability to negatively impact the economy in the Gulf," Sean Meehan says, "Many business owners rely on tourism to keep their tackle shops and charter operations running smoothly. I've met with several members of the recreational fishing community here in Florida who have shared the challenges they're facing in the wake of the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season. Rebuilding efforts are underway and it's only up from here."

How the Fishing Industry is Recovering

Hubbard's Marina has been operating in the Tampa Bay area since 1928. They offer deep sea fishing trips, dolphin-watching excursions, sunset cruises, island visits, and private fishing charters to both visitors and locals alike. After four generations of family ownership and operations on the Gulf Coast, one could say the Hubbard family is experienced in Atlantic hurricane seasons.

"This hurricane season has had a horrendous impact," says Captain Dylan Hubbard, owner of Hubbard's Marina, "But while we got knocked down, it's all about how we get back up. We were back running strong just days after the storm but admit that we need help from our inland neighbors to come out and shop local, shop small to help our



On Oct. 8, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. EDT, NOAA's GOES East satellite captured this imagery of Hurricane Milton approaching the Gulf Coast of Florida. At its most powerful, Milton's maximum sustained winds reached 180 mph making the storm an extremely dangerous Category 5 hurricane.

coastal communities and fishing communities to rebound more quickly."

Hubbard's is just one of many fishing businesses in the Southeast that were impacted by these storms. While others are on their way to recovery like Hubbard's, many others are still struggling.

Key Impacts on Recreational Fishing in the Gulf

Safety Concerns and Storm Damage

Part of the widespread damage is moderate to severe damage to popular marinas, piers, and docks. Recreational fishermen use these to access waterways in the Gulf. Periods of intense weather also raise safety concerns with rough seas, heavy rainfall, and strong winds, making it dan-

gerous for anglers and those with smaller vessels.

Shore-based anglers are finding that many key water access points have been damaged or temporarily closed. Many private recreational fishermen who don't have access to boats/vessels rely on these access points to fish. Hurricanes can destroy or damage shoreline structures, docks, and piers commonly used by this group of anglers.

Environmental Damage

Hurricanes can disturb marine ecosystems and agitate longstanding habits held by certain fish populations and species. For example, increased sand, sediment, and nutrient runoff into the Gulf can impact the health of crucial habitats

for spawning and feeding fish.

In severe cases, entire waterways can become closed off, causing some species to temporarily move away from damaged areas. Often they return once waterways are able to stabilize again, but this has impacts on the frequency and amount of fish caught in certain areas.

Economic Impacts

Some recreational fishing charter companies have had to suspend operations or temporarily close due to storm damage. Tackle shops, boat rental

companies, and bait suppliers can suffer financially due to a reduced amount of tourism to hurricane impacted areas. Many local economies in the Gulf rely on out-of-town visitors to stay open year-round.

Although the 2024 hurricane season has presented many challenges, there have also been notable moments where communities have united to support each other and assist in recovery efforts. The best way to help recovering businesses and communities is by continuing to fish.

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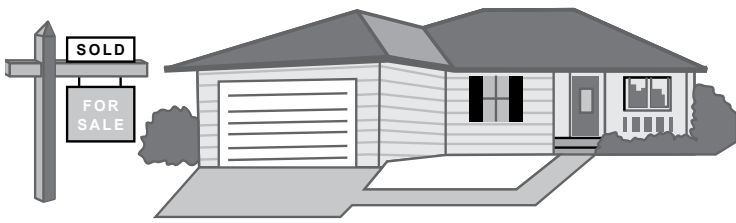
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Bingo Nights

The Knights of Columbus will hold two more Bingo nights this month - Friday, February 14 and Friday, February 28 at Saint Rita Catholic Church. The Knights of Columbus' Bingo events raise funds for varying local charities with 100% of the profits being donated to the charitable organization.

Doors open at 5 p.m. and Bingo is held from 6 - 8 p.m. Bingo Game Packages are available (10 games, 3 cards per game) for \$10. Single game sheets are \$1. You must be 18 years old to be in the gym. Bring your friends and family for a fun night for a good cause.



DID YOU BUILD OR PURCHASE A HOME LAST YEAR?

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

FILING DEADLINE MARCH 1, 2025

Gary J. Gregor, Walton County Property Appraiser, reminds property owners who intend to make application for Homestead Exemption, Deployed Military Exemption, Combat Disabled Veteran's Discount, Veteran's Exemption, Disability Exemption, Agricultural Classification, Additional Senior Exemption, or Widow's and Widower's Exemption, the absolute filing deadline is **MARCH 1, 2025**.

If you plan to file your exemption for the first time, please bring with you a copy of your recorded deed or tax receipt, the social security number(s) of all owners of property, Florida driver's license number, Florida auto tag number, and voter's registration number. If you are entitled to disability exemption, please bring proof of disability (two doctors' statements). If you are filing Homestead Exemption on a mobile home, please bring the title or registration certificate.

If you are filing for the "Additional Exemption for Persons 65 and Older" there is a total household income limitation (adjusted annually for cost-of-living; proof will be required).

If you would like information to determine your eligibility for exemptions, please call **850-892-8123** or **850-267-4500**, Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

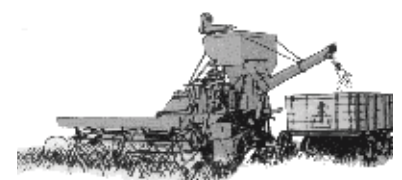
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DeFuniak Springs - Courthouse
571 Hwy. 90 East

Santa Rosa Beach - Courthouse Annex
31 Coastal Centre Blvd., Suite 600

**THE ABSOLUTE FILING DEADLINE FOR
2025 EXEMPTIONS IS MARCH 1, 2025.**

**Have You Applied For Ag Classification of
Newly Acquired Agricultural Lands For 2025?**



The Emerald Coast Boat & Lifestyle Show Returns February 28-March 2nd

\$40 Million Dollars of Marine Inventory Coming to Aaron Bessant Park
 More Than 400 Boats to be Displayed in Panama City Beach
 Curated Premier Line-Up of Exhibitors for Those Who Love the Coastal Lifestyle

It only happens one weekend a year. From the Panhandle to Tallahassee, boating, fishing and outdoor lifestyle enthusiasts gather in Panama City Beach for the Emerald Coast Boat and Lifestyle Show at Aaron Bessant Park, which returns February 28th-March 2nd.

Whether buying their first boat or upgrading their cur-

Bob Price of Panama City Beach, who never misses the show, purchased a 17-foot center console in 2019 and upgraded to a 24-foot center console last year. "Boat show pricing is a real thing," he said. "I know for a fact I got my best deal on both boats I purchased at this show."

In addition to boats, this show also highlights the best of

honor military members and first responders on Sunday. For the most up-to-date information

on the show, including dealers, brands, exhibitors, and vendors, or to purchase tickets in advance

allowing you to 'skip the line,' visit EmeraldCoastBoatShow.com



the Coastal Lifestyle. Attendees who love the sugar-white sand, glistening Gulf waters, sunrises and sunsets, salty breezes, and making family memories along the coast celebrate together at The Emerald Coast Boat and Lifestyle Show!

The curated line-up of exhibitors and vendors showcases boating, fishing, paddle boarding, kayaking, biking, electric carts, product demonstrations, seminars, beach furniture, coastal artists, condo and beach house furnishing, kids' activities, live music, food trucks, beer, and cocktails inspire thoughts of outdoor activities and glorious weather all along the Emerald Coast.

Parking for the show is always free at the adjacent Pier Park. The show will once again

rent model, boat buyers enjoy a shopping experience featuring the top dealers in the Southeast displaying more than 400 boats, valued at more than 40 million dollars. Bay boats, pontoons, cruisers, personal watercraft, and center consoles, from 17' to those well over 40', will be on display, along with the latest marine electronics and innovations.

This onsite collection of dealers and manufacturers allows buyers to compare boats side by side while taking advantage of the best discounts and incentives available exclusively at the show.



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Community

Seacoast Collegiate High School Completes New Building Structure

Seacoast Collegiate High School (SCHS), Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) and Wharton-Smith Construction Group recently celebrated the completion of Seacoast Collegiate High School's new building's structure and the placement of the final beam at the newly expanded campus in Santa Rosa Beach with a Topping Out Ceremony.

This exciting milestone marks significant progress in the expansion project set to open Fall 2025. This expansion will triple the number of college graduates in South Walton, closing workforce gaps, and providing unprecedented educational opportunities for Walton County students.

Highlights included remarks from key leaders, including NWFSC President Mel Ponder, and placement of the final beam on the structure.

Seacoast Collegiate High School has partnered with Northwest Florida State College to create a groundbreaking collaboration to establish a dual enrollment center and fully functioning satellite campus of NWFSC, offering full-degree programs and professional development opportunities to the Walton County community. This collaboration is the first of its kind for South Walton and will be available to all dual enrollment students and adult learners.

This multi-million-dollar project consists of two phases over five years (2024-2029), including a SCHS



building (Phase 1), and a community

building (Phase 2) which will be the hub for the Dream Big Program. Phase 1 is set to open in Fall 2025 and will serve SCHS students in grades 9-12, dual-enrolled students in Walton County, and adult learners pursuing a degree or certification from NWFSC. The Phase 2 community building will function as a workforce and business "think tank" and incubation center, fostering public and private partnerships and supporting businesses, community leaders and entrepreneurs, engaging more than 4,000 community members and profes-

sionals annually. Enrollment in the A.A. degree program is projected to grow from 57 to more than 100 students per cohort by 2028-2029, with the number of A.A. degrees awarded annually increasing from 34 to more than 80. By the 2026-2027 school year, the project will enroll 120 students in the Business Administration A.S. degree program, with 90% of these students completing the degree program each year.

"By providing certifications in cutting-edge fields like AI, cybersecurity, and digital skills, paired with a focus on bilingualism and entrepreneurship, we're ensuring our students are not just ready for the future—they're leading it. Graduates with these credentials are more likely to be hired and command higher salaries in today's global economy."

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A New Chapter in Manatee Care: The Gulfarium Welcomes Lil Joe and Inigo

In a profound stride toward protecting one of Florida's most beloved marine creatures, the Gulfarium proudly announces the arrival of two rescued manatees—Lil Joe and Inigo—to its newly renovated manatee habitat. This milestone is the culmination of a three-year vision that began in 2022, when Patrick Berry, CEO of the Gulfarium, first spoke with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service about creating a haven dedicated to nurturing manatees in need of long-term care.

Originally a 300,000-gallon dolphin habitat, the space, now named Manatee Cove, has been meticulously transformed to meet the specialized needs of rescued manatees. Improved viewing windows invite guests into the gentle underwater world of these animals, while enhanced Life Support Systems (LSS), a dedicated medical area, and intentionally designed resting ledges ensure that Lil Joe, Inigo, and future manatee residents receive the focused attention they need to thrive.

Yet this undertaking is about

far more than a physical renovation—it is a testament to the Gulfarium's dedication to giving manatees a second chance at life. With so many of these gentle giants, a federally threatened species, facing threats in the wild, it became clear that an expanded facility was necessary to help manatees beyond their initial critical care stages.

By joining forces with the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the Gulfarium is now the first facility in the Florida Panhandle to provide housing for rescued manatees requiring extended care. This vital collaboration relieves pressure on central Florida's critical-care facilities, allowing them to focus on more urgent cases and strengthening statewide efforts to

save manatees from harm. Additionally, the Gulfarium plans



to further develop its manatee program by expanding to provide critical care for manatees in need within the northern Gulf Coast region.

Lil Joe and Inigo, who previously called The Seas with Nemo & Friends their home, will serve as living ambassadors for their species—sharing a message of resilience and hope with everyone who comes to see them. Visitors will discover their stories in a newly created education area, where daily chats and additional educational programming with the Gulfarium's team shine a light on the challenges manatees face in the wild and how each of us can play a role in their protection.

“The Gulfarium is honored to welcome Lil Joe and Inigo, two extraordinary manatees who will help illuminate the urgent conservation needs of their species,” said Patrick Berry. “Our vision has always been to create a caring environment where manatees can continue their healing journeys while inspiring our guests to connect more deeply with marine life. By taking on the long-term care of these animals, we enable facilities in central Florida and elsewhere to devote critical resources to those manatees in acute need. We're proud to stand with our partners in the MRP to protect these vulnerable creatures.”

Central to the Gulfarium's mission is public engagement. In addition to providing top-tier animal care, the new manatee habitat fosters a deeper understanding of manatees' plight. Through interactive programs, visitors can

learn about Florida's marine ecosystems, ongoing rescue efforts, and the simple steps we can all take to protect wildlife.

This vision aligns seamlessly with the Gulfarium's accreditations by the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums (AMMPA) and the International Marine Animal Trainers' Association (IMATA), underscoring an unwavering commitment to the highest standards of animal care, conservation, and public education. By welcoming Lil Joe and Inigo, the Gulfarium demonstrates the power of compassion, collaboration, and community engagement in safeguarding Florida's remarkable marine life.

For those eager to learn more about manatees and experience the wonder of these gentle giants firsthand, Lil Joe and Inigo can be viewed as part of general admission to the Gulfarium. Guests are encouraged to explore Manatee Cove, attend daily educational chats, and discover how their own actions can make a positive impact on manatee conservation efforts.

A Great Mix of Diverse Educational Programs Planned for Green Thumb Garden Club

By KATHLEEN EDGE,
PUBLICITY CHAIR

GTGC celebrated Arbor Day by planting trees at historic Gulf Cemetery in Santa Rosa Beach in January. Dr. William Keyes, Cemetery Board President was the keynote speaker. He provided GTGC members and guests with the location's history and highlighted Walton County founders and veterans who are laid to rest in this beautiful setting. Special thanks to Thomas Hicks Nursery for their donation and planting of the three sand live oak trees. A memorial marker from Green Thumb Garden Club is installed by the trees.

February's meeting will have participants flying high and landing in their own gardens. Ron Houser from the Audubon Society of Bay County will educate us on “How to attract birds to your yard with native plants”. The timing is perfect for the planting season in our area.



The March meeting brings in a past GTGC Mercer Scholarship recipient, Casey McClain, to show participants how to achieve the best results from a container herb gardening. Casey will graduate from the University of Florida Milton this spring with a degree in Plant Life. Her goal is to create a residential edible landscape business.

GTGC will welcome spring in

April with a tea party and bake sale. A guest speaker will present the health benefits of herbal teas. Bake sale proceeds from the member-donated cookies, cakes and other treats will benefit GTGC scholarships and local charities.

Additional details about the February, March and April meetings: Check in is 9:30 a.m. at Westwinds Conference Center at Sandestin, 4700 Westwinds Drive, Miramar Beach, FL 32550. The cost is \$30. for members and guests (\$32.00 with credit card.) Lunch is included in the cost.

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

The Green Thumb Garden Club, Inc., located in Walton County, Florida, is a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Its mission is to stimulate interest in the beautification of Walton County, furthering the education of its members and the

public in gardening ~ horticulture ~ botany ~ floral design ~ environmental awareness ~ conservation of natural resources ~ civic beautification ~ nature studies and instill in our youth the love of gardening and respect for the environment.



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Local Author, Diane Pickett, to Sign Copies of New Book

"The Tea Wasn't Always Sweet" at Sundog Books

Diane Pickett, local author of the newly released book, "The Tea Wasn't Always Sweet," will be signing copies and meeting with readers in Seaside at Sundog Books on February 15 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Pickett's second book, "The Tea Wasn't Always Sweet," captivates lovers of Southern history as it chronicles the tortuous path of a fiery and vibrant woman and her kaleidoscope of colorful Southern characters on a march through decades of liberating change for women.

This event is a great opportunity for local residents to meet Pickett, learn more about her books, and purchase a signed copy.

Diane Pickett was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and has lived in the South all her life. This has enabled her to graphically

construct the people and events portrayed in her novels and short



stories. Her edgy, award-winning debut novel "Never Isn't Long Enough," captures almost a century of Southern history as she

re-creates the lives of two intense characters and their chaotic journey through life.

Diane grew up in Northwest Florida and attended Florida State University after which she enjoyed a successful career as a medical executive. She has a strong interest in historic preservation and restoration and founded a non-profit organization devoted to those issues. All proceeds from the sale of her books will benefit the DeFuniak Landmarks Fund at the UWF Historic Trust.

For more information about Diane Pickett, details about her books and upcoming events, or to learn about Defuniak Landmarks, email defuniaklandmarks@uwf.edu.



Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County Announces Artists Featured in Foster Gallery Partner Exhibition at Coastal Branch Library

The Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County (CAA) is proud to announce The Foster Gallery's Spring rotation of artists featured in a partner exhibition at the Coastal Branch Library located at 437 Greenway Trail in Santa Rosa Beach. Original work by twelve regional artists will be featured in the exhibit which runs through April 30, 2025. The public is invited to attend a special morning celebrating art and creativity on Saturday, February 15 from 10 a.m. to noon. Meet the artists and enjoy some coffee and light breakfast bites all while connecting with fellow art enthusiasts in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. All ages are welcome.

The selected featured artists

are Elena Filshinska, Harriet Nix, Janis Mars Wunderlich, Joseph Cantin, Katherine Duda, Kim Clark, Kim Salesses, Linda Kaye Moriarity, Mary McCollum, Masha Edmond, Sierra Swan, and Susan Julio.

All rotation artists are members of the Cultural Arts Alliance. All exhibited works are for sale, and online for viewing and purchase at CulturalArtsAlliance.com/foster-gallery.

For Coastal Branch library hours, please visit waltonlibraries.com. For more information, including class schedule, ceramics services and space rental of the Bayou Arts Center for private events, call (850) 622-5970 or visit CulturalArtsAlliance.com.

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NOW ON SALE!



Check out the new beach towels at **Pecan Jacks** in Santa Rosa Beach. All Theo-inspired products benefit the educational mission of the **Friends South Walton Sea Turtles** nonprofit organization.





Emerald Coast Theatre Company Opens Registration for 2025 Summer Theatre Camps

Programs Available in DeFuniak Springs, Miramar Beach, Santa Rosa Beach, Panama City, and Freeport

Emerald Coast Theatre Company's (ECTC) 2025 Summer Theatre Camps are going to be a blast! These camps provide experience and training in theatre that can improve students' communication, critical thinking, and team-based skills! ECTC offers classes for Mini Players (5yrs.-1st), Little Players (2nd-3rd grade), Big Players (4th-5th grade), and teens. This year, ECTC is offering Mini Player Camps themed Disney Dreams, Snow White, Seussical, Moana, Encanto, and Trolls (Ages 5-7, Rising Kindergarten-ers), Camp Broadway: Disney Dreams (Grades 2nd-5th), Snow White and the Seven Dwarves - Non-Musical (Grades 2nd-8th), Seussical the Musical (Grades 2nd-5th), Camp Broadway: Rock and Pop! (Grades 2nd-12th), Acting for Film: Harry Potter Edition (Grades 5th-12th), Camp Broadway: The Best of Broadway (Grades 6th-12th), Too Many Detectives at the Murder Mansion - Non-Musical (Grades 6th-12th), Chicago - Teen Edition Vocal & Dance Intensive (Ages 14-18; Audition ONLY Camp), and Beetlejuice JR! Musical Theatre Intensive (Grades



6th-12th). The full schedule of class dates and times along with tuition and registration rates can be found at emeraldcoasttheatre.org/summer-camps.

"We are so excited about our Summer Theatre Camps! We've included a few favorite classics that everyone will love! We are looking forward to a lot of theatre fun this summer!" - Heath Carroll, Director of Education

Summer Theatre Camps are held from June - August 2025, with varying dates based on camp. 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, Gulf

Coast State College at 5230 US-98 in Panama City, FL, and Seaside Neighborhood School at 10 Smolian Cir in Santa Rosa Beach, FL. Please have your child bring a snack and water for half-day camps and a snack, water, and lunch for full-day camps.

"Give your children a chance to express themselves on stage, in a comfortable environment with other children, without judgement. Theatre

Arts can help children break out of their shells, improve confidence and make friendships that last. We are thrilled to be able to continue these programs here at ECTC and surrounding communities." - 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, South Walton Tourist Development Council, and Jerry and Alice Zich. 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 2025 Summer Theatre Camps, visit emeraldcoasttheatre.org/summer-camps.

To make a tax-deductible donation, volunteer or learn more about Emerald Coast Theatre Company, find them on Facebook, follow the ECTC YouTube channel, call (850) 684-0323 and visit www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

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

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SONGS THROUGH THE AGES
Valentines Day Musical Revue

February 14TH 2PM & 6PM

ALWAYS a Bridesmaid
A Jones Hoppe Woolen Comedy

February 20TH - March 2nd

Share this evening or afternoon event with the ones you love. Enjoy beautiful love songs from yesteryear performed by our top vocalists. This special evening can be complemented with a bottle of wine and a sweet or savory charcuterie box. This is a fun way to celebrate and avoid the packed restaurants. We have everything you need right here at ECTC.

In this hilarious comedic romp a la "Golden Girls," four friends have sworn to keep the promise they made on the night of their Senior Prom: to be in each other's weddings...no matter what. More than thirty years later, these Southern friends-for-life are still making "the long walk" for each other, determined to honor that vow.

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



Sand Up Comedy Festival Returns Valentine's Day Weekend With Star Studded Lineup

Annual event features top comedians and supports local artists and filmmakers through SOWAL Foundation.

Following the unprecedented success of last year's sold-out inaugural event, the Sand Up Comedy Festival is back for a second year, promising even more laughter and community engagement. Scheduled for Thursday, February 13 – Saturday, February 15, this year's festival will feature performances at six iconic venues across Walton and Bay Counties, with a stellar lineup of comedians seen on Netflix, Comedy Central, Sirius XM, Drybar Comedy, and Bob Goldthwait's Misfits & Monsters.

Whether you're celebrating with someone special, spending time with friends, or enjoying a solo adventure, the Sand Up Comedy Festival is the perfect way to spend Valentine's Day weekend—with a side of world-class comedy.

Featured Venues

SOWAL House (Rosemary Beach) – A creative hub for intimate performances.

Distillery 98 (Santa Rosa Beach) – Known for its unique distilled spirits and lively atmosphere.

Grayton Beer Taproom (Santa Rosa Beach) – A crowd-favorite venue offering locally brewed craft beer.

Stinky's Bait Shack (Dune Allen Beach) – A beloved local entertainment venue, serving up more than just laughs.

Beaches Comedy Club (Panama City Beach) – Panama City Beach's premier dedicated comedy venue.



Mosey's Downtown (Panama City) – A hidden gem perfect for late-night laughs and laid-back vibes.

"We're thrilled to build upon last year's momentum," says Dave King, President of SOWAL Foundation and co-founder of SOWAL House. "We're not only bringing world-class comedy to the area but also supporting our local arts community through SOWAL Foundation."



Tickets are available now at www.sandupcomedyfest.com. Stay updated on Instagram and Facebook @sandupcomedyfest for exclusive announcements and sneak peeks.

Supporting Local Creatives Through Laughter

Sponsorships from the festival benefit SOWAL Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering and uplifting local artists, fashion designers, and filmmakers in Walton County and surrounding areas. The Foundation provides essential resources, fosters creative growth, and advocates for artistic expression, believing in the transformative power of the arts to inspire, educate, and unite.

Festival sponsors are invited to an exclusive Saturday night wrap party at SOWAL House to celebrate the weekend's success alongside performers, community leaders, and local creatives.

SeaLight Festival Returns with Stunning New Displays!

After an incredible debut in 2024, the SeaLight Festival is back for 2025, offering an even more spectacular experience.

Step into a mesmerizing world of light, featuring hundreds of handcrafted Chinese lanterns, each meticulously designed by artisans with decades of experience. This whimsical walk-through experience is perfect for the whole family, immersing visitors in a breathtaking display of color and culture.

This year's festival introduces all-new, larger, and brighter lanterns, enhancing the magic

of the event. Guests will also be thrilled by live performances from the Zigong Acrobatic Troupe, an award-winning Chinese acrobatic collective, delivering awe-inspiring shows under the Big Tent.

Beyond the dazzling lights, enjoy a variety of vendors, cultural booths, games, and food & drink options. Under the Big Tent, families can also explore a children's play area featuring bounce houses and even rideable giant dinosaurs!

The SeaLight Festival's luminescent night walk brings

the rich tradition of Chinese lantern festivals to life, celebrating craftsmanship and culture. The experience takes 30 to 45 minutes, depending on your pace. Don't miss out on this unforgettable event—get your tickets now at www.sealightfestival.com/destin.



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The Most Powerful Way to Express Your Love Will Surprise You



BY JAMIE C. WILLIAMSON, PHD

Romantic love involves both the experience of affectionate feelings and the outward expression of those feelings. No matter how deep your feelings of love are, your partner can only know that you love them if you frequently, openly express that love.

And if you want your partner to know for sure that you love them, you need to know which actions say “I love You” more strongly than others.

Spoiler alert: Grand gestures, good sex, and saying “I love you” help, but that’s not what matters most – not by a long shot.

Two Surprisingly Powerful Ways to Express Your Love

Express Positive Feelings: According to relationship expert John Gottman, one important way couples show their love for one another is by “nurturing their fondness and admiration for each other”. This requires romantic partners to continually develop the positive internal feelings they have for one another. To do this, couples mutually express positive feelings, focus on each other’s positive qualities and their good times.

Express Interest in Your Partner: We all know that there

is more to a couple’s life than exchanging compliments and reliving good times. There are jobs, housework, food prep, parenting, community involvement, extended family obligations, friends, hobbies, etc. So, another important way successful couples express their love for one another is to embrace the day-to-day opportunities to express genuine interest in their partner’s feelings and experiences. Gottman refers to these small opportunities for connection as “bids” for attention, affection, humor, or support. Partners can respond to each bid by either “Turning Toward” the other or by “Turning Away” or “Turning Against”. Routinely Turning Toward your partner sends a powerful loving message.

Why “Turning Toward” Each Other Is So Important

Turning Toward your partner includes paying attention and responding to your partner’s comments with interest, as well as initiating small, intentional moments of kindness and connection. Turning Away includes ignoring or brushing off your partner’s comments while Turning Against involves a critical response that blatantly rejects your partner’s bid for attention or support.

How couples respond to small, day-to-day opportunities for connection is fundamental to the future of their relationship. Partners who Turn Toward one another most of the time are more likely to stay happily married because Turning Toward your partner forms the basis of trust, emotional connection, passion, and a satisfying sex life. Couples who most often turn away from one another

are more likely to end up divorced because frequently Turning Away erodes their positive connection.

Positive Responses More Important Than How You Fight

How you and your partner respond to each other’s bids for connection may be more important than how you fight. And you can make a surprisingly powerful impact on your romantic relationship by responding constructively to your partner’s enthusiastic interests, achievements, successes, and even the positive little things that happen to them daily.

So, although it may be important to learn how to fight better, it is even more important to learn how to express your love through active, constructive responses to your partner’s bids for connection, especially when your partner shares their positive interests, good events, and stories of things that went right.

Active Constructive Responding – Your New Superpower

You can respond to your partner in one of four basic ways. But Psychologist Shelly Gable’s research shows that only Active Constructive responses express the strong loving feelings that enhance a romantic relationship. Here’s an example:

Your Partner enthusiastically shares: **“I was asked to train the new guy at work!”**

Active – Constructive: *That is so great! I am so proud of you. I know you really want to become a supervisor, and this shows they are grooming you for that. Start at the beginning and tell me everything. How did*

heartfelt thanks to our generous event sponsors, including Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa, Emerald Coast Hospice, Bluewater Plastic Surgery, Co-gent Bank, Blush Beauty Lounge, Eglin Federal Credit Union, Palms 30A, Sweet Henrietta’s, Mingle, GTS Entertainment, Shunk Gulley, Emerald Coast Florals & Event Design, and Epic Photo Booth Co.

Caring & Sharing of South Walton provides crisis relief to our neighbors in need in Walton County through financial assis-

tance, food, counseling and case management. Founded in 1994, the organization serves over 800 local families each month. Caring & Sharing of South Walton also operates a Thrift Store. Sales in the Thrift Store help cover operating expenses and generate funds to help those they serve. Items for sale in the Thrift Store include clothing, housewares, bedding, furniture, electronics and books. For more information about Caring & Sharing of South Walton visit www.caringandsharingsowal.org

they ask you? What did they say? (Nonverbal: Direct eye contact, Positive Emotion, e.g. smiling, touching, laughing – Turning Toward).

Passive – Constructive: *That’s good news. You will be good at it.* (Nonverbal: little active emotional expression).

Active – Destructive: *That’s a lot of responsibility. Are you sure you’re up to it? Will you have to work more but for the same pay?* (Nonverbal: Displays negative emotion, e.g. frowning, furrowed brow),

Passive – Destructive: *What time is dinner? I’ve got to respond to this text.* (Nonverbal: Little eye contact, focused on phone – Turning Away).

If you want your partner to know for sure that you

feel love for them, try Turning Toward your partner using Active-Constructive responses to their bids for connection, especially when they share something they feel good about. This is a surprising powerful way to express your love and an easy habit to learn.

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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CARING & SHARING

continued from page 8

Tickets are available for purchase online only. Caring & Sharing offers individual tickets for \$65, as well as the ability to reserve a table for eight guests for \$600. Visit <https://springfashionshow2025.eventbrite.com> or www.caringandsharingsowal.org to purchase tickets.

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 Events

UPCOMING EVENTS

Coastal Branch Library Winter Community Speaker Series

The Coastal Branch Library invites you to the Winter Community Speaker Series beginning at 10 a.m. every Wednesday through February 26. Informational brochures can be picked up at the library.

Feb. 12: Jessica Valek, natural resources

Feb. 19: Historian Brenda Rees

Feb. 26: Murder Mystery

Emerald Coast Theatre Company: Timeless Love: Songs through the Ages Feb. 14

Emerald Coast Theatre Company presents Timeless Love: Songs through the Ages Valentine's Day Musical Revue at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. at ECTC's space in Grand Boulevard Town Center. Share this evening or afternoon event with the ones you love. Each couple will enjoy their own private table. Complete your experience with a bottle of wine and a sweet or savory charcuterie box. Tickets and information can be found at www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

AJ's Grayton Pups & Pints Valentine's Celebration Feb. 14

Celebrate Valentine's Day at AJ's Grayton Beach. Pups & Pints begins at 3 p.m. featuring fun, furry friends and live music. Road Dogg Rescue will be on-site from 3-6 p.m. with adorable puppies and dogs looking for their forever homes or foster families. Enjoy a free pint of beer, free crawfish, and sample a delicious Tito's cocktail while you mingle with friends and fellow dog lovers. Don't forget to indulge in sushi happy hour from 4-6 p.m., featuring 1/2 price sushi.

LIVE MUSIC

Main Stage, 4 p.m.: Bryan Bludworth

Courtyard, 3 p.m.: TBA

8 p.m.: DJ Charles

9 p.m.: About to Sweat

PCB Mardi Gras and Music Festival Feb. 14-15

You're in for a real treat at the Panama City Beach Mardi Gras and Music Festival on February 14 & 15, 2025. In conjunction with the Krewe of Dominique Youx's great Mardi Gras at the Beach parade, the festival fea-

tures entertainment for the whole family. Attendees will enjoy float tours, the kids' fun zone, live music, and fireworks. For more details, visit www.visitpanamacitybeach.com/events/concerts-music-festivals/mardi-gras.

SeaLight Festival Now-April 13

The SeaLight Festival has returned to Seascapes Resort, open Thursday through Sunday from 5:30-9:30 p.m. The whimsical outdoor walk-through experience showcases over a thousand intricately designed Chinese lanterns and invites visitors of all ages to explore a luminous landscape inspired by Chinese legends and lore, while others celebrate the beauty of nature. Enjoy live entertainment by the Zigong Acrobatic Troupe, an award-winning Chinese acrobatic collective. Each festival also features a variety of vendors, games, food & drink, and cultural booths boasting incredible artisanal gifts for purchase.

Tickets are now available for purchase: sealightfestival.com.



CAA Cocktails & Canvases at Farm & Fire Feb. 19

Unleash your creative side with the Cultural Arts Alliance! Grab your friends and secure your spot for their Cocktails & Canvases experience with artist Pam Ridler at Farm & Fire on Wednesday, February 19, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Cocktails & Canvases is a program of the Cultural Arts Alliance of Walton County that offers guests the opportunity to be guided by an experienced artist in creating a piece of artwork they will take home at the end of

the session. This event is open to all levels of learners ages 21 and older. Cost is \$75 which includes supplies, 2 cocktails and light bites. Visit CulturalArtsAlliance.com/upcoming-events to reserve your spot!

30A Wine Festival Feb. 20-23

The 30A Wine Festival, underwritten by The Alys Foundation, returns to the beautiful community of Alys Beach for its 13th year. Cleanse your palate and prepare for five days of exquisite wines, delectable dishes, and beautiful surroundings.

CRESCENDO!
An event supporting Sinfonia Gulf Coast

VINTNER DINNERS
Friday, February 28, 2025






Intimate dinners in stunning homes and venues with a private chef & world class wines.


MAIN EVENT!
Sunday, March 2, 2025

Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa
Join us for world-class vintners, delectable bites, a seated lunch, expert spirit purveyors, amazing auction items and live music.

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

CRESCENDO! 2025 IS PRESENTED BY:



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850.460.8800

UPCOMING EVENTS

The festival showcases renowned distillers, vintners, and culinary favorites over four days of celebration – a series of events and workshops where wine enthusiasts and bourbon lovers alike relish in the festivities within the captivating town of Alys Beach.

All proceeds from the festival benefit the Children's Volunteer Health Network, a local charity which provides health services to uninsured or underinsured school children in Walton and Okaloosa Counties.

Tickets and more info at 30awinefestival.com.

Florida Chautauqua Assembly Feb. 20-23

The assembly is an annual 4-day educational program for families featuring notable keynote speakers, educational breakout sessions, and a nightly street party. The assembly will also host free events along with paid events around the lake yard. The 2025 theme is "A Journey Into Vaudeville."

See the full schedule and registration information at FloridaChautauquaAssembly.org.

Emerald Coast Theatre Company: Always a Bridesmaid Feb. 20 - March 2

Emerald Coast Theatre Company presents Always a Bridesmaid at 7 p.m., Sundays and Wednesdays at 2 p.m. at ECTC's space in Grand Boulevard Town Center. In this hilarious comedic romp a la "Golden Girls," four friends have sworn to keep the promise they made on the night of their Senior Prom: to be in each other's weddings...no matter what. More than thirty years later, these Southern friends-for-life are still making "the long walk" for each other, determined to honor that vow. If you've ever elbowed a stranger out of the way to catch a bride's bouquet, seriously questioned the mental stability of the duo saying "I do" or been forced to wear the world's ugliest bridesmaid dress, this deliriously funny Jones Hope Wooten comedy is definitely for you...and your dearly beloved!

Tickets and information can be found at www.emeraldcoasttheatre.org.

Sandestin Gumbo Festival Feb. 21 & 22

The event is a beloved local winter tradition in South Walton, featuring gumbo tasting through-



out The Village as well as a bloody mary competition and live music. This year's event promises to serve as fun for everyone. Gulf Coast restaurants will be featured along with live music and children's activities.

Visit SandestinGumboFestival.com for tickets and details, including a daily schedule of events and entertainment. Event will happen rain or shine.

Escape to Create: A Performance by Seyko Groves Feb. 21

Escape To Create makes its highly-anticipated return! Accompanied by local musicians, Soulful singer and songwriter Seyko Groves will perform a selection of jazz, soul and R&B standards and introduce new works at The REP Theatre. Tickets will be available through The REP Theatre at <http://lovetherrep.com>.

Escape to Create performances continue throughout February at The REP and other various locations in Seaside. Ticket purchases support Escape to Create Residencies and Educational Outreach throughout Walton County. To learn more and view the full schedule, visit www.escape2create.org.

6th Annual Shrimp & Grits Festival Feb. 22

Don't miss out on the 6th Annual Shrimp & Grits Festival Feb. 22 from 12-4 p.m. behind Brotula's Seafood House and Steamer, benefiting the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast. Delight your taste buds with creative twists on this classic southern dish from local chefs, sip on refreshing drinks, groove to a live DJ and cast your vote for the best Shrimp and Grits on the Emerald Coast. To purchase tickets, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/5th-annual-shrimp-grits-festival-tickets-741754897867.

Dog-Harmony Hops for Hounds Feb. 23

Dog Harmony's 5th Annual

"Hops for Hounds" dog walk and after party, will be held February 23rd, 1-3 p.m. at Props Brewery in Hammock Bay, Freeport. The day will start with a picturesque, short stroll followed by a lively after-party at Props Brewery, complete with craft beer (for thirsty humans 21 and older), live music, vendors, food trucks and more. To register, visit <https://dog-harmony.org/hops-forhounds-2025>.

Emerald Coast Boat & Lifestyle Show Feb. 28 - March 3

The Emerald Coast Boat & Lifestyle Show takes place at Aaron Bessant Park in Panama City Beach. This land based show will feature boat displays from all major manufacturers and the top dealers representing the latest in boats, high-tech engines, electronics and marine accessories. Boats range from entry level bow riders and center consoles all the way up to the next generation 42' center consoles with quad outboards. Buyers will find everything in between. REAL. FUN. BOATS.

Making it much more than a boat show, this event features everything for the kind of active, outdoor beach living so popular along the Emerald Coast, from stand-up paddleboards and fishing kayaks to outdoor kitchens, diving, active wear, and beach cruising bicycles.

Visit emeraldcoastboatshow.com to purchase tickets, check out the venue and registered exhibitors.

DeFuniak Springs Home and Garden Show March 1

The DeFuniak Springs Home and Garden Show takes place Saturday, March 1st from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the Fair Grounds in DeFuniak Springs. Entry is free, but donations are greatly appreciated.

The show is a local marketplace where you can shop for home-related products and services, purchase unique decor and gifts from arts and crafts vendors, get products from local hobby

farms, support small business owners, view displays to help inspire your next home project, connect with home improvement and real estate professionals, and enjoy informative presentations from local home and garden experts. Enjoy plant and food vendors as well as pet adoptions on-site. Visit walton-countyfair.com/events for more information

La Vie En Rouge Friday, March 7

Immerse yourself in the glamour of 19th-century Parisian cabaret at La Vie En Rouge, presented by Emerald Coast Theatre Company on Friday, March 7th 6-9 p.m. This exclusive signature event will feature exhilarating live performances, dazzling costumes, and a vibrant atmosphere for guests 21+. Get ready to indulge yourself in an evening of elegance, as we transport you to the iconic Moulin Rouge for a night of dinner, dancing, entertainment, silent auction, and many more unforgettable moments.

Purchase tickets at emeraldcoasttheatre.org/special-events.

ECCAC's Signature Gala & Golf Events March 8-9

The Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center (ECCAC) is putting on its annual signature Gala & Golf event this year, presented by Peggy and Jerry Swanson. The Gala features a cocktail hour starting at 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 8, at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Guests will enjoy dinner and live entertainment; an exciting live auction, as well as a featured guest speaker. The Gala is an energetic, yet important ECCAC fundraiser to benefit children by providing services at no cost to help identify, treat and support child victims in abusive situations. The Golf Tournament, also to benefit ECCAC, will take place on Sunday, March 9, at Kelly Plantation Golf Club with registration and a cookout meal from 10:30 to 11:45 a.m. to be ready for a tournament shotgun start at noon. An Awards Ceremony will follow the tournament. Please make reservations online at eccac.org. Sponsorships are still available.

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PLATINUM: The Blue Giraffe
GOLD: Justin Gaffrey Gallery

BEST EVENT

DIAMOND: 30A Songwriters Festival
PLATINUM: Digital Graffiti at Alys Beach
GOLD: Tequila & Taco Fest

BEST GOLF COURSE

DIAMOND: Camp Creek Golf Course
PLATINUM: Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club
GOLD: Burnt Pine Golf Club

BEST KIDS ATTRACTION

DIAMOND: Wild Sea Turtle Wednesday/
South Walton Turtle Watch
PLATINUM: The Village of Baytowne Wharf
GOLD: The Big Chill 30A

BEST NATURE LOCALE

DIAMOND: Grayton Beach State Park
PLATINUM: Eden Gardens State Park
GOLD: Topsail Hill Preserve State Park

BEST RETAILER

DIAMOND: Street Legal Golf Carts
PLATINUM: Lola's on 30A
GOLD: WaterColor Store

BEST SHOPPING AREA

DIAMOND: Grand Boulevard
PLATINUM: Seaside
GOLD: Rosemary Beach

BEST TENNIS FACILITY

DIAMOND: WaterColor Tennis by MatchPoint Resorts
PLATINUM: Sandestin Tennis Center
GOLD: Camp Creek Inn

FOOD & DRINKS

BEST BREAKFAST

DIAMOND: Donut Hole
PLATINUM: Black Bear Bread Co.
GOLD: Crackings

BEST CASUAL

DIAMOND: Shunk
PLATINUM:
GOLD: South

BEST COFFEE

DIAMOND: Black
PLATINUM: B
GOLD: Amavida

BEST CRAFT BEER/STOUT

DIAMOND: Idyll Hour
PLATINUM: Grov
GOLD: The

BEST FINE

DIAMOND: C
PLATINUM: Ambrosia P
GOLD: TH

BEST HAPP

DIAMOND: Amici 3
PLATINUM: Hurr
GOLD: The

BEST L

DIAMOND: Sou
PLATINUM: Cha
GOLD: George'

BEST PERSONAL CHEF

DIAMOND: Sw
PLATINUM: Blue N
GOLD: Grayz

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 GOLD: South of Philly 30A

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 GOLD: Coffee Roasters

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DIAMOND: Hands Brewing Company
 PLATINUM: Towler Garage 30A
 GOLD: The Craft Bar

BAR DINING

DIAMOND: Café Thirty-A
 PLATINUM: Prime Seafood & Steaks
 GOLD: The Citizen

BAR/CLUB HOURS

DIAMOND: 30A Italian Kitchen
 PLATINUM: Hurricane Oyster Bar
 GOLD: The Wine Bar

BRUNCH

DIAMOND: South of Philly 30A
 PLATINUM: Anticleer Eatery
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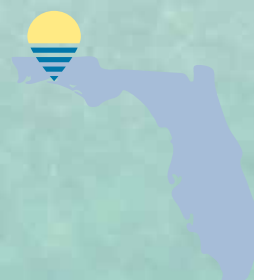
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The Three Most Common Types of Skin Cancer: What You Need to Know



DR. JESSICA CLARK,
BEACH DERMATOLOGY SKIN
WELLNESS CLINIC

As a board-certified dermatologist, one of the most important aspects of my practice is educating patients about skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States, but the good news is that when detected early, it is often treatable. Let's discuss the three most common types of skin cancer—basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma—and what you should watch for to protect your skin.

1. Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)

Basal cell carcinoma is the most common type of skin cancer, accounting for about 80% of all skin cancer cases. It typically develops in the basal cells, which are found in the lower part of the epidermis (the outer layer of the skin). Basal cell carcinoma is generally slow-growing and rarely spreads to other parts of the body, but it can cause significant local damage if left untreated.

What to look for:

Appearance: BCC often appears as a small, pearly or waxy bump, sometimes with visible blood vessels. It can also look like a flat, scaly patch.

Location: It usually develops on sun-exposed areas, such as the face, ears, neck, scalp, chest, shoulders, back, or arms.

Other signs: BCC may bleed, crust, or form a sore that doesn't heal.

While basal cell carcinoma is

rarely life-threatening, early detection and treatment are important to prevent disfigurement or damage to surrounding tissue.

2. Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)

Squamous cell carcinoma is the second most common type of skin cancer, responsible for about 20% of all skin cancer cases. SCC develops in the squamous cells, which make up most of the skin's outer layer. Unlike basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma can spread to other parts of the body if left untreated, though it typically remains localized in the beginning stages.

What to look for:

Appearance: SCC often appears as a red, scaly, or crusted bump or patch. It may be firm to the touch and may bleed or ulcerate. *I always remind patients to call me if they have a small red bump that looks like a hard pimple or bug bite that has been there over a month. People often think SCC is a pimple or a spider bite and try to squeeze it. I have often seen primary care doctors treat these for a spider bite or cyst and they end up in my office because "it won't go away." SCC is important to catch early because it CAN SPREAD TO LYMPH NODES, especially in the neck area.

Location: It commonly develops in areas that have been sun-damaged, such as the face, ears, neck, chest, backs of the hands, or arms. However, it can also appear in other areas, including mucous membranes (like the mouth or genital area).

Other signs: SCC may be tender or itchy and may cause pain if it begins to grow deeper into the skin.

If caught early, squamous cell

carcinoma has a high cure rate, but like BCC, it requires prompt treatment to avoid complications.

3. Melanoma

Melanoma is the least common but most aggressive form of skin cancer. It arises from melanocytes, the cells responsible for producing pigment (melanin) in the skin. Melanoma can develop in previously normal skin or from an existing mole. Unlike BCC and SCC, melanoma has a higher likelihood of spreading to other parts of the body, making it the deadliest form of skin cancer if not caught in its early stages.

What to look for:

Appearance: Melanomas often have an irregular shape, uneven color, and may have jagged or blurry borders. The color can vary from brown to black, and in some cases, it can be red, blue, or white.

Location: Melanoma can appear anywhere on the body, including areas not typically exposed to the sun, like the soles of the feet, palms of the hands, or under the nails. It is also common in moles on sun-exposed areas such as the back, legs, and face.

Other signs: A new mole or a change in an existing mole's size, shape, or color should raise suspicion. Melanomas can also become painful, itchy, or bleed.

Because melanoma can spread quickly, early detection is key. That's why I always encourage my patients to regularly monitor their skin for any changes and to schedule routine skin exams.

Prevention and Early Detection

The good news about skin cancer is that it's often prevent-

able, and when caught early, it's highly treatable. Here are a few important tips for prevention:

Sun Protection: Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher every two hours when outdoors, even on cloudy days. Wear protective clothing, hats, and sunglasses, and avoid tanning beds.

Skin Checks: Perform regular self-exams to check for any new moles or changes in existing ones. Use the ABCDE rule for melanoma:

- Asymmetry (uneven shape)
- Border (irregular edges)
- Color (multiple colors)
- Diameter (larger than 6mm)
- Evolution (changes in size, shape, or color over time)

Regular Dermatology Visits: See a dermatologist for a full-body skin exam annually, or more frequently if you have a history of skin cancer or are at higher risk due to factors like fair skin, family history, or excessive sun exposure.

Conclusion

While the idea of skin cancer can be alarming, understanding the differences between basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma can help you feel more empowered when it comes to taking care of your skin. Remember, early detection and protection are key to preventing skin cancer or catching it early when treatment is most effective. If you notice any changes in your skin or have concerns, don't hesitate to schedule an appointment with a dermatologist. It's always better to be safe than sorry!

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Staying Healthy This Cold & Flu Season: A Q&A with Dr. Karen DeVore

BY BOBBY PARKER

As the seasons change and the air gets crisp, so does the likelihood of sniffles, sore throats and seasonal viruses. The Tortoise Clinic, located in Santa Rosa Beach, believes in blending Eastern and Western medicine to support the immune system naturally. Their medical-grade dispensary, open to the public, offers third-party tested supplements, vitamins, and herbs to ensure quality, safety, and therapeutic effectiveness.

We sat down with Dr. Karen DeVore, Naturopathic Doctor at the Tortoise Clinic, to discuss immune support, stress management and how natural supplements can play a key role in overall wellness this time of year.

Dr. Karen, what are your favorite formulas during cold and flu season?

Dr. Karen: Prevention is key when it comes to cold and flu season, and supporting the immune system proactively is

the best way to keep illness at bay. For my family, I rely on a few key supplements to give our immune defenses a strong foundation.

One of my favorites is Pure Defense, a powerful all-in-one formula that includes vitamin C, NAC, elderberry, quercetin, vitamin D, zinc, and a probiotic—all crucial for upper respiratory health and immune support. I also use Viracid, which has broad-spectrum antiviral properties with lysine and vitamin A, echinacea, astragalus, and andrographis. Either formula is great for both prevention and early intervention if you start feeling under the weather.

Beyond supplements, lifestyle factors play a huge role in immune health. Adequate sleep, stress management, proper hydration and a nutrient-dense diet all help the body fight off infections more effectively. If you're not prioritizing these areas, even the best supplements won't be as effective.



Stress can take a huge toll on the immune system. What are your go-to recommendations for managing stress naturally?

Dr. Karen: Absolutely! Chronic stress weakens the immune system and can make us more susceptible to illness. When someone comes to us struggling with stress, the first step is to assess how stress is af-

fecting their biochemistry—including hormones, sleep, and metabolism.

One of my favorite stress-support supplements is Cortisol Manager, an ashwagandha-based formula that's particularly effective for people dealing with prolonged stress, sleep disturbances, and difficulty managing weight. For those who need more adrenal support, HPA Adapt is a combination of adaptogenic herbs to help the body adapt to stress more efficiently. Chelated Magnesium L-Threonate is a favorite of mine to support the brain with anxiety due mental stress, and is a great option for those needing support with focus, memory, and mood.

In addition to supplements, I encourage everyone to prioritize stress-relief techniques including meditation, breathwork, acupuncture, exercise, and mindfulness practices—all of which can help manage stress and the toll it takes on the body, and support the nervous system.

What is your favorite way to naturally support kids and teens?

Dr. Karen: Although nothing takes the place of sunshine, a balanced and low sugar diet, exercise, and limited screen use, a great liquid multivitamin with methylated B vitamins and minerals is a great way to get good nutrients into sensitive pallets. My favorite is by Eddie Bee, called Liquid Multivitamin + Mineral Support. This can be paired with a high quality probiotic like a refrigerated formula by Klaire or Metagenics.

How can people access high-quality supplements, and why does it matter?

Dr. Karen: Not all supplements are created equal, and quality matters immensely when it comes to effectiveness and safety. We stock medical-grade brands at the Tortoise Clinic that undergo third-party testing to ensure purity, potency,

Continued on page 33



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 Wellness

Medicare Advantage Plans: Prior Authorization Problems?

By CHRISTIAN REGALADO

Health insurance has been a hot topic recently and as a Medicare Specialist, I hear a lot of commentary and concern about insurance company practices, like prior authorization denials. Understandably, many seniors

enrolled in one are now questioning if they should be worried about their Medicare Advantage Plan. Here are the facts:

Across the nation, on average, the percentage of seniors who choose a Medicare Advantage plan versus those who stick

with original Medicare and add a Supplement plan are about evenly split. Our area is a little similar as only a small majority of seniors, here, get their coverage through an

Advantage plan. Why is this? We are fortunate to have many

different insurance companies competing for your business. This allows for more competition, and we tend to have fewer problems with Advantage plans here. Most Advantage plans in our market have \$0 premiums and offer some benefits that Supplement Plans don't.

Why do Advantage Plans even exist? The federal government spends about 12% of its annual budget on Medicare (roughly \$840 billion in 2024).

A doctor billing traditional Medicare who follows Medicare guidelines doesn't need approval before providing a procedure they deem appropriate. While this is great for patients, concerns arose over medical fraud, waste, and abuse. To combat costs and promote efficiency, Medicare Advantage plans were established by partnering with private insurance companies to provide a managed care approach to senior healthcare delivery. Managed care agencies save the government money by requiring pre-approval (or pre-authorization) before costly medical procedures are billable. The downside is insurance carriers can reject or delay care just to save money. Many people believe a high percentage of pre-authorizations are denied by insurers. In truth, most authorization denials happen because of clerical, documentation errors or omissions, and billing code mistakes.

Only about 10% of patients appeal denials and of those, 83.2% have the denial overturned. So, if you get a denial, appeal it! Reports suggest only 7.4% of prior authorizations are denied after missing documentation is provided. Even though a small percentage of authorizations are ultimately denied, patients can still suffer from having their treatment delayed.

Generally, carriers are allowed 10 business days to respond to appeals, expedited to 2 business days in emergency cases. Legislation scheduled

to go into effect in 2026 should reduce all requests to 72 hours. In some cases, even this is too long for a patient to wait for treatment.

One study reports that in-



insurance carriers using artificial intelligence to review requests increased denials from 10% in 2022 to 12% in 2023.

Because more errors than expected were reported from AI reviews, most carriers have gone back to physician reviews, at least for now.

Prior authorization for Advantage Plans can be a problem, but it is not as bad as the media reports. Concerns have been noted and corrective action is anticipated.

So when my clients who sign up for an Advantage plan that they are quite happy with ask why their friends and family always recommend choosing a Supplement plan instead, the Prior Authorizations problems is the reason. However, the facts are that most seniors will not have to deal with those issues, but if they do, I hope they know to appeal it.

In conclusion, Medicare Advantage Plans are still overall a great value for the level of care. The important part is choosing the right plan that best fits your needs. We have many great options in South Walton for Advantage plans. If you are soon aging into Medicare and going the Supplement plan route, I still recommend exploring multiple different companies as the rate on premiums can vary quite substantially. Of course, there are a few other things to consider as well. If you would like any assistance, I will be happy to help you explore any of these options further or just answer any questions. My services are no cost to you and I am always happy to help a neighbor. Reach out anytime! Email Christian@evergreenhealthins.com or call (850) 687 7606.



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Go Red in February: Raise Awareness and Reduce Heart Disease Risk



BY KATHRYN PORTER, APRN, ACNP-BC

February is American Heart Month, first celebrated by the American Heart Association in 1963 and later officially recognized by President Johnson in 1964. We recognize National Wear Red Day on the first Friday of the month, in honor of the Go Red for Women campaign which aims to raise awareness about heart disease in women.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States. In fact, about 1 in 3 women die from cardiovascular disease (CVD) each year. This

includes conditions like coronary artery disease, heart attacks, and stroke. Despite these high rates, many women are unaware of their risk and may not recognize heart disease as a major threat to their health. In fact, cardiovascular disease kills more women than all forms of cancer combined.

Several factors can increase the risk of heart disease in both women and men. Some are controllable, while others are not. Controllable risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, obesity, physical inactivity, and an unhealthy diet. These factors contribute to increased strain on the heart and arteries, raising the risk of heart disease. Uncontrollable factors include age, family history, gender, and genetics, with women's risk rising after menopause. Chronic stress and untreated sleep apnea can also contribute to heart disease. Managing controllable risks through lifestyle changes like diet and exercise, along with regular health check-ups, can significantly

reduce the risk of heart disease and promote overall heart health.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) affects men and women differently in terms of age, symptoms, and contributing factors. Men typically develop CVD in their 40s or 50s, while women's risk increases after menopause. Women often experience more subtle symptoms, like fatigue or shortness of breath, which can lead to delays in seeking treatment, delayed care, and even misdiagnosis. Risk factors such as diabetes and high blood pressure impact women more strongly, especially after menopause. This is partly due to a decrease in estrogen, which has a protective effect on the heart and blood vessels. As estrogen levels drop, women are more likely to experience changes in cholesterol levels, increased abdominal fat, and higher blood pressure, all of which significantly increase heart disease risk. Social and emotional factors can further complicate heart disease in women.

To reduce cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk in women and men, focus on these key interventions: Adopt a heart-healthy diet with plenty of fiber and proteins, while limiting ultra processed foods. Increase physical activity by incorporating weight training and moderate cardio into your routine. Quit smoking to prevent blood vessel damage and plaque buildup; Manage stress with relaxation techniques like meditation and yoga. Regular health screenings to monitor blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar, and manage chronic conditions like diabetes. These changes, along with maintaining a healthy weight, can significantly lower heart disease risk and improve overall health. When risk factors extend beyond the control of diet and lifestyle, seek a knowledgeable health practitioner to guide you in your health journey, be that medication, screening, or referral to a cardiovascular specialist.

Take the next step in prioritizing your heart health! If you have any questions or would like per-

sonalized guidance on managing your cardiovascular risk, or are interested in discussing risk factor modification or assessing your personal risk, don't hesitate to reach out. Katherine Porter at Hydrate30A (hydreight30a@gmail.com) and Margaret Russell at 850 Midlife (margaret@850midlife.com) are happy to discuss your concerns and help you chart a path to a healthier future!

Katherine Porter, APRN, ACNP-BC is the owner of Hydrate30A. She received a BSN from Auburn University and an MSN from UAB and has practiced locally as an acute care nurse practitioner since 2013. She can be contacted at hydreight30a@gmail.com

Margaret Russell, APRN, AGACNP-BC is the owner of 850 Midlife and has been in practice locally for more than a decade. If you are interested in discussing risk factor modification or assessing your personal risk, She may be reached at Margaret@850Midlife.com



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 Wellness



Book Review: Secure Love by Julie Menanno

REVIEWED BY
MICHAEL McMANUS, LCSW

Reading “Secure Love” by Julie Menanno is like having a heart-to-heart chat with your best friend about what makes relationships tick. One of the main things I love about this book is that it gives specific examples and strategies of how to interrupt toxic communication patterns that couples have been unconsciously repeating for years. Many couples that

come in to see me report that they start out discussing a seemingly simple topic and then it escalates into an argument and they don’t even know how they got there. Julie breaks down the often confusing world of love and attachment styles in a way that’s super easy to understand. You don’t need a psychology degree to get it!

Imagine this book as your personal guidebook to love, where each chapter feels like

a cozy conversation over coffee. The author shares relatable stories that make you nod your head in agreement, thinking, “Wow, that’s so me!” It’s all about figuring out why we act the way we do in relationships and how our past experiences shape our love lives.

One of the best parts is the emphasis on communication. The book teaches you that being open and honest is like the secret sauce for a healthy relationship. It gives you tips on how to express your feelings without sounding like a robot or starting a fight.

Whether you’re single, dating, or in a long-term relation-

ship, this book has something for everyone. It’s packed with wisdom that can help you build stronger connections and maybe even find a little more happiness in your love life.

If you’re looking for a fun, insightful read that helps you navigate the wild world of love, “Secure Love” is a fantastic choice! Grab a copy, settle in, and get ready to rethink love in the best way possible.

Michael McManus LCSW is a psychotherapist in private practice in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida and can be reached by phone or text at 1-850-837-0123 or Psychotherapy30A.com

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Investing Relationship Energy Strategically



BY STEPHENIE CRAIG,
JOURNEY BRAVELY

Have you ever done something kind for someone you value to then feel like it went largely unnoticed? Do you feel frustrated when you spend time and energy investing in a relationship to feel like the other person doesn't really see or appreciate your investment? Doing thoughtful things for your loved ones matters. However, the human instinct, most often, is to do for others what you would like someone to do for you. And, while that approach works sometimes, often the other person in the relationship feels most loved and seen in ways that might be different than what helps you feel loved and seen.

Maybe you are spending energy cleaning your child's room and packing time consuming lunches when what really makes your child feel seen and loved is

playing a game with you. Maybe you are spending energy buying something for your partner when what really makes them feel seen or loved is time and meaningful conversation. Maybe you are spending energy planning a party for a friend when what makes them feel most loved is spontaneous lunch with you.

Investing energy in relationships unintentionally can create frustration, confusion and disconnection over time as both parties can end up feeling unseen. So, how do you figure out how to invest energy in your relationships strategically so your effort is landing in a way that feels meaningful to the other person? And, how do you learn to communicate your needs clearly to others, so they can invest energy strategically in their relationship with you?

Seven Ways to Invest Relationship Energy Strategically

1 - Let go of mind reading. Mind reading is a myth. Culture has sold you a false idea that mind reading equals love. No one can read your mind and you can't read theirs. And, that's perfectly okay. Let go of expecting yourself or others to read minds when it comes to what makes you or them feel seen and loved.



2 - Reflect on what makes you feel seen and loved. Notice what makes you feel valued, connected, deeply seen and known. Do you feel most seen with side by side time together, meaningful conversation, acts of service, physical touch, encouraging words, gifts, surprises? Notice that what makes you feel seen works for you but is not necessarily the same for others.

3 - Ask the other person what makes them feel seen and loved. Be curious and take notes. Remember, your way of feeling seen is not the right way, it's just your way. Let the other person have space to need and want what feels best and most connecting to them in the relationship.

4 - Make adjustments in your approach. Make consistent and meaningful efforts to spend more energy on what helps the other person feel seen and loved and less energy on things that do not matter as much to them.

5 - Tell people what you need. Communicate clearly what helps you feel seen and connected in your relationships. Remember that communicating what you want and need does not take away from the value when the other person gives you what you're asking for. Being clear about your needs makes you more likely to get what you need and to feel connected in your relationships. Instead of hoping someone reads your mind about wanting a nice dinner for your birthday, tell them a nice dinner would make you feel loved.

6 - Give and notice positive feedback. When your friend does something that felt meaningful, tell them directly

what it meant to you. When your family member tells you the focused time you spent with them was meaningful, take mental note and prioritize spending focused time with them.

7 - Initiate check in conversations periodically. Try directly discussing connection in your relationships. Ask the other person how it's going for them? Don't judge their response. Share your connection needs.

Spending your relationship energy strategically feels better and much less frustrating. Be patient with yourself and others as you learn. Connect with us along your journey for coaching and counseling at Journeybravely.com.



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Lee Campbell

 Musings

Showing Up



BY KIRK MCCARLEY

The day before our scheduled coaching meeting I took time to review notes from when we last gathered to outline questions and topics we may want to cover. As is practice, a text message was also sent reminding the client of the meeting time the next day.

At 11 the next morning I initiated the Zoom meeting. Five minutes later the client had still not connected. Another text was dispatched indicating that I was standing by, waiting to engage. Still no response. Five minutes after that came another text from me signaling that I would wait

five more minutes before concluding the meeting and considering it “complete.” The client never connected.

“A no show.”

The next day a text message came from the client indicating that they had had come off a long shift and had slept through the scheduled meeting. No regret or apology provided.

Fortunately, clients who fail to appear at meetings are, for me, the exception rather than the rule. It no doubt helps that part of the coaching agreement provides that if a client fails to appear at a meeting without first giving adequate notice, with an exception for unforeseen emergencies, the session will be considered complete and billable. Yet many of these same clients have sought services for career coaching and job searches, a few seemingly not realizing that failing to show up for scheduled meetings is not a valued characteristic in the workplace.

Have you been “ghosted?” Beyond the workplace, we see it in other business and personal re-

lationships. It would seem nearly impossible to get a job without first showing up for the interview, yet the industry average indicates that this happens as often as 30% of the time! In medical appointments, it runs around 5-8%. In the love and romance category, scheduled first dates are a miss about one in 20 tries.

A worthy resolution for this still new year would seem to be to at least “show up.” And for those of us with businesses to build, there are practices that encourage that. How is that done?

1. Businesses, begin by clearly outlining expectations. Establish high standards. In the military attendance is not only required but appearing any later than five minutes before the scheduled starting time is philosophically considered tardy.

2. Ghosters, understand that reputations are at stake. Who wants to own an “unreliable” label?

3. Show up when you say you’re going to show up. We can’t control someone else’s behavior, only the manner we react

to their actions.

4. Develop your own standards of excellence. I was in an organization once where deadlines didn’t seem to matter. When a project was supposed to be due by the end of the day on Tuesday, it seemed that more than half the leadership team would seek an extension. Before long, an even greater proportion of key staff missed deadlines. Not only did team performance diminish, but poor work practices and bad habits emerged.

5. Remember that “what goes around will eventually come around.” When you ghost, others will ghost you.

Author and keynote speaker Darren Hardy shares, “Commitment is doing the thing you said you were going to do long after the mood you said it in has left you.”

I was scheduled to appear on a podcast. A couple of days prior I prepared by viewing some of the host’s other episodes to familiarize myself with the format and jotted down responses to possible subjects and questions. After that time investment I readied to go live. Ten minutes before the scheduled time I glanced at my email and noted that the host had canceled our interview, apparently believing we were “misaligned.”

I get that I may not be for everyone and can accept professional rejection. What I would at least expect is a timely cancellation, rather than what seemed to be almost a mean-spirited afterthought.


This year commit to a high standard of awareness. Show up for meetings and appointments. Reschedule in a timely fashion in advance when other commitments arise. Pledge to build upon a reputable reputation.

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, theseedsovercoach.com, or call 314-677-8779.



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A Pastor's Ponderings: **The Tree**



BY REV. PETE HYDE

were already being delayed and connections were going to be missed. An hour on the phone with "customer service" finally got a new schedule in place only to have it changed again as those flights were in turn shuffled.

These delays at the hotel put us behind the Tulsa rush hour traffic as we headed out of town for the funeral of a close friend. The rush of traffic and the concrete landscape gave way to less congested roads and more Oklahoma countryside as we headed north to Bartlesville. Billboards and neon signs disappeared leaving a lonely brown and grey landscape framed by a cloudy, cold, Oklahoma winter day. Someone in the car commented on how brown the scenery was

in comparison to the Florida evergreens.

I began to take note of the rolling open hills of pasture. Black Angus and white face cattle added a stark contrast to the drab winter palate. As I glanced off to the side, standing alone in an empty field was a stately, towering, perfectly shaped, yet lonely oak tree. It stood starkly naked in the emptiness of the sprawling tan pasture. Its grey branches almost blended into the low grey clouds. They stretched for yards horizontally and then reached up to the bleak winter sky. The smaller branches reached out their spindly, leafless fingers in an effort to provide the spring and summer leaves every square

inch of opportunity to catch the life-giving sun that sustained it through probably more than a century. I wondered about all it had witnessed during its years and wished it could tell its story.

For all its beauty, the old naked oak stood alone. There was not another tree or bush for at least a hundred yards. But yet it stood proclaiming to all who would care to notice the magnificence of our great creator God. No one with an ounce of spirituality could miss its message and witness.

Many times we feel alone in the field where God planted us and asks us to make a difference and have an impact with His witness and message. We try to live our lives in the way spelled

out in Scripture. But we wonder if anyone notices or even hears the message. Are we the lone oak making God's statement in the best way we can? Have we stretched out our faith branches to give every opportunity for God to use us to bring His message and light to the world?

The old magnificent oak probably doesn't worry about such things. It just is and does what God has intended it to be and do. Maybe that's the secret we all miss in our quest for meaning. We need to just be and do what God has intended us to be and do in the field where He has planted us. And never forget that we will be noticed!

Rev. Pete Hyde serves as chaplain with the South Walton Fire District

STAYING HEALTHY

continued from page 27

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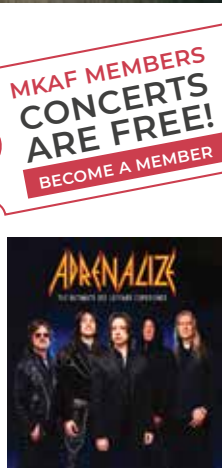
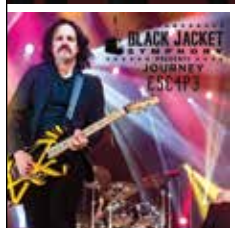
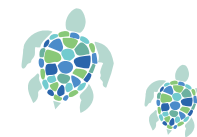
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 Musings

Road to Redemption: Zach Kiley – Deliverance

By VICTORIA OSTROSKY

Walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, God called out – “Adam, where are you?” Enoch’s legacy is that he walked with God every day. Then there’s Moses of whom it is said that God talked with him face to face as one speaks with a friend. And we can’t forget David – a man after God’s own heart. God the Father, through the prophet Isaiah entreated Israel to “come now and let us reason together...”

Throughout the Bible, God reveals that He is all about reaching

out to us because He desires connection with us. Jesus, in the fullness of time, arrived on the scene and spoke the invitation – “follow me”. “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

Jesus instructed His disciples and us today about the importance of abiding in Him. This is not a New Testament only theme. God has always desired a relationship with us. We wonder, in our modern day, what exactly Jesus meant. There’s a cute saying from years ago – “home is where, when you go there, they have to

let you in.”

Zach Kiley grew up in Spring, Texas, and was raised in the Catholic faith. “I knew God existed, but I didn’t want Him in my life, so I stepped away.” His world came crashing down in 2020, when he experienced a complete mental breakdown, partially brought on by abusing his body with alcohol,



now an active member in his church and participates in a small group of men encouraging each other to walk with God and abide in Jesus, daily.

Zach knows that in order to live a fruitful life and walk in freedom, getting in the Word, staying in the Word, and praying the Word is essential. He understands depression and anxiety are crippling. “I still struggle with depression at times, but I know I’ll come out of it.” Memorizing scripture is paramount to combating

anxiety. Thinking of the Psalmist, David, what did he do when he was depressed or anxious, afraid or uncertain? He cried out to the One he knew would hear him. That’s how David walked with God. His heart was fixed and his feet never wandered far from the path.

Zach’s advice for anyone experiencing incapacitating depression or anxiety – “know that it’s not going to kill you. You’ll get through it. Depression feels like forever, but it will pass. Lean into connection.” Staying close to Jesus with prayer and reading the scripture and connecting with other believers is God’s way of protecting and growing His children. Abiding in Jesus takes time and effort. The payoff is a closeness with Him that is indescribable.

You can listen to Zach Kiley’s entire interview and many other incredible stories on the weekly Road to Redemption radio show and podcast at www.rtrdestiny.com.

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Sean of the South: **Love**



BY SEAN DIETRICH

We were newlyweds, living in a grungy apartment.

Each morning, I would wake before her. I would pass my morning hours writing poetry on a yellow legal pad, sipping coffee.

Mostly, I'd write the kinds of god-awful things you'd expect newlyweds to write. I'm talking painfully corny stuff. I'd leave these poems on slips of paper scattered throughout our apartment for her to find.

One such poem read:

"Together, the two of us,

"In thought, and deed, and breath, and heart,

"Shall never be lacerated apart."

Gag me with number-two pencil. "Lacerated?" What kind of a dork uses that word? In fact, I'm not certain this verb works in this particular case.

LACERATE [verb: las-uh-reyt] lac'er-at'ed, lac'er-at'ing

1. to tear; mangle; rip. Example: "Hey dude, that poem you wrote really freakin' lacerated."

My wife saved all my crummy poems in a shoebox, and today they reside in a storage closet.

Anyway, when we first married, we lived in an apartment that smelled like dead squirrels. I am not being figurative. I mean our apartment actually had a nest of decomposing squirrels in the attic above our master bedroom.

The place was tiny, and about as ugly as homemade soap. The tenant before us had painted the walls black and greenish-gray. Sherwin Williams officially titled this color "Seasick Granite®."

When we moved in, we made the place our own. We painted the walls brown and khaki. We bought a used coffee table and some scented candles.

My friend, Chubbs, found an old console television on the side of the road. I was lucky enough to claim the TV before the garbage man came.

The thing was heavier than a dead preacher, but we got it up the stairs. Chubbs, however, would suffer from severe disc degenerative problems for the rest of his life.

Our building sat across the



street from a Waffle House, a Chick-fil-A, and an ice cream shop. And this is why we gained nearly fifty pounds within our first year of marriage.

We never went to the movies because we didn't have the money. We ate Hamburger Helper without hamburger sometimes.

We saved our cash for a new window unit AC—our air conditioner was on the fritz. The thing would only work on days of the week beginning with "R."

On weekends, every weekend, we ate donuts. It was our simple ritual, and I loved it. Krispy Kreme was only a stone's throw from us, and when the hot-and-ready light would glow, by God, we were there.

Over donuts, we would talk for hours about nothing. Heavy doses of sugar can do things to the human mind. It can make a person honest.

She told me all her stories. I told her mine. You can do a lot of soul-searching over crullers.

My professional life was nonexistent, I took whatever jobs I could get. I spent days crawling rooflines, swinging a hammer, or operating a commercial lawn mower. She worked as a preschool teacher at church, or in a kitchen.

For extra income, I played piano at a Baptist church on Sundays, Sunday nights, Wednesday nights, Thursday night choir practices, and Saturday night prayer meetings.

We learned things about each other. We learned important things.

We learned how to argue in the middle of a Winn-Dixie, and how to attend two Thanksgivings in one day. How to share a sunset, seated on the hood of a truck. How to read in bed with a flimsy battery-powered book light.

We learned how to travel together with paper maps. And after years of practice, we finally learned how to make a bed together without me getting murdered.

We learned how to hold each other when loved ones die. We learned how to sit together—me reading a magazine, her playing a crossword puzzle.

We learned how to wring our hands in hospital waiting rooms. We learned how bury dogs with a shovel and a burial sheet.

We learned how to make a life together.

A lot has changed since those days, but I still wake early in the mornings to write. I don't use a legal pad anymore, I use a laptop.

This morning, however, I did not write. Instead, I sifted through our storage closet. I found things. An old coffee-tin sewing kit, some scented candles, love poems, and the picture of a young man and his new wife in their first apartment.

In the picture, the place had ugly gray walls, but that's the only ugly thing about this photo.

He's holding her. She's holding him. They are young. Their skin is smooth. I wish I could tell you how much I love these two people in the picture.

I wish you could see their faces, and their punch-drunk smiles. You can tell they belong together by looking at them. You simply know that their names should never be said apart.

It's as though nothing bad in this life can ever touch them. As though the two of them, in thought, and deed, and breath, and heart, shall never be lacerated apart.

I suppose that word is growing on me.

Happy Valentine's Day, Jamie.

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 Dining

Fish Out of Water at WaterColor Inn Unveils Boldly Reimagined Menu Under New Culinary Leadership

Chef Louis Martorano brings the fresh flavor of the Gulf to WaterColor Inn

WaterColor Inn, the flagship luxury resort along 30A, announced that its iconic onsite eatery, Fish Out of Water, has

taken a fresh culinary direction under the guidance of industry veteran Chef Louis Martorano. As the hotel's new Director of

Culinary and Executive Chef, Chef Martorano brings a new, seasonally-driven perspective to Fish Out of Water's award-

winning cuisine and impeccable service.

Balancing bold new flavors and the coastal classics of the region, Fish Out of Water's offerings take inspiration from the fresh tastes of the Gulf and traditional Southern comforts. Fish Out of Water's latest highlights include fresh Gulf catches served in a photo-worthy tackle box, tender Grilled Ribeye with housemade steak sauce and the imaginative Cauliflower 'Tabbouleh.' With these selections and more, Chef Martorano and his team are committed to offering guests a dynamic menu that stays true to its 30A roots, with seaside staples elevated by flavors that will both surprise and delight the senses.

"I love South Walton's natural beauty, small-town feel and access to fresh seafood and local ingredients," Chef Martorano says. "I'm an avid outdoorsman, so it has been a nice match personally and fosters inspiration for fresh dishes. I'm excited to continue to keep Fish Out of Water's offerings locally and seasonally focused."

Beginning his culinary journey in 1985 at New York's Waldorf Astoria, Chef Martorano has forged an impressive career, participating in nearly a dozen Food & Wine Classic events, a dinner at the iconic James Beard House, and even serving several presidents including Ronald Reagan, George H. Bush, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. After honing his skills in New York, Chef Matorano held multiple chef positions at Boca Raton Resort and Club in Boca Raton, FL, and was part of the opening team for the Hilton Orlando Convention Center hotel.

"Chef Martorano brings an exciting new energy and perspective to Fish Out of Water, and we're thrilled to have him spearheading our beloved culinary program," said Gabriella Testa, General Manager



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at WaterColor Inn. "With his vast experience and passion for the ingredients 30A has to offer, we know that guests and visitors alike are in great hands."

Perched above the sugar-white sands and boundless emerald waters of WaterColor Inn's exclusive stretch of Santa Rosa Beach, Fish Out of Water offers guests a fully-immersive taste of 30A and stands as an integral part of WaterColor Inn. Since 2002, the AAA Four-Diamond WaterColor Inn transports guests to a colorful seaside oasis, with luxurious onsite amenities including WaterColor Beach Club, charming coastal boutiques, Camp WaterColor for children and much more.

Fish Out of Water is open daily for lunch from 11 AM – 2 PM and dinner from 2 – 10 p.m., with a daily Happy Hour from 2 – 4 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays from March to October, Fish Out of Water offers Weekend Brunch from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Café Thirty-A Raises Record-Breaking \$81,000 for Caring and Sharing of South Walton



Café Thirty-A's Annual Christmas Charity Ball, presented by honorary sponsors Earl Bacon, the Ellis Family, and Thomas Howell Ferguson, was held on Saturday, December 7, 2024, and raised a record-breaking \$81,000 for Caring and Sharing of South Walton, an organization that provides food and financial assistance to area families and individuals in need.

The sold-out event welcomed over 250 guests to the festively decorated restaurant, courtesy of Theresa Felton with La Florida Properties. Guests were greeted with complimentary valet parking, sponsored by All Access Coach and Leasing, and a glass of champagne, courtesy of Thor Construction and Design. Inside, event goers enjoyed heavy hors d'oeuvres, a gourmet dinner buffet, cash bar sponsored by All Access Coaching and Leasing, and a variety of desserts courtesy of Haney Holloway, LLC. Sponsors and VIP attendees also received exclusive access to a pre-party event provided by Hannah Martin of

Coastal Luxury Real Estate.

Throughout the night, guests had the opportunity to view and bid on various pieces of art, jewelry, gift baskets, and other luxurious items featured in the extensive silent auction, sponsored by Disco. There was also an Epic Photo Co. photo booth, courtesy of A BOHEME Design, for guests to commemorate the evening and a DJ, sponsored by Marsh Lending, which kept the dance floor going all night long. Santa also made a surprise appearance at this year's event, courtesy of Centennial Bank, and captured photos with guests, sponsored by Coastal Luxury Real Estate.

Through ticket sales, sponsorship, donations, and funds raised from the silent auction, the annual event raised a record-breaking grand total of \$81,000 for Caring and Sharing of South Walton. The money raised will be used to provide local families with access to food, financial assistance, case management, and connections to other resources.

"The needs of our community are greater than ever; we ended 2024 seeing a record number of clients. The \$81,000 raised at the Charity Ball will help us continue providing necessary resources to Walton County families," said Carly Barnes, executive director of Caring and Sharing of South



Walton. "We are so thankful for the continued support of Café Thirty-A and the event sponsors and attendees who make this event a huge success!"

Café Thirty-A would like to thank Counts Real Estate Group 30A for being a Support-

ing Sponsor as well as Julio Beaton and Barn Capital Group for being Friend of Harriet Crommelin Sponsors of this year's event.

Café Thirty-A would also like to thank all of those who donated to the silent auction.

For area businesses interested in sponsorship for the 2025 Café Thirty-A Christmas Charity Ball slated for the first week of December, please contact Jessica Bracken at jessica@proffittpr.com.

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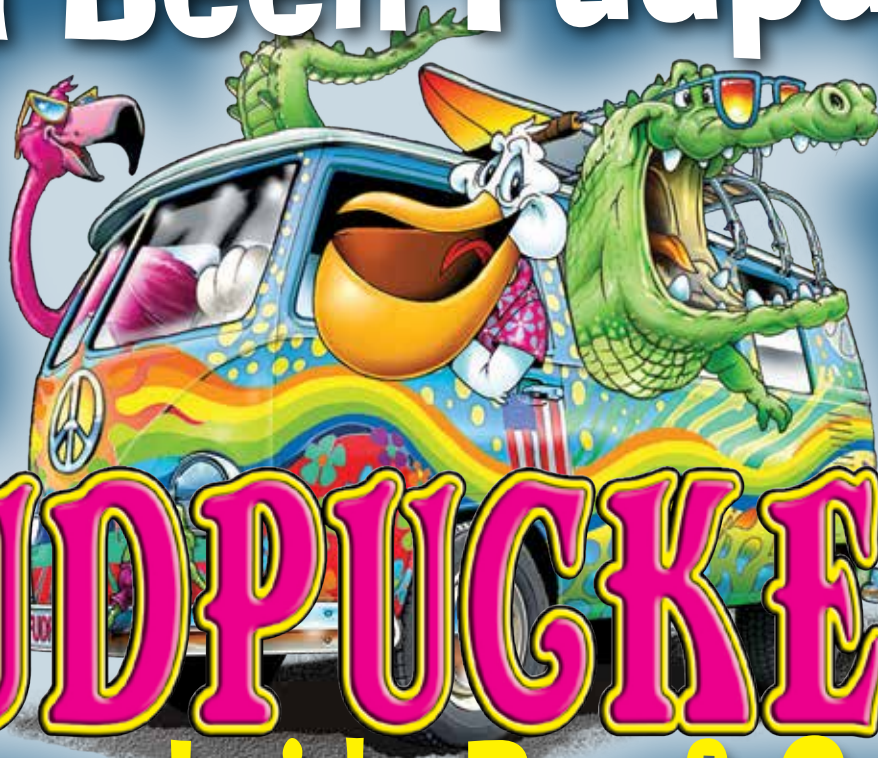
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South Walton Live Music Scene

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Feb. 22: Mike & Maggy McKinney
March 1: Pail Kamm & Eleanore MacDonald

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.

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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.

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Karaoke Night @ AJ's Grayton Beach Thursdays

Join in the fun on Karaoke Night starting at 8 p.m. every Thursday night at AJ's Grayton Beach. Thursday night is also Prime Rib Night at AJ's. Enjoy

a 10oz cut of Prime Rib with au jus & horseradish cream sauce. Served with side salad and baked potato for \$22.95.

Shunk Gulley

Shunk Gulley is a premier location on 30A for live music, bringing in artists from around the Gulf coast and beyond. 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.

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:

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Feb 19: The Sand Ole Opry Songwriters: Mike Whitty, Harrison Prentice, Jerad Reynolds
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Music

Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation Announces Tickets Are On Sale For The 2025 Concerts In The Village

The 10-concert live music series on Thursdays, April 10 to June 12, to feature premier musicians and bands performing everything from classic rock and yacht rock to soulful tributes and high-energy hits.

From iconic blues rock to soulful Amy Winehouse tributes, danceable yacht rock, and Def Leppard classics—plus a special performance of Journey’s album Escape from start to finish by Black Jacket Symphony—the 2025 Concerts in the Village presented by the Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation offers a dynamic lineup for every music lover.

The area’s longest-running live concert series is held each spring on Thursday evenings at the MKAF Dugas Pavilion in Destin. This year’s family-friendly series will run from April 10 to June 12, featuring premier regional and national musicians and bands performing everything from classic rock and rhythm & blues to modern

pop and nostalgic tributes.

The series kicks off on Thursday, April 10, 2025, with an electrifying performance by The Fabulous Thunderbirds, setting the stage for an unforgettable season.

"This is an exceptional lineup of live music in a beautiful outdoor venue at an affordable price for a great cause," says MKAF CEO Demetrius Fuller. "When you purchase a concert ticket, you're helping us provide high-quality arts education and community engagement across Northwest Florida. Whether you're a regular or joining us for the first time, we promise an unforgettable experience."

Gates open at 6 p.m., and concerts begin at 7 p.m. This come-as-you-are outdoor concert series encourages attendees to bring a lawn chair, picnic, or wine. Food and beverages also will be available for purchase from local food trucks on-site.

2025 Concerts in the Village Schedule:



April 10 – The Fabulous Thunderbirds Kick off the season with blues rock legends known for hits like Tuff Enuff and Wrap It Up.

April 17 – Journeyman: An Eric Clapton Tribute Celebrate Clapton’s timeless hits like Layla and Wonderful Tonight with stunning authenticity.

April 24 – Yacht Rock Revue Dance to soft rock classics from the ‘70s and ‘80s by artists like Christopher Cross and Hall & Oates.

May 1 – Black Jacket Symphony: Journey’s Escape Relive

Journey’s iconic album Escape, featuring Don’t Stop Believin’ and Open Arms.

May 8 – Dear Amy: Amy Winehouse Tribute The official estate-approved band, pays tribute to Winehouse’s soulful legacy with hits like Rehab and Back to Black.

May 15 – Kickstand Jenny Experience a high-energy night with this dynamic rock ‘n’ roll band.

May 22 – The Molly Ringwalds Journey through the ‘80s with this ultimate tribute to the decade’s greatest hits.

May 29 – Petty Hearts Celebrate Tom Petty classics like Free Fallin’ and American Girl.

June 5 – A1A: Jimmy Buffett Tribute Escape to Margaritaville with the original, Jimmy Buffett estate-approved tribute band.

June 12 – Adrenalize: Music of Def Leppard Rock out to Def Leppard’s biggest hits like Pour Some Sugar on Me and Love Bites.

General admission tickets are \$35 per person, plus a ticketing fee. Save \$5 by purchasing tickets in advance online at MKAF.org. Children under 12 attend for free. MKAF members enjoy early entry and free admission to every concert as well as discounted pricing for other MKAF events. A limited number of VIP tables (reserved for eight guests for the entire season) are available for \$3,000. To reserve a VIP table, call Deb Nissley at (850) 650-2226.

To purchase tickets, become an MKAF member, make a tax-deductible donation or provide a corporate sponsorship, visit www.MKAF.org or call (850) 650-2226. Follow MKAF on Facebook and Instagram for the latest updates.

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Sinfonia Gulf Coast Presents Crescendo! 2025: A Cultural & Culinary Extravaganza, Feb. 28 & March 2

Sinfonia Gulf Coast's Crescendo! 2025, its highly anticipated annual fundraiser will be held February 28 to March 2, 2025. This multi-day cultural and culinary extravaganza will bring together world-class entertainment, exceptional cuisine and fine wine in support of Sinfonia's music education and community outreach programs.

Crescendo! 2025 Lineup

Crescendo! Kick-Off Lunch: Thursday, Jan. 30 at Bijoux Restaurant + Spirits in Miramar Beach. This chic luncheon will feature award-winning cuisine, elegant wines, and exclusive shopping opportunities. Tickets are \$175 per person.

Vintner Dinners: Friday, Feb. 28 at 6 p.m. Carefully curated dinners hosted in elegant homes and venues across the Emerald Coast, featuring "celebrity" chefs paired with renowned vintners. Tickets are \$500 per person.

Crescendo! Main Event: Sunday, March 2 at 11:30 a.m. at the Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa. Enjoy an all-inclusive afternoon of culinary delights, live and silent auctions, and exceptional entertainment. This year's theme is "Paint the Town Red." Tickets are \$225 per person.

Featured Entertainment for the Main Event

Crescendo! 2025 will highlight extraordinary talent, including the acclaimed string rock band



Violectric. Proclaimed "House Band for the City of Orlando" by Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, Violectric captivates audiences with cutting-edge technology and live performances that span rock history, from The Beatles to

The Weeknd. Led by artist and producer Michelle Jones, known for Grammy-nominated projects, Violectric's interactive performances promise an unforgettable experience.

Also featured is Bradley Co-

peland, a rising 25-year-old visual artist based in Santa Rosa Beach. Copeland, named Walton County Artist of the Year (2023), will be showcasing her award-winning talent with a live painting demonstration and a pop-up art gallery. With over 600 pieces in her collection, Copeland's work reflects her passion and creativity, shaped by her experiences and surroundings. Her vibrant career includes solo exhibitions, public art projects, and a mural at Linda Miller Real Estate on 30A. Copeland's dedication to art as a trans-

formative medium extends to her teaching at the Walton Correctional Institution, where she leads an art program aimed at inspiring creativity and healing.

Supporting Music Education

Proceeds from Crescendo! 2025 benefit Sinfonia Gulf Coast's mission to redefine the symphony experience and provide exceptional music education. Programs supported include support of Sinfonia's signature music education pro

CRESCENDO

continued on page 42

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 Music

The Love Language of Music

Music is often described as the universal language, transcending barriers of culture, language, and geography. Yet, its role extends far beyond communication—it serves as an expression of love and connection that resonates deeply within the human soul. The love language of music is a powerful medium through which emotions are conveyed, relationships are nurtured, and hearts are united.

The Emotional Resonance

At its core, music is a form of

emotional expression. From a lullaby soothing a restless infant to a romantic ballad expressing profound affection, music has an unparalleled ability to evoke and share feelings. Its melodies, harmonies, and rhythms can articulate emotions that words often fail to capture. This emotional resonance is why certain songs become deeply personal; they remind us of loved ones, significant moments, or shared experiences that carry a profound sense of meaning.

A Tool for Connection

Music bridges gaps in relationships, serving as a shared experience that fosters connection. Families bond over traditions of singing together; couples find their "song" that symbolizes their love, and friends create memories at concerts and festivals. In these moments, music becomes more than just sound—it becomes a shared language of affection and togetherness.

Even in moments of solitude, music connects us to others. A song written hundreds of years ago can make us feel understood in the present, as though the composer knew our heartache, joy, or longing. This timeless quality underscores music's ability to transcend time and space, reinforcing the idea that we are never truly alone. For example, the well-known "Happy Birthday to You" song which was written by Patty Hill and her sister Mildred in 1893 is probably sung many times every day of the year.

An Act of Love

Creating music for someone is one of the most personal and profound acts of love. Whether it's a custom playlist curated for a friend, a serenade for a partner, or a heartfelt composition for a family member, these gestures carry deep meaning. They say, "I see you, I understand you, and I care for you," in a way that words alone cannot.

Likewise, sharing music is a way of sharing oneself. Recommending a favorite song or attending a concert together is an act of vulnerability and trust. These exchanges foster intimacy and understanding, enriching relationships in ways that feel both subtle and significant.

Music's Role in Healing and Reconciliation

Music also plays a pivotal role in healing and reconciliation, embodying forgiveness, empathy, and love. For instance, lullabies comfort distressed children, and music therapy is used to mend emotional wounds. On a larger scale, anthems and peace songs unite communities, fostering understanding

and collective healing in times of discord.

The love language of music is a profound and versatile form of expression, weaving together emotions, relationships, and shared human experiences. It transcends the limitations of spoken language, offering a unique and powerful way to connect and communicate. Whether it's through listening, creating, or sharing, music allows us to express love in ways that touch the heart and soul.

Music reminds us of our shared humanity and universal longing to feel understood and loved. It is, in every sense, the sound of connection.

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CRESCENDO

continued from page 41

gram, musicians in schools, free orchestra concerts, transportation for students, and partnerships with Carnegie Hall's Link Up initiative and Ascension Sacred Heart's Arts in Medicine program and more.

Sinfonia Music & Artistic Director Demetrius Fuller states, "Crescendo! is more than a fundraiser; it's a celebration of our community's commitment to the arts. The funds raised allow us

to continue bringing music and education to thousands across Northwest Florida."

Are you a "treble" maker? If so, Sinfonia Gulf Coast invites you to join this honorary committee. For a \$650 contribution, Treble Makers will receive one ticket to the Crescendo! Kick Off Lunch and Main Event, recognition in the event program, a reserved seat at the closed-to-the-public student Link Up performances on March 12, 2025, at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach

Convention Center, a special Treble Maker gift, and more.

Tickets, Sponsorship & Volunteering

Tickets are available at www.SinfoniaGulfCoast.org or by calling (850) 460-8800. Sponsorship opportunities are also available. For inquiries, contact Daniel Milana at dmilana@sinfoniagulfcoast.org. For more information on how you can join Sinfonia's team of volunteers, contact Beth Clavier at (850) 460-8800 and bclavier@sinfoniagulfcoast.org.



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What You Should Do Right After An Accident



By JULIE A. MARTIN

It can be scary to be driving along one minute, and the next, either you've been run off the road, or spun out into the intersection, or even into a ditch. You or your passenger might even be injured, and need medical attention. Here is the short version of how to handle auto accidents so that you know you handled everything correctly and your stress level can come down.

Pull over safely to the side of the road and call 911. Calling for help is the first essential step in making sure that any injuries are treated in a timely fashion, as well as making sure the police arrive to do a full accident report.

Take photos of the other vehicle(s) involved including the drivers, as the position of the vehicles, for your insurance

company, so that there is photo evidence of all damage as well as an accurate representation of who was in which car, as well who was driving.

Make sure you have your license, registration and insurance information on hand. I recommend keeping a copy of your declarations page, your auto id cards and your registration in your glove box.

If your vehicle is not drive able after the accident, you have two choices. If you have AAA, you can have them pick up your vehicle and drop it off at your preferred auto repair shop. If you have towing on your auto policy, and the site of your accident is less than five miles away from your repair shop, you can potentially use the towing coverage on your policy for this accident.

If you are injured, go to the hospital to get checked out or your primary care physician, if your injuries are not serious.

Personal Injury Protection in the state of Florida pays 80% of your \$10,000 coverage, minus the deductible. This includes hospital bills, medical bills relating to your accident injuries, physical therapy, casts, crutches, etc. If you have medical payments on your policy as well, they will start where the Personal Injury Protection ends. If the at fault driver is not you, and



they either have no bodily injury liability coverage, or not enough to cover your injuries, this is where uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage comes in. You insure for those times that you get hit, you're hurt, but the person who causes the accident does not have enough coverage

to cover your medical expenses.

If you have not already called your insurance company to put in the claim, do so now, calling your agent and explaining to them what happened. Answer their questions and do not guess if you do not know the answer. Let them know that the police have been on the scene. Give them the case number the police give you and they will get the ac-

cident report when it becomes available. Write down the claim number and any other instructions the claims representative, and your agent give you for the accident.

Dear reader, we all get into a scrape from time to time, and hopefully this list is helpful when you need to know what to do. Call 850-424-6979.



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Roofing Questions - Part 1

By BYRON TOUPS

Florida's picturesque landscape and sunny weather make it a dream destination for many, but its vulnerability to hurricanes and tropical storms requires homeowners to carefully consider their roofing options. In this two-part comprehensive guide, we'll delve into key questions about Florida roofs, providing insights into their lifespan, insurance coverage, repair options, installation process and more. Let's navigate the intricate world of Florida roofing together.

How Long Should My Roof Last in Florida?

Florida's climate, characterized by hurricanes and high humidity, significantly impacts the lifespan of roofs. Various factors such as materials, building codes, and climate considerations come into play. Traditional asphalt shingle roofs typically last between 12 and 20 years, while more durable options like metal or tile roofs can endure for 40 to 60 years. The question is, will your insurance carrier insure the roof for that long? Today's Florida homeowners are getting letters or notices of cancellation daily from insurance carriers. Insurance companies are threatening



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to drop a roof's coverage if it's not replaced.

Do Florida Homeowner's Insurance Policies Cover Roofs?

Given the frequent hurricanes and storms in Florida, understanding your homeowner's insurance policy regarding roof coverage is essential. Most policies cover structural damage caused by perils such as hail, wind, fire, and falling trees, including damage to your roof. However, the coverage may vary, requiring you to pay a deductible and possibly excluding certain conditions. Please be aware if your policy has special clauses which can change the payment a carrier makes on your claim. You may think you have a Replacement Cost Policy but there may be a clause basically reducing coverage by de-

preciating the roof's value.

Does a Leaky Roof in Florida Necessitate a Complete Replacement?

Addressing leaks promptly is crucial to prevent further damage, but not every leak warrants a complete roof replacement. Factors such as the age of the roof, extent of damage, and type of materials used play a role in determining whether repairs suffice or if a full replacement is necessary.

What Is the Cost of a New Roof in Florida?

The cost of a new roof in Florida depends on various factors, including its size, shape, materials, and additional features like chimneys and skylights.

What Are the Signs of a Failing Roof in Florida?

Identifying visible signs of a

failing roof is crucial, especially in Florida's climate. Look out for loose or missing shingles, sagging areas, exposed nail heads, and granules or debris in gutters. Regular inspections, particularly for older asphalt shingle roofs, can help detect issues early on. And damage may not be visible from the ground.

Why Is My Florida Roof Stained?

Stains on Florida roofs, particularly black and green stains from algae, moss, or lichens, are common due to the state's humid climate. Regular cleaning is essential to prevent structural damage and preserve the roof's integrity.

What Reroofing Options Are Available in Florida?

For homeowners considering reroofing in Florida, options include installing a new roof directly over existing materials. Factors such as aesthetics, climate conditions, and budget should be considered when making choices. We do not recommend installing a new roof over an existing roof.


How Long Does Roof Installation Take in Florida?

The duration of roof installation in Florida varies depending on factors such as roof size, materials, and potential weather delays. While the process can range from a day to a few days, obtaining a comprehensive timeline from roofing contractors is advisable for proper planning.


How Can I Find a Reliable Roofing Professional in Florida?

Selecting a trustworthy roofing professional is paramount for ensuring the integrity and safety of your home. Look for licensed and insured contractors who are responsive to your questions and concerns. Seeking professional insights from reputable companies like RoofPro Roofing can provide in-depth answers to all your roofing concerns. Check their ratings and reviews and consult your local Chamber of Commerce and BBB. For a free RoofPro Roofing consultation, call 850-332-3330 or email info@RoofProRoofing.com.

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